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**Radical Dismissal: Stokely Carmichael and the Problem of Inclusion in
Public Deliberation**

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Public Deliberation**

by

Justin Dean Hatch

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Dedication

To my beautiful wife.

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Abstract

RADICAL DISMISSAL: STOKELY CARMICHAEL AND THE PROBLEM OF INCLUSION IN PUBLIC DELIBERATION

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“Radical Dismissal: Stokely Carmichael and the Problem of Inclusion in Public Deliberation” has two interrelated goals—first, to lay bare the rhetorical mechanisms by which those in power silence dissent, and, second, to view with greater clarity Stokely Carmichael’s rhetorical strategies and legacies. Toward those goals, I examine Carmichael’s words in the year following SNCC’s release of the slogan “Black Power,” and I look closely at the almost universally negative responses to them during the same period. While the terms—angry, hateful, demagogue, racist, etc.—that Carmichael’s critics use to dismiss him vary, they all direct attention away from his institutional critique toward his relationship to subjective norms of discourse. I open the dissertation by introducing Carmichael and relevant context and by developing the dissertation’s overarching theoretical framework. I borrow from scholars writing on “civility” to develop “civility policing” as rhetorical action that preserves unjust harmonies (Roberts-Miller, *Deliberate Conflict* 154), displaces blame from oppressor to oppressed (Welch 110), and silences dissent (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 223). Chapter One finds that Carmichael’s critics shaped his image and longer legacy by amplifying a distorted version of his message. An

exploration of Carmichael's words especially within a set of letters to Lorna Smith offers a corrective. Chapter Two explores the utility of two definitions of the term "demagogue" for distinguishing anti-racist rhetoric. While critics accuse Carmichael of being a "demagogue," his words in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* not only contradict the claim, but also return the charge. Chapter Three builds on Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's "dissociation of concepts" and Janice Fernheimer's "dissociative disruption" to better understand the adaptive rhetorical strategies Carmichael used in his most famous speech given at Berkeley. I offer the term "subversive dissociation" as a charge to discover the dissociative foundations of dominant racial narratives.

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Introduction: Institutional Critique and Silencing Dissent

After hearing Stokely Carmichael speak at Stockholm University in 1967, Swedish journalist, Ingris Dahlberg, traveled to the United States to record footage of Stokely Carmichael and other Black Power activists (Werman). More than three decades later Director Goran Olsson stitched Dahlberg's footage together into a documentary *Black Power Mixtape* on the Black Power Movement in America between the years 1967 and 1975 (Werman). Story AB and Louverture Films released the film to critical acclaim in 2011, and as noted by critics at the time, *Mixtape* is extraordinary in its relatively positive depiction of Black Power.

Particularly awing were scenes of Stokely Carmichael spending time with friends, singing and laughing, and interacting with his mother, Mable Carmichael, affectionately known to all as "May Charles" (Olson; Joseph, *Stokely* 5). In one scene Dahlberg attempts to interview camera shy May Charles and has trouble eliciting answers (Olson). Stokely takes the mic and begins, sweetly, to question his mother about the economic circumstances of his youth (Olson). At ease with her new interviewer, May Charles speaks of the family's indigence and names racism as its cause. A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* called this "the most touching and arresting scene in 'Mixtape,'" and Scott is not alone. This is the scene most often pointed to by critics (see Scott; Jenkins; Kennedy).

Why would footage of Stokely Carmichael simply and sweetly interacting with his mother draw so much attention? One answer is that the presence of humanity is shocking only to those who are certain of its absence. Before Stokely Carmichael called for "Black Power" in the heart of the Mississippi Delta in the summer of 1966, he was a veteran activist and organizer who rode on the Freedom Rides, participated in countless sit-ins and marches, who was a central figure during Freedom Summer, and who organized the

Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) (see especially Carmichael *Ready for Revolution* and Joseph, *Stokely*). Then Carmichael, with the help of fellow SNCC activist Willie Ricks, released the slogan “Black Power” that (as Keith Gilyard and Adam Banks write) forever altered the rhetorical landscape of The Civil Rights Movement (40). “Black Power” circulated with what would at present be called virality, and Stokely Carmichael, seemingly overnight, went from a movement name to a household name, one on the lips (or pens or typewriters) of critics from Jackson to New York to London.

As this project demonstrates, responses were swift and largely negative. *The Los Angeles Times* writes of “Black Power” as “negro supremacy” and a “doctrine of vengeance” (A4). *Time Magazine* calls it the “New Racism” (11). Even within the movement, the NAACP’s Roy Wilkins called “Black Power” “a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Klu Klux Klan” at his organizations national meeting (qtd. in Joseph, *Stokely* 127). At that same gathering, Lyndon Johnson’s Vice President, Hubert Humphrey called “Black Power” “racism,” “the dogma of the oppressor,” and “apartheid” (qtd. in Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution* 526). Conservative voices were particularly harsh. William Buckley, under the subheading “Black Klu Kluxer” writes that if Carmichael was white, he would be calling for lynchings (A10), and in the *Waco News-Tribune* one writer records that Carmichael is “a dangerous demagogue who passionately advocates Negroes shedding the blood of whites (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces Expected Results” 4).

As I demonstrate in this dissertation, critics dismissed Carmichael as angry and as racist. They called him a demagogue, and they questioned his citizenship status. They called him un-American. They called him a traitor, and they called for his imprisonment and his deportation. But very few actually responded to his arguments.

This project investigates Stokely Carmichael's call for "Black Power" and responses to it in the year following the slogan's release. I limit the dissertation to the period spanning from June 16, 1966 when the phrase "Black Power" began its broad circulation to July of the following year when Carmichael embarked on an international speaking tour that took him to Cuba, London, and Vietnam (Joseph, *Stokely* 197). Reasons for that decision include that Carmichael was ever evolving in his political positions and so rhetorical strategies. In just a few years, he traversed political terrain that might be described (very roughly) as (1) non-violent integrationist civil rights activism animated by social democratic political philosophy, (2) self-determinative organizing with black nationalist overtones marked by the call for "Black Power," and (3) a revolutionary Pan-Africanism carrying cultural nationalist flourishes that culminated in an unfortunate alliance with Guinean dictator Sekou Touré.

One, in essence, must choose which Carmichael to study, and the Stokely Carmichael of 1966 and 1967 is of particular interest because critics so thoroughly misidentify, misrepresent, distort, and dismiss his words. That is, Stokely Carmichael is everywhere and nowhere to be found during this period. His face is printed in *Time Magazine* and in the *New York Times*, but the complexity of his critique of white supremacy and American institutions is largely absent from these accounts.

As a result, the dissertation is about silencing dissent, and it has two overarching and interrelated goals—first, to uncover the mechanisms by which Carmichael's voice was so thoroughly dismissed and distorted in 1966 and 1967. Second, it aims to view with greater clarity Carmichael's critique of American institutions. In service of the first goal, I take up two rhetorical concepts "civility" and "demagoguery" that Carmichael's critics weaponized in the process of silencing. As will be discussed at length in the dissertation, those unwilling to deal with *what* Carmichael was saying, attempted to dismiss him by

focusing on *how* he was saying it. To address the second goal concerning more clearly viewing Carmichael's institutional critique, I build on Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's term "dissociation of concepts" and Janice Fernheimer's "dissociative disruption," and offer my own term "subversive dissociation."

While in the dissertation I reference an array of texts (or sets of texts) that Carmichael produced during this period, each of the three body chapters centers just one. These include his letters to Lorna Smith, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (the book he co-authored with professor of political science Charles V. Hamilton), and his most famous speech given at UC Berkeley on October 29, 1966. While I focus on letters written during the period in question, the Lorna Smith collection includes more than 50 letters and postcards written to his elderly white friend between December of 1965 and August of 1978. These are significant to a study interested in silencing because they constitute a substantial challenge to narratives that have obscured both Carmichael's message and humanity. *Black Power* is significant to the study, not as a traditional object of rhetorical analysis, but instead as the most comprehensive collection of Carmichael's rhetoric during the year in question. The Berkeley speech is appropriate because of the attention it drew from critics and for its effect upon the anti-war movement.

The rest of the introduction will proceed as follows. I lead with a brief sketch of Stokely Carmichael's life and context from the 1960s that will be useful to the rest of the study. I follow with a review of recent literature on "civility," which will allow application of the principles of "civility policing" throughout the dissertation. An introduction of key terms follows, and I then proceed to a presentation of Stokely Carmichael's institutional critique using Carmichael's own words.

STOKELY CARMICHAEL AND BLACK POWER IN RHETORIC

Stokely Carmichael is an appropriate subject for a study concerned with silencing and with the distortion and recovery of activist voices. First, and most generally Carmichael's importance to the rhetoric of the Black Freedom Struggle is difficult to overstate. While he did not invent the slogan "Black Power,"¹ nor the various philosophies that it signaled, no other activist, save possibly for Malcolm X, has done more to circulate Black Power rhetoric in the postwar period than Stokely Carmichael. Second, distinctions between Carmichael's words and those written about them were stark (see, especially Blue and Murphree), especially during the period covered in the dissertation. Third, while a scholarship on Black Power, including on Stokely Carmichael, has emerged in recent decades, he remains wildly understudied in rhetoric.

In both "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field" and "Black Liberation Without Apology" historian Peniel Joseph outlines the substantial literature, including biographies of movement participants and deep historical studies with varied and evolving attitudes toward Black Power. Joseph argues that these texts shape "Black Power Studies," a field that has coalesced in history in the last two decades and which continues to grow at a rapid pace.² Studies on Black Power have continued to emerge, including work that investigates the intersection of Black Power and healthcare (Nelson), work that considers artistic expression during the era (Godfrey), that considers Black Power's influence on education (Rickford) and in politics (Moore), just as examples.

¹ Versions of the phrases were used by Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (Joseph, "The Black Power Movement" 755). William Worthy also spoke of the accumulation of power before Carmichael's call (Joseph, *Waiting* 73).

² Joseph is also responsible for the most robust study of Black Power *Waiting 'til The Midnight Hour* and the only full-throated biography of Stokely Carmichael *Stokely: A Life*.

While the study of Black Power has gained traction in other arenas, scholars in rhetoric have paid less attention. In the immediate wake of the call for “Black Power,” a few scholars in rhetoric attempted to grapple with the productiveness of radical activist rhetoric in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These studies, however, rarely reflected well upon radical rhetoric. Edward P. J. Corbett’s “The Rhetoric of the Open Hand, and the Rhetoric of the Closed Fist” and Robert L. Scott’s “The Rhetoric of Confrontation” are good examples. Notable exceptions include Arthur L. Smith’s (later known as Molefi Asanti) *Rhetoric of Black Revolution*, and Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede’s *The Rhetoric of Black Power*, the only two noteworthy book-length treatments of Black Power rhetoric of the era.

A few scholars in rhetoric produced studies on Stokely Carmichael specifically, and these early studies were concerned with style—Jefferson’s “Stokely’s Cool’: Style,” Richardson’s “Stokely Carmichael: Jazz Artist,” and Scott and Brockriede’s treatment of Carmichael in the aforementioned book are examples. In the decades following the Black Power Era, interest in Black Power rhetoric within the field waned, and not until 1997 does another study of Carmichael’s rhetoric appear in a major publication. Charles J. Stewart in “The Evolution of Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power” writes of Carmichael’s rhetoric not as a break with the rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement, but instead as following the natural arc of movements toward radicalization.

Three years later, Victoria Gallagher uses Burkean concepts in “Black Power in Berkeley: Postmodern constructions in the rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael” to analyze Carmichael’s most famous speech, given at Berkeley on October 29, 1966 (these two studies get more attention in Chapter 3 of the dissertation). After Gallagher, it wouldn’t be until 2006 that the next and last study of Stokely Carmichael’s rhetoric was published in the field. In that essay Stephen Schneider in “Freedom Schooling: Stokely Carmichael and

Critical Rhetorical Education” looks at what the philosophies of language undergirding a speech class taught by Stokely Carmichael have to tell the field about critical education.

These studies only begin to shed light on arguably the most influential black activist rhetor of the Civil Rights and Black Power Eras save for Dr. King, and none of them take seriously the rhetoric of Carmichael’s critics. Victoria Gallagher stands alone in attempting to identify the rhetorical strategies Carmichael used to communicate the existence of institutional racism. The current study intervenes at both points, looking seriously at responses to Carmichael before, in the final chapter, examining Carmichael’s rhetorical strategy at Berkeley.

RADICAL BEGINNINGS AND RHETORICAL INFLUENCES

I provide in this section a brief sketch of Carmichael’s early life taken from Peniel Joseph’s biography *Stokely: A Life* and Carmichael’s posthumously published autobiography *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael*. My hope is that in doing so readers will approach the current project—one that spends substantial time with racist and venomous critics that vilify and demonize Carmichael—with a sense of Carmichael’s humanity. My hope with the mundane depiction that follows is that readers leave shore with the understanding that Carmichael came from somewhere, that the anti-racist activist who answered the phone “ready for revolution” until the day he died, was, like the rest of us, somebody’s child.

Stokely Standiford Churchill Carmichael was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad on July 29, 1941 to Mable Florence Charles (“May” Charles) and Adolphus Carmichael (Joseph, *Stokely* 5). Between four grandparents, Stokely traced his ancestry through Montserrat, Antigua, Barbados, and Tobago (Joseph, *Stokely* 5). May Charles left Trinidad

for the Bronx when Stokely was three, Adolphus when he was five, and he did not see either of them again until he was 11 (Joseph, *Stokely* 9). At that time his grandmother passed away, and it was decided that he and his sisters would live with Adolphus and May Charles in the Bronx (Joseph, *Stokely* 9). On April 27, 1953 at the age of eleven, Stokely Carmichael, along with the rest of his immediate family became a naturalized citizen of the United States (Joseph, *Stokely* 9). The fact of Carmichael's citizenship would much later be of great concern to Carmichael's critics.

Always an exceptionally bright student, Stokely excelled at P.S. 83, a magnet middle school, and he was selected to test for Bronx High School of Science, where he would eventually begin his foray into radical politics via his good friend Gene Dennis, son of Eugene Dennis, Sr. who was at the time imprisoned for his activities as a leader of the Communist Party U.S.A. (Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution* 73). It was through Dennis that Stokely began attending events and study groups of the Young Communist League (YCL), though he never became a member (Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution* 92, 93). Carmichael lists his most formidable influence during this time as Bayard Rustin, the storied activist and democratic socialist, who Carmichael encountered during an event attended by the YCL (*Ready for Revolution* 95). Carmichael would also list the writings of C.L.R James and George Padmore as influential during this period, and so the foundations of democratic socialism and his later Pan-Africanism were established before Carmichael graduated high school (*Ready for Revolution* 95).

Stokely's early engagements with black history and culture came via time spent both at Michaux's African National Memorial Bookstore as well as at the Schomburg (*Ready for Revolution* 104, 105). He encountered black music via two New York deejays (Symphony Sid and Jocko) and through his Uncle Sid's record store, where he encountered Gospel, Jazz, R&B, and Soul (*Ready for Revolution* 96, 97). Carmichael first connected

black struggles at home with anti-colonial movements abroad via nationalist stepladder speakers, and he conversed with figures, such as Queen Mother Moore, Mae Mallory, Charles X Kenyatta, and Porkchop Davies (*Ready for Revolution* 100). Of these and other nationalist speakers who “brought regular updates on the African struggle for independence” and who “extolled African revolutionaries,” Carmichael writes, “The effect of the speakers on me was more than political, it was rhetorical” (*Ready for Revolution* 101). To these “street corner orators of Harlem” as well as to the “Baptist preachers of the rural south” Carmichael traces his own adult public speaking style (*Ready for Revolution* 101).

While Carmichael’s parents encouraged him to study at Harvard, after a chance encounter with Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) organizers from historically black Howard University, he insisted on attending there (*Ready for Revolution* 113). At Howard, Carmichael counted notable writer Sterling Brown, famed sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, and Toni Morrison among his professors, and, of these, Brown had a particular influence (*Ready for Revolution* 134). Brown invited some NAG members for discussions in his office, and had Carmichael, Michael Thelwell, and Courtland Cox to his home to discuss black literature and history. Carmichael appreciated Brown’s “undying love for our people and our culture” (Carmichael *Ready for Revolution* 134).

Joseph writes that Carmichael’s education at Howard also taught him to love black culture, and it provided him a “progressive black intellectual orientation” (Joseph, *Stokely* 26, 27). Carmichael’s fearlessness, wit, and natural charisma helped him quickly become a respected leader within NAG, one who established contacts in an array of organizations (Joseph, *Stokely* 49-52). Both his participation in the second wave of Freedom Rides and his subsequent forty-day stint in Parchman Prison brought a level of fame within the movement as well as speaking requests (Joseph, *Stokely* 35).

Though Carmichael listed Bayard Rustin as an early influence, his respect for the activist deepened during his time with NAG (Joseph, *Stokely* 28, 53).³ Rustin's promotion of nonviolence as a political strategy underscored NAG's activism, which included interracial and interorganizational coalitions, especially with labor (Joseph, *Stokely* 53). At Howard, Carmichael would lead marches, demonstrations, and sit-ins. He would also spend his summers in the Mississippi Delta where he met and eventually worked with another substantial influence, Bob Moses. His first conversation with Moses influenced Carmichael to switch majors from pre-med to philosophy (Joseph, *Stokely* 38).

During this time, Carmichael may have received his most important education, though, from his associations in NAG, which included Courtland Cox, and Ed Brown as close friends (Joseph, *Stokely* 26-28). A debate staged at Howard between Rustin and Malcolm X constituted an important intellectual moment for Carmichael who was in the front row as the two debated "integration" vs. "separation" (Joseph, *Stokely* 40-43). While he remained more influenced by Rustin's democratic socialism than the nationalism espoused by Malcolm, the two presented positions that would eventually divide and then shift Carmichael's loyalties (Joseph, *Stokely* 43). Joseph writes of Carmichael's association with each man: "Stokely's active role in Washington-area civil rights politics placed him squarely on the side of Rustin, while his militant posture made him an unacknowledged disciple of Malcolm X" (*Stokely* 53).

The move to full-time organizing exacerbated Carmichael's move toward self-determinative strategies. During Freedom Summer, for example, Carmichael was operating as the "project director for Mississippi's 2nd Congressional District" (Joseph, *Stokely* 68)

³ Joseph records that Rustin's "The Negro and Nonviolence" was required reading for new NAG members and that Carmichael was also deeply influenced by another essay by Rustin "Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow" (*Stokely* 29, 28).

when, in Neshoba County, fellow activists Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner were murdered and their bodies hidden in a conspiracy sponsored by local Sheriff Rainey. After Carmichael spent three nights scouring the Delta for their bodies, and after their corpses were finally discovered, he found it increasingly difficult to justify non-violence in such a violent context (Joseph, *Stokely* 68, 73). Carmichael found the refusal of the national Democratic party to recognize delegates from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) at the Democratic National Convention that bookended the summer a sobering reminder that those in positions of authority were not concerned with morality, but with power (Joseph, *Stokely*). And Carmichael lost friends. Joseph writes that he took the deaths Jonathan Daniels and Sammy Young, Jr. particularly hard (Stokely 94).

Even before it had been given its name, Carmichael, was organizing, along with local activist John Hulet, black political power in Lowndes County, Alabama with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), an all-black independent political party that had the Black Panther as its mascot. The LCFO had seven candidates on the official state ballot and was looking forward to its first election when Carmichael was elected chairman of SNCC and his leadership tested along the last great march of the civil rights movement (Joseph *Stokely* 87-99).

The March Against Fear was renamed the Meredith March after its original organizer James Meredith was gunned down along the route from Memphis to Jackson in the summer of 1966 (Goudsouzian, *Down the Crossroads* 15; Carmichael and Thelwell, 495). This March constitutes the immediate context within which Carmichael called for “Black Power,” and while I leave off here, that story continues within the dissertation’s chapters, and a central component is that pundits, politicians, and lay critics responded to Carmichael’s cry for power with curiously indignant opines to rhetorical and moral

standards. Below I provide the theoretical foundation for understanding the operation and effect of what I term “civility policing.”

POLICING CIVILITY ⁴

In the decades following the rhetorical excesses of the Black Power Era and the cultural-rhetorical tumult of the 1960s and 1970s scholars as varied as Habermas (1984,1989), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984), Krista Ratcliffe (1992), and Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin (1995) attempted to articulate standards of acceptable discursive behavior or, from another angle, to establish standards of rhetorical civility. Bone et al. make explicit the connection between Foss and Griffin’s invitational approach and the concept of civility, writing that “invitational rhetoric and civility are a means to create ethical exchanges in difficult situations” (435). They argue that “when we adopt an invitational approach and are civil, the potential for grief and violence is minimized” (456).

Civilizing responses to perceived increases in incivility, though, are unoriginal. Political theorist Teresa Bejan writes that those promoting civility are often responding to a “crisis of civility,” one perceived as “unprecedented, the product of technological, social, and cultural transformations unique to the modern world” (4). Bejan, though, traces the concern for rising incivility as far back as “Plato’s Euthyphro” where “Socrates complained that differences of opinion about the ‘just and the unjust, the noble and the shameful, and good and bad’ made for ‘quarrels,’ ‘anger,’ and enmity between the gods as well as men” (4). For Bejan, “whether incivility is, in fact, on the rise.... we insist that something must be done,” and she argues that the solution for “political practitioners and theorists alike has

⁴ Portions of this literature review originated in my Master’s Report: *Inclusivity and the (Un)Civil Paradox: Critiquing and Needing Civility in the Public Sphere*. 2014. UT Austin

been ‘more civility’” (3). In seeming alignment with that sentiment, Ralph Norgaard—in “The Rhetoric of Civility and the Fate of Argument”—asks, “Who amongst us would argue with civility?” Norgaard, though, is setting us up. “Yet I submit that we must argue with civility,” he argues, and a new scholarship on civility agrees with him. Norgaard was arguing for a better civility, however, while a new scholarship returns to “civility” not to theorize the ways that public deliberation might be more civil—and not to consider how more civility would improve deliberative outcomes. Instead this new scholarship points to the negative (and sometimes intended) consequences that result when those in power police civility.

For example, Lozano-Reich and Cloud see “Bone et al.’s argument for invitational civility in situations of conflict as potentially perpetuating discrimination in the name of peace” (224). They argue that “it is irresponsible to displace more confrontational models for social change in favor of a politics of civility that has been proven to leave those already disempowered in a continued state of conformity, punishment, and/or silence” (224). For Lozano-Reich and Cloud, “[I]nvitation and civility are as likely to be bludgeons of the oppressor as resources for the oppressed” (225). Similarly, Patricia Roberts-Miller argues that “to prohibit anything other than ‘civil’ political discourse, as long as ‘civil’ is defined as discourse that does not upset anyone, is to prohibit social change” (*Fanatical Schemes*, 231). And Raymie Mckerrow expresses the sentiment most concisely, arguing that “In a word, civility may perpetuate servitude” (279). As I’ve written elsewhere, scholars concerned with civility point to three interrelated negative consequences that result from civility policing—silencing dissent, preserving unjust harmony, and displacing blame from oppressor to oppressed (13). I will eventually argue that all three combined to dehumanize Stokely Carmichael and paved the way for distorting his and Black Power’s longer

legacies, but first I briefly review how scholars have written of civility policing and its consequences.

In *Deliberate Conflict*, Patricia Roberts-Miller associates civility with conflict avoidance and the preservation of community harmony. She argues that “prizing civility” requires that those “who become confrontational” be “shunned and condemned” (154). For Roberts Miller, “Evading conflict contributes to social harmony...but it cannot accommodate people who are deeply unhappy with the system itself” (154). “To the extent that one can say there is a community,” she writes, “it is a community committed to injustice. (154). Raymie McKerrow dramatizes the point with a confessional anecdote from his youth. McKerrow writes, “As a Montana farm boy I got along with the native Americans living in railroad cars up on hill 57 just outside of Great Falls” (280). “They kept, for the most part, to their world,” he writes, “and I kept to mine: when we did cross it was with a civil silence that protected each from the other” (280). McKerrow reflects, “I am not now proud of the civil indifference my actions projected in those days. But what I hope to have taken from that experience is the recognition that merely getting along is woefully inadequate as a response to social issues” (280).

Bejan names the process of silencing dissent present in such contexts: “Designating certain behaviours or beliefs [or speech, I’ll add] as ‘uncivil,’” Bejan argues, “effectively banishes them beyond the pale of conversational community” (9). What exactly is uncivil speech? Bejan tells us that those defending civility rarely define the term (10). Similarly, Roberts-Miller argues that civility is “a powerful, but very vague, concept” (*Fanatical Schemes* 4). She argues, though, that it is usually “defined through negation: it is not emotional or abusive; it does not involve personal attack; it is not offensive” (*Fanatical Schemes* 4). Bill Reader in a study of online comments, suggests that “some critics may call an opinion “uncivil” simply because it challenges their beliefs or ideologies” (506).

Roberts-Miller sees this play out in arguments over slavery, arguing that there wasn't a way for abolitionists to confront slavers that slavers wouldn't have found to be uncivil (Fanatical Schemes 231).

McKerrow similarly argues that “democratic discourse” is defined as rational, reasonable, calm, controlled, etc. (280). The implication for McKerrow is that if “actors are passive and dependent, irrational and hysterical, excitable, passionate, unrealistic or mad, they cannot be allowed the freedom that democracy allows” (280). “On the contrary,” he continues, “[T]hese persons [according to the line of thought] deserve to be repressed, not only for the sake of civil society, but for their own sake as well” (280). McKerrow then makes an important observation: “Absent is any recognition of who is defining what it means to be either calm or excitable, active or passive, rational or irrational. Such a sense of civil society is meaningless in that it merely serves to perpetuate the dominance of those already in power” (280). Who has power and who does not is a central concern for civility's critics. Lozano-Reich and Cloud, for example, agree with Bone et al. that invitational rhetoric (which both associate with civility) “presupposes conditions of economic, political, and social equality between and among interlocutors” (221). “However,” Lozano-Reich and Cloud argue, “Such conditions of actual equality are rare in political controversy and interpersonal relations” (221). For these authors “dominant groups,” instead, use “civilizing strategies to silence and punish marginalized groups” (223).

Collectively the new scholarship on civility argues that the term “civility” (or terms of dismissal used under its guise—emotional, irrational, etc.) are often weaponized by those in power for the purposes of (or at least to the end of) silencing or dismissing those whose arguments threaten the operation of discriminating systems. They also demonstrate that the process of silencing by civility policing entails, of necessity, shifting blame from oppressor to oppressed. That is, when those defending discriminating systems level

accusations of incivility at those challenging those same systems, they frame protestors and not the injustices being protested as the “real” problem. Lozano-Reich and Cloud, using Gitlin, argue that “When measured by standards of civility, protesters are framed as wild and riotous by dominant media, rendering their struggles illegitimate (Gitlin, 2003)” (224).

Nancy Welch offers an illustrative example of such a displacement of blame when relating the ways the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) turned the tables on environmental activists who protested the placement of a reactor on tribal lands. She writes that when “working and middle class” activists challenged a “corporation’s [Entergy’s] considerable political power and economic resources, NRC officials deployed the accusation of incivility and the specter of mob violence as a regulatory force to discredit meeting attendees and to discourage future audiences from pushing for a democratic agenda” (110). According to Welch, “Through its calls for calm, the NRC effectively shifted the topic and focus from Entergy’s record to the audience’s conduct and from public rights to social manners” (110).

Similarly, Roberts-Miller observes that in the 19th Century some went so far as to blame the Civil War on the incivility of abolitionists (*Deliberative Conflict* 231). Historian Aram Goudsouzian offers another example with particular relevance to the emergence of “Black Power,” writing that the Greenwood Commonwealth ran a story during the Meredith March that compared Dr. King to Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. It reads, “This man [Dr. King!] has created more violence and left more hatred in his path than any other civil rights leader in the country’s history” (qtd in Goudsouzian 140). This last example argues the thought expressed in the popular refrain of segregationists, that “outside agitators” were to blame for disrupting their otherwise peaceful communities, with no acknowledgment of the price paid for such a peace.

Finally, scholars concerned with civility also argue that the concept can be a shield as well as a sword. We have seen that those in power sometimes pervert the concept to dismiss and to punish, but the new scholarship also reminds that an aesthetic of civility can be used to mask the uncivil acts of oppressive institutions. Roberts-Miller in a recent study of demagoguery demonstrates, for example, that arguments for interning Japanese-American citizens during World War II were made with an air of objectivity and an absence of emotionalism, but that those features made them no less demagogic (or, I argue, uncivil) (*Rhetoric and Demagoguery* 78).

William Chafe invented the phrase—“the progressive mystique”—to name the pretense of civility put on by state officials in Greensboro, North Carolina, who stated progressive intentions while dragging their feet on school integration in the wake of *Brown v. Board* (6). This allowed the city to maintain its reputation as “a beacon of Southern progressivism” even while it was among the last states to integrate public schools (5, 6). Chafe writes, “Civility is the cornerstone of the progressive mystique, signifying courtesy, concern about an associate’s family children, and health, a personal grace that smooths contact with strangers and obscures conflict with foes” (8). “Civility,” according to Chafe, “was what white progressivism was all about—a way of dealing with people and problems that made good manners more important than substantial action” (8).

And the dissertation bears out Chafe’s observation as the seeming friends of civil rights are nearly as vicious in their dismissals of Carmichael as are its enemies. Collectively, this scholarship tells us that those in power use civility to obscure their own intentions, and they sometimes police civility to three destructive ends: preserving unjust harmony, displacing blame, and, most important for the current study—silencing dissent.

CARMICHAEL’S WORDS

Before engaging critical responses in coming chapters, readers will benefit from reviewing Stokely Carmichael’s words. Because rendering any of Carmichael’s major speeches or writings in full is impractical in the dissertation, below I stitch together Carmichael’s arguments from a variety of texts produced during the year following the release of “Black Power.” Because of the potential of such a move to replicate the violence that Carmichael’s critics (especially in the news media) inflicted upon him, I quote Carmichael with minimal editorializing. While this section is intended to give readers an idea of Carmichael’s thoughts during the period in question, it makes no attempt at replacing the experience of hearing or reading Carmichael in full and in-context. For any audiences who have neither read nor heard Carmichael, the collection *Stokely Speaks* includes several of his major speeches and writings. For quicker access, you can find a full speech at voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu or at Americanradioworks.publicradio.org.

Because the dissertation considers critical responses to Carmichael at various points in the year following the release of “Black Power,” it is appropriate to provide his thoughts from multiple speeches, essays, and his co-authored book on a range of topics relevant to what follows in the dissertation. I’ve included Carmichael’s words on “institutions,” “integration,” “violence,” and “the War in Vietnam.”

On Institutions

In “Toward Black Liberation” published by the *Massachusetts Review* in late fall of 1966, Carmichael expressed for the first time in published writing the existence of “institutional racism,” (which he calls “institutionalized racism” at this point). Carmichael writes, “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” (“Toward Black Liberation” 643). Important for Carmichael’s critique is that “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” (“Toward Black Liberation” 643).

A week before the publication of that essay, Carmichael was on a speaking tour in the Bay area, and he stopped in San Jose and spoke from the unpublished manuscript of “Toward Black Liberation” (Speech at San Jose). Before moving to the text, he concedes, “We do not know 186 million white people, so we couldn’t say they’re all racist” (Speech at San Jose). “We could,” he argues, “say that the institutions of this country do perpetuate racism” (Speech at San Jose). In *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, Carmichael and Hamilton connect “institutional racism” to white supremacy: “Institutional racism relies on the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices. A sense of superior group position prevails: whites are “better” than blacks” (5). For Carmichael (again in “Toward Black Liberation”) the “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 frequently not even recognized” (“Toward Black Liberation” 643).

In *Black Power*, Carmichael and Hamilton give their now famous distinction between “individual” and “institutional” racism,

When white terrorists bomb a Negro Church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city—Birmingham, Alabama—five hundred black babies die

each year because of a lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism (4).

On Integration

In an essay titled “What We Want” published in the *New York Review of Books* in September of 1966 Stokely Carmichael wrote,

For too many years, black Americans marched and had their heads broken and got shot. They were saying to the country, “Look, you guys are supposed to be nice guys and we are only going to do what we are supposed to do—why do you beat us up, why don’t you give us what we ask, why don’t you straighten yourselves out?” (“What We Want” 52).

“After years of this,” Carmichael argues, “we are at almost the same point—because we demonstrated from a position of weakness” (“What We Want” 52). He concludes, “We cannot be expected any longer to march and have our heads broken in order to say to whites: come on, you’re nice guys. For you are not nice guys. We have found you out” (“What We Want” 52).

In his most famous speech given at Berkeley in October of 1966, Carmichael deepened SNCC’s connection of integration (as practiced) with white supremacy: “Now, several people have been upset because we’ve said that integration was irrelevant when initiated by blacks, and that in fact it was a subterfuge, an insidious subterfuge, for the maintenance of white supremacy (“Black Power Address”). “Now we maintain,” Carmichael affirms, “that in the past six years or so, this country has been feeding us a ‘thalidomide drug of integration,’ and that some negroes have been walking down a dream street talking about sitting next to white people; and that that does not begin to solve the problem” (“Black Power Address”).

Roughly six weeks later, during a debate with Bayard Rustin in New York, Carmichael elaborates on SNCC's attitude toward integration: "I want to make it crystal clear that when we say integration is irrelevant, that isn't to say that one is opposed to it. To do that is to commit the fallacy of the undistributed middle" ("Life and Career" 38:07). Carmichael writes in a letter to Lorna Smith, "We are working in this country for true integration. This means white people move into black neighborhoods and white children go to black schools and black children go to white schools and black people move into white neighborhoods" (Letter to Lorna Smith, June 15, 1966).

Again, at the Rustin debate in New York, Carmichael provides an example as proof of the irrelevancy of integration as currently practiced: "Integration is irrelevant. I assume that we are integrated here. That's well and good. When I go out to catch a white cab driver, he's still going to pass me by. I don't know how that has helped" ("Life and Career" 38:23). Carmichael continues, "We're talking about racist institutions that exist in this country, not individuals" ("Life and Career" 38:23). "This doesn't mean," Carmichael offered in "What We Want," "that we don't welcome help from friends. But we want the right to decide whether anyone is, in fact, our friend" ("What We Want" 56).

On Violence

Carmichael most often spoke of violence in terms of self-defense in 1966 and 1967. At a speech in Seattle in April of 1967, he said, "Now we want to talk about violence. Because I understand now that some of your so-called Negro leaders have been saying that we violent" ("Speech Given"). "I won't deny it," Carmichael responds, "Yeah, I'm violent. Somebody touch me, I'll break their arm" ("Speech Given"). When speaking at Tougaloo College, Carmichael affirmed,

Don't you see the real problem with violence is that we have never been violent....The problem isn't that we are violent. The problem is that every time they come into our neighborhood, beat our arse and go back , we sit there and talk about it in a whisper. And today we're telling them clear in their mind, if you touch us with your hand we're going to break your arm. (“We Ain’t Goin”)

Again in the Seattle speech, “[T]he problem isn't one of violence, see. The problem is one of hitting back white people when they hit you (“Speech Given”). Carmichael concludes, “They've been able to walk over us, bomb our churches, beat us up, shoot into our houses, lynch us, and do everything they wanted to do and we would just sit there and whisper about it behind closed doors. It's a new day today!” (“Speech Given”). Carmichael echoed his observation of the hypocritical concern with black retaliatory violence (while ignoring white offensive violence): “[N]obody in this society ever sought to stop them when they burned our church down but when we retaliate everybody is upset. Don't you worry about it because we're not going to take it anymore. (“We Ain’t Goin”).

In “What We Want” Carmichael addresses the possibility of black offensive violence: “SNCC reaffirms the right of black men everywhere to defend themselves when threatened or attacked. As for initiating the use of violence, we hope that such programs as ours will make that unnecessary” (“Power and Racism” 53). “[B]ut,” Carmichael argues, “it is not for us to tell black communities whether they can or cannot use any particular form of action to resolve their problems” (“Power and Racism” 53). Carmichael concludes, “Responsibility for the use of violence by black men, whether in self defense or initiated by them, lies with the white community” (“Power and Racism” 53).

Finally, the connection between violence at home and violence in Vietnam (the subject of the next section) is clear for Carmichael:

Now then finally we want to talk about this thing called "violence" that everybody is so afraid about. There you're going to sit in front of your television set and listen to LBJ tell you that, "Violence never accomplishes anything my fellow Americans." And you're going to sit there agreeing with him that violence never accomplishes anything while he's bombing the hell out of North Vietnam" ("We Ain't Goin").

And again in Seattle, "So that, you just dismiss that nonsense about violence. When they tell you about violence, you tell them 'yeah we dig your nonviolence in Vietnam. We dug your nonviolence in Hiroshima and Nagasaki'. You tell 'em we dug that, yeah....We ain't gonna forget the Congo baby, we dig it there too....They dug... they tried violence in Cuba, but Castro took care of them" ("Speech Given").

On War in Vietnam

At Berkeley, Carmichael rejects U.S. state violence in Vietnam: "I maintain, as we have in SNCC, that the war in Vietnam is an illegal and immoral war" ("Black Power Address"). "And the question is," Carmichael asks, "What can we do to stop that war? What can we do to stop the people who, in the name of our country, are killing babies, women, and children?" ("Black Power Address"). Carmichael answers his own question: "I maintain that we do not have the power in our hands to change that institution, to begin to recreate it, so that they learn to leave the Vietnamese people alone, and that the only power we have is the power to say, "Hell no!" to the draft" ("Black Power Address").

In a speech at Cobo Hall in Detroit in July of 1966, Carmichael rejected arguments that framed military service for black folks in terms of economic opportunity, arguing, "Do you mean to tell me for me to have a decent life I've got to become a hired killer and fight it out in Vietnam? Baby, it's time we stayed here and fight it out here" ("Stokely Carmichael Explains" 89). And Carmichael was one of the earliest high-profile black

leaders to reject not only the war in Vietnam, but also conscription, and he did so on moral grounds in the Berkeley speech:

We have to say to ourselves that there is a higher law than the law of a racist named McNamara. There is a higher law than the law of a fool named Rusk. And there's a higher law than the law of a buffoon named Johnson....It is the law of each of us saying that we will not allow them to make us hired killers.... [T]his country will only be able to stop the war in Vietnam when the young men who are made to fight it begin to say, "Hell, no, we ain't going." ("Black Power Address")

When Carmichael spoke to hundreds of thousands outside the United Nations at the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam he connected black oppression at home with the suffering of people of color abroad:

We maintain that America's cry of "preserve freedom in the world" is a hypocritical mask behind which it squashes liberation movements which are not bound, and refuse to be bound, by the United States' cold war policies. We see no reason for black men, who are daily murdered physically and mentally in this country, to go and kill yellow people abroad, who have done nothing to us and are, in fact, victims of the same oppression. We will not support LBJ's racist war in Vietnam" (qtd. In Joseph, Stokely 188).

IMPORTANT TERMS

Black Power & "Black Power"

I use quotation marks to distinguish the call for "Black Power" from the political and cultural movement known as Black Power. The first is a slogan that Willie Ricks and Stokely Carmichael released along the Meredith March in the summer of 1966 and which proliferated to nearly every corner of the U.S. and, eventually, across the globe (Joseph, *Dark Days* 12). The latter, names the movement that, according to Peniel Joseph, "privileged a view of black empowerment that was local, national, and international in scope, held political self-determination as sacrosanct, and called for a redefined black identity that connected black Americans to a national and global political project based on

racial solidarity and a shared history of racial oppression (“The Black Power Movement” 753).

Black Power precedes the 1960s and spans into the present. It’s cultural, political, and rhetorical roots are as deep as Martin Delaney, David Walker, W.E.B Dubois, Ida B. Wells, Marcus Garvey and the New Negro Movement, Paul Robeson, Robert F. Williams, black Muslim organizing (generally), and, of course, Malcolm X. (see, especially, Joseph, *Waiting ‘till The Midnight Hour*). Black radicals such as Carmichael, Huey Newton, and Angela Davis were its most visible spokespersons during the 60s and 70s, but the phenomenon marks the foundations of political projects that elected black mayors in the 70s and 80s, and it foreshadows the militancy and institutional critique of Black Lives Matter (BLM).

When writing generally or when concerned with the larger phenomenon that traces from Garvey to BLM, I simply write the words Black Power. When writing specifically of Black Power rhetoric and organizing within the period that spans very roughly from Carmichael’s call for power through the 1970s, I write of The Black Power Movement or Era. The Black Power Movement was marked by the revolutionary rhetoric and militant aesthetic most popularly associated with The Black Panther Party (BPP), but it also framed the organization of lesser known groups such as US, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and the Republic of New Africa (RNA), and it most often manifested in local grassroots organizing aimed at the immediate needs of black communities. While membership in these organizations was never large, “Black Power,” according to Joseph, “beginning with its revision of black identity, transformed America’s racial, social, and political landscape” (*Waiting* xviii).

When the current project uses the term Black Power relative to Stokely Carmichael’s political philosophy just after the release of “Black Power,” it carries a more

narrow meaning. Carmichael's call for "Black Power"—specifically, in the summer of 1966—certainly adopts black nationalist themes of black pride, strength, and beauty, but, at its core, it is a call for black self-determinative political and economic strategies. Carmichael argued in the *New York Review of Books* essay "What We Want" that "black power will mean that if a Negro is elected sheriff, he can end police brutality" ("Power and Racism" 54). Carmichael's Black Power means that "If a black man is elected tax assessor, he can collect and channel funds for the building of better roads and schools serving black people—thus advancing the move from political power into the economic arena" ("Power and Racism" 54).

Prior to the call for power, Carmichael with the help of local organizer John Hulett established an all-black political party in Lowndes County, Alabama called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO). Carmichael writes, "In such areas as Lowndes, where black men have a majority, they will attempt to use it to exercise control. This is what they seek: control" ("Power and Racism" 54). "Where Negroes lack a majority," according to Carmichael, "black power means proper representation and sharing of control. It means the creation of power bases from which black people can work to change statewide or nationwide patterns of oppression through pressure from strength—instead of weakness" ("Power and Racism" 54). "Politically," Carmichael argues, "black power means what it has always meant to SNCC: the coming together of black people to elect representatives and to force those representatives to speak to their needs" ("What We Want" 54).

Terms of Dismissal

Because Carmichael's critics used words that signal the violation of norms interchangeably, I don't distinguish between words such as "uncivil" or "indecorous." As

will be demonstrated, even terms such as “extremist,” “angry,” or “radical” in the mouths of Carmichael’s critics indicate mostly that Carmichael is speaking words with which they disagree. I argue that similar terms were used to dismiss and silence Carmichael. The charge that Carmichael is a “demagogue” does have a particular meaning and historical context, and it gets special attention in Chapter 3. However, even this term is to be understood as a weapon that critics clumsily wield to police civility.

I argue that Carmichael’s critics distracted from his institutional critique by focusing on his supposed failure to meet variable ethical, rhetorical, or moral standards, and a taxonomy of terms adds little in accomplishing that task. Carmichael’s critics declare that his words are unworthy of consideration because they are too angry, racist, mal-intended, etc., and the point (as will be demonstrated) is not that they were wrong (they were), but, instead, that they did not contend with the policy implications of his arguments.

I do, however, distinguish the term “civility” from “civility policing” in the dissertation with the intent of not abandoning the goals of civility. The paradox of civility is that civility is, of course, needed, even as any attempt to enforce a particular standard of civility will exclude some groups or individuals—usually those already marginalized. The dissertation sees “civility” as a worthy goal so far as “civility” is defined appropriately. “Civility policing” is understood as a weapon used by those in power to silence those with whom they disagree.

Radical

I use the term “radical” in two ways. First, find it listed with terms of dismissal above. Those in power leverage the term “radical” to civility police—to label and dismiss rhetoric and rhetors with whom they disagree. However, I also use the term “radical,” to indicate black activists whose voices carry an institutional critique. Such a move is in

alignment with Cedric Robinson and Manning Marable’s naming of the “Black Radical Tradition,” (see Marable, “Marxism, Memory, and the Black Radical Tradition” and Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*).

CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

Chapter 1, “‘Black Power’ and Policing the Uncivil” examines how, in the wake of the call for “Black Power,” Carmichael’s critics amplified a distorted version of his message. I apply the understanding of civility policing gained in this introduction to analyze critical responses, especially those in news media, to Carmichael’s call for “Black Power,” and I find that through repeated amplification and distortion Carmichael’s critics created a nefarious image of him. I find that this image has too easily allowed the creation and perpetuation of simplistic historical narratives, and I focus most particularly on narratives that frame Stokely Carmichael as a racial separatist and oppose him to Martin Luther King, Jr. I counter this narrative in two ways. First, I demonstrate that in 1966 and 1967, critics were as likely to parallel the two activists as they were to oppose them. Second, I present, in addition to other historical sources, a set of letters that Carmichael wrote to his elderly white friend Lorna Smith. In addition to countering the charge of separatism, the Lorna Smith Letters provide a window into Stokely Carmichael’s humanity that belies one-dimensional depictions sometimes found in our histories.

Chapter 2, “Demagoguery, Reverse-Racism, and *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*” also investigates the words of Carmichael’s critics. This time I focus on critics who accuse him of “demagoguery,” and I analyze Carmichael’s responses to those critics. I use historical sources and mid-century scholarship on “demagoguery” to argue that critics making the charge in 1966 and 1967 meant that Carmichael was appealing to emotions, lying, and exploiting racial divisions. I show that this definition allowed

Carmichael's critics to compare him to Southern demagogues (such as Theodore Bilbo or George Wallace) and the KKK. Questioning the utility of a definition that finds little distinction between racism and anti-racist activism, and I turn to more recent scholarship on demagoguery with a focus on Patricia-Roberts-Miller's definition. Application of the new definition—which centers outgrouping and scapegoating—reveals that those making the charge of demagoguery often use demagoguery to do so. I conclude the chapter by arguing that the charge of demagoguery was particularly attractive within a color-blind context that allowed critics to frame all references to race as equally racist. Carmichael challenges that context by returning the charge of racism upon the colorblind strategy of choice—integration. I demonstrate that Carmichael frames integration (as practiced) as an assimilationist perpetuation of white supremacy.

While the previous chapters center Carmichael's critics, Chapter 3, "Rambling Man: Stokely Carmichael Dissociates Power and Racism at Berkeley" builds upon Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's "dissociation of concepts" and Janice Fernheimer's "dissociative disruption" to better understand the adaptive rhetorical strategies Carmichael used in his most famous speech given at Berkeley. I offer the term "subversive dissociation" (a type of "dissociative disruption") as a charge to locate the dissociative foundations of dominant racial narratives. Once dissociations that privilege white experience as "real" and black experience as only "apparent" gain broad acceptance they can be understood as the "linguistic common property" from which dominant racial narratives derive. I identify the racist dissociation of labor that Carmichael countered at Berkeley as "linguistic common property." Doing so unlocks Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's tools of counter for observing how Carmichael's fan-type dissociation of "power" and "racism" works to destabilize dominant racial narratives around merit and reward.

To conclude the dissertation, I analyze the words of those who challenge current anti-racist rhetoric. I look at essays from conservative venues, and I apply Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's four "frames" of color-blind racism. I consider, however, neither overtly white supremacist rhetoric, alt-right rhetoric, or the sometimes blatantly racist words of President Trump and his most ardent supporters. Instead, I look at publications such as the *National Review*, *City Journal*, and *The Wall Street Journal* to find that even within more reputable conservative journals, writers use charges of racism and un-Americanism to avoid seriously engaging institutional racism, its impact upon black communities, and productive policy interventions. Stokely Carmichael's critics met his institutional critique with civility policing marked by charges of demagoguery, violence, and reverse racism, and I find those who challenge institutional critique in the present make similar moves, though they don't always use the same terms. They engage in civility policing, promote pure agency, and reverse the charge of racism. Collectively, these moves mask critics' allegiance to a system that provides them both material and psychological benefits, and they prevent good faith deliberation concerning anti-racist policy.

Chapter 1: “Black Power” and Policing the Uncivil

This is 1966 and it seems to me that it's "time out" for nice words.

—Stokely Carmichael

Though the phrase “Black Power” had been used in other contexts, its broad circulation as a term of racial solidarity and institutional critique began in the heart of the Mississippi Delta along the last great march of the Civil Rights Movement.⁵ In the summer of 1966 James Meredith—the first black graduate of Ole Miss’ and a civil rights activist as brazen as he was eccentric—determined to walk more than 200 miles from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi to demonstrate to southern black people that they no longer needed to fear anti-black racists (Goudsouzian, *Three Weeks* 23; Goudsouzian, *Down the Crossroads* 15; Carmichael and Thelwell, 495). Meredith made only a few miles, however, before James Aubrey Norville gunned him down from a sniper position, hospitalizing Meredith for more than a week (Goudsouzian, “Three Weeks” 23, Goudsouzian, *Down the Crossroads* 15; Carmichael and Thelwell, 495). While Meredith was receiving medical treatment, major civil rights organizations, including the SCLC and SNCC resolved to continue the March to Jackson.⁶

⁵ Gilyard and Banks 39; Joseph, *Stokely* 115; and Joseph, *Waiting ‘Till the Midnight Hour*, 147, for example, tell us that Adam Clayton Powell and Richard Wright had used the phrase “Black Power” prior to June 16, 1966.

⁶ See Goudsouzian’s, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* for the definitive account of the Meredith March.

Mississippi locals, activists from outside the state, as well as known political players, joined the march, which avoided major conflict until it approached Greenwood, Mississippi (Joseph, *Stokely* 114, Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads* 141). Stone Street Negro school administrators had originally given march organizers permission to set up tents, but city officials had subsequently denied marchers access to school grounds (Joseph, *Stokely* 114, Goudsouzian, *Down the Crossroads* 133). When police officers arrived to enforce the turnabout, Stokely Carmichael responded in typically defiant fashion (Joseph, *Stokely* 114). “That ain’t no problem....We’ll put them up anyway,” he said, before reaching for a tent (Joseph, *Stokely* 114; Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads* 141). This was to be Carmichael’s twenty-seventh time being jailed for civil rights activism. It would not be his last.

Upon release that same evening, Carmichael was ushered to a microphone in front of a crowd that had been primed by Willie Ricks to respond enthusiastically to SNCC’s new slogan (Carmichael, *Ready* 507; Joseph, *Stokely* 115; Garrow 481; Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge* 486). SNCC had been workshoping the slogan in preceding months, and Ricks had been testing it on unsuspecting sharecroppers along the march (Carmichael, *Ready* 507; Joseph, *Stokely* 115; Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads* 142). On June 16, 1966, in front of 600 supporters, Ricks told Carmichael, “Drop it now. They’re ready” (Joseph, *Stokely* 115). Carmichael spoke only briefly before leading his audience in multiple rounds of call and response. “We want Black Power,” Carmichael urged. “Black Power!” thundered back his audience each time (Carmichael, *Ready* 507; Joseph, *Stokely* 115; Garrow 481; Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge* 486).

The rest is history, but it has not always been factually reported history. In the days following Carmichael's speech, the slogan proliferated rapidly among march participants, and inter-group disputes broke out over whether the call for "Black Power" would displace "Freedom Now" as the Movement's most popular slogan (Gilyard and Banks 40; Joseph, Stokely 115; Branch 487). But the call for "Black Power" remained of little interest to national media for several days. The day after the speech in Greenwood, Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times* recorded little more than the fact that Carmichael and two others were jailed and that the phrase had been used (1). Peniel Joseph writes that two days later, Dr. King, while not a fan of the particular phrase, still defended much of what SNCC's new slogan stood for in a speech given to a crowd of 1,000 again at Broadstreet Park in Greenwood. "Do you know what power is?" King asked his audience. "Power is the ability to make the power structure say yes when it wants to say no" (*Stokely* 116). That last statement closely accords with Carmichael's articulations of Black Power, even as King's pathway toward achieving similar aims differed somewhat from Carmichael's. During this early period, King and Carmichael both believed that accumulating power would take votes, but Carmichael's work with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO, the *first* Black Panther Party) signaled a belief in independent black institutions, where Dr. King maintained hope in interracial organizations and alliances.

"Black Power" would be a household phrase before the month was out, and it appeared from national media that few had anything good to say about it. More than a week after his initial report, Jack Nelson again wrote on "Black Power," but this time he records Carmichael as "the angry young leader of the Student Non-violent Coordinating

Committee” (B1). He refers to “the racism of SNCC,” and he associates “Black Power” with violence (B1). Nelson’s editorial board would be even less merciful, arguing that “Black Power” signaled “extremism,” “negro supremacy,” and a “doctrine of vengeance.” (A4). *Time Magazine* would refer to “Black Power” as the “New Racism” (11), and after Carmichael began touring the country to promote and defend “Black Power” and the self-determinative strategies it signaled, the *Oakland Tribune* would report that we now have “the advocates of white supremacy on the one hand and black power advocates on the other” (260). Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson of the *The San Jose Mercury* called Carmichael a “young West Indian rabble-rouser” and blamed him for a “white backlash against negroes,” and Shenton James, again of the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Carmichael spoke “the language of delusion” (2).

One throughline between the charges made against “Black Power” and Carmichael during this period is that critics consistently dismiss as uncivil the young SNCC leader and the phrase signaling a philosophy of black self-determination. According to his critics, Carmichael and his cry for power fail, in various ways, to accord with the norms of acceptable public deliberation. Critics decry Carmichael as emotional, racist, angry, hateful, exclusive, irrational, and indecipherable, and these charges constitute more than name-calling. I argue that they distort Carmichael’s legacy, that of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and even current black anti-racist response.

In this chapter I apply recent scholarship on “civility” outlined in the introduction, which reminds that when those in power police norms of acceptable public discourse they (sometimes intentionally) silence dissent, preserve unjust communities, and displace blame

from oppressor to oppressed (see especially Roberts-Miller, *Fanatical Schemes*; Lazano-Reich and Cloud; and Mckerrow). I argue that after calling for “Black Power” and deploying across the country to defend the new slogan in 1966 and 1967, Carmichael was effectively silenced. Though by 1967 he was among the most visible black activists in the U.S., very little of his critique of American institutions managed to breach the filters of the national news media. Because of that reality, Carmichael had a national profile, but he also seemed to many to have no productive message. Carmichael’s critics traded civility policing for honest reporting, and many blamed him for urban unrest, the failure of the Open Housing Bill, waning support for civil rights, and for what was being termed a “white backlash.” The resulting demonic image (in combination with complex social and historical factors) ensured that Carmichael was badly written into mid-century racial-historical narratives.

Because those in power concerned themselves with the decorousness of Carmichael’s rhetoric and not his anti-racist message, the reality of a passionate and self-sacrificing anti-racist activist (who was of course also very flawed) was traded for depictions of Carmichael as an angry and opportunistic purveyor of racial hatred. Carmichael was written into narratives of the Civil Rights Movement as a racial separatist, as Dr. King’s foil, as a rabid anti-Semite, and as emblematic of the sexism against which second wave feminism emerged.⁷ Because civility policing in national media obscured

⁷ Feminist activist and former SNCC member Chude Pam Allen writes (at crmvet.org/disc/women2.htm) that the following texts inaccurately portray Carmichael’s relationship to the development of Second Wave Feminism: Sarah Evans *Personal Politics: The*

both Carmichael’s message and his humanity and thereby aided such historical revision, I use scholarly conceptions of “civility” and historical sources—including newspaper accounts and a set of letters Stokely Carmichael wrote to Lorna Smith—to reveal Carmichael’s humanity and frame these narratives as simplistic, ahistorical, or both. By tracing and countering the dehumanizing of Stokely Carmichael, this chapter also provides a clearer understanding of the dangers inherent in civility policing activist voices.

ERASING HUMANITY AND DISPLACING BLAME USING AMPLIFICATION AND DISTORTION

One might with difficulty imagine Stokely Carmichael being silenced in the name of civility in 1967. He was, after all, among the most visible black activists in the United States at the time, his star for a brief moment rivaling even Dr. King’s. But American media seemed to be trading quality for quantity, dedicating an incredible amount of ink and tape to Carmichael, but often distorting his message to the point of noncomprehension. Brian Lamb, founder of C-SPAN, credits selective and distortional television coverage of Stokely Carmichael as influencing his decision to create a news outlet “where everyone gets to see everything from start to finish” (Meyer 46). In a 1992 interview given to Thomas J. Meyer of the *New York Times*, Lamb stated that in the 1960s he went to see Stokely Carmichael speak at a black Baptist church (Meyer 46). Lamb remembered, “Well, 30-minute speech, probably, and maybe 2 minutes was incendiary....The rest of it was thoughtful and

Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left. 1979. Vintage Books. (especially 83-101) and Robin Morgan’s 1970 anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful*.

intelligent and very well stated” (Meyer 46). Lamb told Meyer that when he saw coverage of the speech on David Brinkley that evening, “What made it on...was the fire and brimstone” (Meyer 46). This and other experiences like it led Lamb to conclude that “[W]e were being unfairly treated as a society by television news” (Meyer 46).

Those who actually heard Carmichael speak in the wake of the call for “Black Power” were often surprised to hear a reasoned argument delivered in an academic tone. Important for the current study, however, is not that Carmichael’s arguments were well reasoned, but that those who actually heard them found the fact surprising. I argue that the substantial distance between the reality of Carmichael’s messages and public perceptions of them can be traced to media coverage of the time. In 1966 and 1967, major news outlets from across the country ran stories with salacious titles and (often unflattering) images of Stokely Carmichael. These reports included very little honest content, and many seemed determined to omit any useful summary of his speeches. The claim that coverage of Carmichael was distortional is not new, of course, and, at present neither is it particularly controversial. In fact, Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede made the claim as early as 1969. In *The Rhetoric of Black Power* they argue that white audiences formed negative opinions of Carmichael because they “received a distorted version of the message and the image....Selective reporting is heavily accountable (Brockriede and Scott 122). “Seldom,” they argue, “did the mass media report anything designed to develop a constructive interpretation of Black Power” (Brockriede and Scott 123).

As evidence for such claims Scott and Brockriede point to a report in the *Detroit Free Press* of a speech Carmichael gave at Detroit’s Cobo Hall in July of 1966. These two

scholars in Rhetoric argue that “it contained little more than a count of the audience at the Cobo Auditorium and at various rallies, emphasizing with unmistakable satisfaction that Carmichael was not drawing well in the Negro community” (123). Scott and Brockreide continue, “A dozen column inches include no reference to any of the ideas he articulated so challengingly” (123). I found that the *Detroit Free Press* similarly covered the same speech, titling their piece “Carmichael Urges: Join Muslims,” though Carmichael never urged his listeners to become members of the Nation of Islam (NOI).⁸ In the speech at Cobo Hall, Carmichael provided an expansive counter to criticisms of the call for “Black Power.” He addressed racial integration, urban unrest, and U.S. involvement in Vietnam, among other issues, but instead of giving any of these due consideration, journalist Wayne King attempted to smear Carmichael by associating him with the Nation of Islam’s leader, Elijah Muhammed; by painting the event as a failure for not filling more seats; and by quoting Carmichael’s unapologetic attitude toward riots—or “rebellions” as Carmichael would often correct (8A).⁹

On another occasion Carmichael spoke to a crowd of more than 6,000 in Will Rogers Park in the Watts neighborhood of L.A. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story titled “Defiant Carmichael Declares Goals of Negro Generation: ‘Blacks Will Deal with Whites Whether the Like it Or Not’” (Rogers 1). And after Carmichael’s famous speech at UC

⁸ As recorded by Joseph, he was, however, for a brief period in 1966 interested in a working alliance between SNCC and the NOI (*Dark Days, Bright Nights* 126).

⁹ A transcription of much of the speech is found in Scott and Brockriede. *The Rhetoric of Black Power*. Harper and Row. 1969. pp. 85-95

Berkeley, the *Oakland Tribune* ran a headline in large print—“To Hell With The Draft”—over a picture of Carmichael, head cocked back, laughing (Montgomery 5C). Covering that same speech, the *Detroit Free Press* printed a story titled “Carmichael says U.S. is Racist,” and they included an image of Carmichael looking sinister. *The New York Times* coverage of the Berkeley speech published their report under the title “Carmichael Asks Draft’s Defiance” with the subtitle “Ridicules Johnson and Rusk at Rally in Berkeley” (Davies 62).

This latter piece, like many reports of Carmichael’s speeches, flattened Carmichael’s analysis, which connected institutional racism and American foreign policy for the purposes of justifying black self-determinative philosophies and strategies. Carmichael’s speech, which I take up in earnest in the dissertation’s final chapter offers an expansive critique of American institutions, including his thoughts law enforcement, national political parties, housing, and education. At Berkeley, Carmichael, a Howard graduate with a degree in philosophy, uses Camus, Sartre, and Fanon to return blame to the dominant group, but Davies—with the type of selective coverage noted by Brian Lamb and Brockriede and Scott, begins his report, “Stokely Carmichael assailed the Johnson Administration today and called upon the nation’s youth to say ‘Hell, no’ to the draft” (62). Davies quotes Carmichael’s quick dismissals of Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, and Lyndon Johnson as well as his negative assessments of California’s gubernatorial candidates Edmund (Pat) G. Brown and Ronald Reagan (62). At the same time, Davies manages to omit any reference to a single portion of Carmichael’s institutional critique, which comprised the bulk of his nearly hour-long speech (62). By focusing reporting on

Carmichael's perceived violations of decorum, on his most salacious statements—that he called Lyndon Johnson a “buffoon” or that he dared speak against the draft—instead of his institutional critique, journalists traded careful analysis for civility policing (Davies 62).

I argue that this coverage of Carmichael makes two mutually influencing moves and that both depend on conditions of civility policing. First, news media at the time amplifies Carmichael and the call for “Black Power.” While seemingly obvious, it is worth noting both the breadth and intensity of the coverage of Carmichael, as it is in degree (as well as fact) that amplification shaped perceptions of Stokely Carmichael and the call for “Black Power.” Just as an indicator, *The New York Times* lists 217 distinct entries with reference to Stokely Carmichael just within the first year that “Black Power” began to circulate in national media. The *Times* lists at least 116 entries with reference to the phrase “Black Power” within the same timeframe.¹⁰ Carmichael was featured in *Time Magazine* and *Ebony Magazine*. He was on *Meet the Press* and featured prominently in other television and radio programming. Yet, while reports on Carmichael proliferated in national news media in 1966 and 1967 smaller papers followed suit, and one could find seemingly endless reports, opinions, and editorials in papers such as the *The Record* out of Hackensack, New Jersey; *The Danville Register* in Danville, Virginia; *The Daily Standard* out of Sikeston, Missouri; *The Bucyrus Telegraph-Forum* out of Bucyrus, Ohio, *The Monitor* out of McAllen, Texas, and in hundreds of similar papers across the country. Everyone, it seemed, had something to say about Stokely Carmichael.

¹⁰ These numbers were attained by searching *The New York Times*' TimesMachine using the search terms “stokely carmichael” and “black power’.”

The conditions of possibility, though, for such intense media exposure are the same conditions ensuring that what was being exposed was distortional, and so it is unsurprising that many journalists, while intensely interested, traded honest content and meaningful analysis for attention grabbing headlines and shallow reporting. To the point, Mary Blue and Vanessa Murphree in a study of television coverage of Carmichael during the Black Power Era, write that among the reasons for airing Carmichael's most dramatic statements is a desire "to include what was new and different, in other words, the 'news value' of the event or speech" (218). I disagree with their calling such reasoning "valid," but they point to the reality that reporters may have excluded Carmichael's speeches entirely had they not felt the novelty of their incivility. Blue and Murphree conclude that "the effect was that viewers were left with an image of Carmichael that probably contained equal elements of truth and falsity" (218). I'm skeptical of Blue and Murphree's proportions in that last statement, but, certainly, journalists—through the process of amplification and distortion—obscure a coherent message of black self-determinative philosophies that might otherwise have been given due consideration in the marketplace of ideas. The point, however, is not that the message didn't get out; it is that a very distorted version of the message did get out, and out, and out. Disconcerting is that the original message couldn't be found while the distorted message could hardly be escaped, and the amplified and distorted message had material, social, and political consequences.

As Scott and Brockriede point out in an analysis of two of Carmichael's speeches, "Carmichael is aware, of course, of the role of the press in his Black Power campaign." (122). They quote his comments on the press in two speeches, one given at Wisconsin State

University (WSU) in February of 1967 and the other in his speech at Cobo Hall in Detroit soon after “Black Power” began to circulate. At WSU, Carmichael argued, “One of the most pointed illustrations for the need for Black Power, as a positive and redemptive force [...] is to be made by examining the history of distortion that the concept has received in the national media” (qtd. in Scott and Brockried 122). Scott and Brockriede highlight the ways that Carmichael adjusted his speech to each audience, and the distinction is clear when comparing the WSU comments on the press with those given to his predominately black audience at Cobo Hall: “Now these guys....They’re called the press. I got up one morning and read a story. They were talking about a cat named Stokely Carmichael. I say he must be a bad nigger [laughter]. For he’s raising a whole lotta sand! I had to get up and look in the mirror and make sure it was me” (qtd. in Scott and Brockried 122). Carmichael began many of his speeches by criticizing the press. In Berkeley, for example, Carmichael calls the press his “self-appointed white critics,” and he quotes George Bernard Shaw to address them directly “All criticism is a[n] autobiography. Dig yourselves” (“Black Power Address”).¹¹

Carmichael commented specifically on the combination of distortion and amplification in his autobiography, writing that “the media’s incomprehension [of “Black Power”] combining with its global reach, the concept, invested with all kinds of fearsome implications, would reach across oceans into the Caribbean, Africa, and even Europe” (524). Carmichael blames the combination of amplification and distortion (he doesn’t use

¹¹ A similar observation is made in Blue and Murphree 211.

those words) for framing “Black Power” as “menacing, sinister, and subversive of public order and stability” (*Ready for Revolution* 524). Or, in the language of this chapter, media coverage rendered the phrase as types of uncivil, as threatening the community harmony that Roberts-Miller argued civility policing aims to protect. Carmichael also saw the connection between the perceived incivility of the phrase and perceptions of himself: “[T]he two words [“Black Power”] would, in short order, have me denied entry into France and Britain, declared persona non grata, and banned in thirty territories of the former British Empire, including even the country of my birth” (524). “They [the two words] would make me the object of vilification” Carmichael argues, “and, on more than one occasion, put my life at risk” (524).

Carmichael’s reflections are not to be taken uncritically, of course.¹² On the point of vilification, though, Carmichael got both the effect and cause right. Mary Blue and Vanessa Murphy, demonstrate how those producing television content edited Carmichael’s speeches and interviews in ways that presented a deceptive and negative image. After viewing all television coverage of Carmichael available to them in 2009, they write that “Stokely Carmichael was often called an ‘extremist’, but it is likely that he seemed to be extreme [or, I argue, uncivil] because of the power of television news to edit his remarks using its agenda rather than his” (218). They found this revision to be the result of

¹² These occurred after he engaged in restricted travel to Havana, and in his final years he attributed the tragedy of his testicular cancer to CIA targeting (*Ready for Revolution* 753). Carmichael also remained unapologetic about his alignment with vicious dictators, including Sekou Ture (*Ready for Revolution* 628).

Carmichael's institutional critique, writing that "when Carmichael entered the scene, the news coverage changed. Carmichael threatened the established values of white supremacy and institutional control" (205). "[N]etworks almost always inhospitable to criticism of the US system of government and its established authority," they argue, "took a stand" (205). And when pundits (in any media) perceived "Black Power" as uncivil, as a threat to community or even national harmony and consensus, not only was the message distorted, but its bearer as well, with long-term consequences for Carmichael's legacy. Peniel Joseph points to the fact: "His [Carmichael's] central role in reshaping domestic race relations and reimagining American democracy is overwhelmed by his volatile public image and fiery polemics" (*Stokely* 319). That statement names the stakes for civility policing marked by amplification and distortion to the end of vilification.

Through repeated negative reporting that diverted attention to Carmichael's violation of decorum instead of toward his message, Carmichael and the call for "Black Power" were associated in the national consciousness with incivilities such as ad hominem attacks upon U.S. heads of state, making charges of racism, and especially with a lack of patriotism. On this last point consider that in 1966 and 1967, several U.S. Congressmen, the entire Tennessee State House of Representatives (save for A.W. Willis from Memphis), as well as indignant citizens from across the country called for Stokely Carmichael (sometimes with the knowledge that he was a U.S. citizen!) to be deported ("Deport Stokely" 1; Joseph, *Stokely*, 9).¹³ The rhetoric around calls for Carmichael's deportation

¹³ Calls for deporting Carmichael were common in 1967, especially in response to his anti-war rhetoric and promotion of draft resistance (see also Joseph, *Bright Nights* 129).

will be addressed in greater detail in later chapters. Here I provide just one example. A citizen (presumably) calling himself “Angry Taxpayer” expresses the racist and indignant sentiment that grounds such calls: “[T]he best suggestion I have seen yet is the one made by the Tennessee House of Representatives that the federal government deport Stokely Carmichael back to his native island in the West Indies” (4). This author continues, “And let’s deport everyone else we can who moves in on us and stirs up riots. Especially if they advocate such un-American tripe as ‘black power’” (4). This is an extreme version of a popular argument: that Stokely Carmichael and “Black Power” fall short of patriotic expectations and are thus unworthy of citizenship.

The effects of diverting attention from the content of Carmichael’s speeches to his violations of decorum, however, include not just that “Black Power” is framed as types of uncivil, but also that “Black Power” is understood as *unjustified* incivility. I argue that the media’s demonization of Carmichael and the phrase “Black Power” hinged on removing justifications for the call. Carmichael noted the “sinister” and “menacing” connotations associated with the phrase, and he rightly observed that the result was vilification. I argue that equally important to the process of vilification was the removal of the justification for

The U.S. Congressional Record shows Representative Louis Wyman from New Hampshire, for example, calling for Carmichael’s deportation (with full knowledge of his status as a citizen) on December 12, 1967. Carmichael’s FBI file includes evidence that several people wrote the FBI requesting Carmichael’s deportation, and both houses of the Tennessee legislature debated actions calling for Carmichael’s deportation in April of 1967. The joint resolution passed with near unanimity in the House. The results of the Tennessee House’s vote on the resolution calling for Carmichael’s deportation were reported in “Deport Stokely: House.” *The Daily News Journal*. 11 April 1967. pp. 1

the call for “Black Power.” With few exceptions, Carmichael’s speeches were filled with references to overlapping and mutually reinforcing oppressive forces aimed at black people. Black Power strategies and philosophies signaled by the phrase “Black Power” were simply SNCC’s answer to institutional racism that failed to shrink in response to civil rights strategies already attempted. “For too many years,” Carmichael wrote in the *New York Review of Books*, “black Americans marched and had their heads broken and got shot” (“Power and Racism” 52) Carmichael argues that “after years of this, we are at almost the same point” (“Power and Racism” 52). According to Carmichael it is time to attempt self-determinative strategies. It is time for Black Power.

Many complained that Carmichael never defined “Black Power,” but one could argue that ambiguity over the phrase exists, in part, because Carmichael’s intended message was as much about the justification for Black Power as it was about specific strategies for attaining it. Carmichael’s speeches suggest a central concern with communicating the overlapping and mutually reinforcing institutional constraints upon black progress. But when all meaningful communication of Carmichael’s institutional critique is traded for decontextualized references to his most salacious statements, then an important component of the message is lost, and what is left (at least in the eyes of his critics) is unjustified incivility marked by the call for “Black Power.”

Without access to a justification (and often with a healthy dose of racism), media consumers wanted to know what type of person would so overtly violate community norms of decorum. Americans wanted to know, as did the guest editorialist in the *Independent Record*, “What is Stokely Carmichael doing?” (“It’s Very Bad Advice” 4). Some

concluded that only an unreasonable person would so violate norms of decorum without cause, and so Carmichael was at times framed as irrational. Shenton James of the *L.A. Times*, for example, wonders in the wake of the call for “Black Power” “[W]ill terror replace reason?” and he argues that when Stokely Carmichael talks of bringing the white American to his knees, he speaks the language of delusion” (F1, 3). John S. Knight, who would much later win a Pulitzer for his editorials (“John S. Knight”), wrote in 1966, “Mr. Carmichael has now revealed himself for what he is—a scheming fomenter of disorder, a mad dog who attacks all whites indiscriminately, a revolutionist who seeks to burn and destroy, a terrorist who defies law and spits upon our flag” (“Editors Notebook: Atlanta Riots” 9A).

With Carmichael’s justification (in the form of institutional racism) obscured, his critics engage in motivism, using terms like “rabble-rouser” or “adventurer” to signal his unworthy motivations and intentions. Sometimes they invented intentions and motivations more nefarious than “adventurer.” For example, Congressional Representative from Ohio, Robert Sweeney, states, “He [Carmichael] is a subversive whose long-range intentions are to inflict great harm upon the United States of America” (“Stokely Carmichael: Subversive” 4). John Chamberlain in *The Daily Republican* calls Carmichael “[T]he rabble-rouser who calls for ‘black power’ without specifying ‘power for what’” (4). And an xenophobic editorialist in *The Star Press* calls “Stokely Carmichael, the foreign-born racist and rabble rouser” (“Stokely Carmichael: Subversive 4). Framing Carmichael’s intentions in such terms necessarily misses (or ignores) his critique of institutional racism. In one instance, Carmichael points to the institutional forces that justify the call for “Black

Power.” To the charge that he is a rabble-rouser, Carmichael returned, “I have a lot to rabble about” (“Stokely Carmichael and Free Speech” 46).

The scholarship on civility demonstrated that those policing civility will displace blame from oppressor to oppressed, and I argue that the effect is intensified when the identified incivility is understood as emerging without provocation. Thomas Benson writes that “Our shared concern with civility as a communicative practice also carries with it an implicit sense that talk has consequences and that uncivil speech is not merely rude but that it has effects” (23). Carmichael’s critics were convinced of the fact, and they blamed Carmichael (the “Black Power Prophet” as the *New York Times* called him in one report) and his incivilities for a list of wrongs in America (10).

Famed African American psychologist Kenneth Clark confirms the fact just months after “Black Power” began to circulate widely. Clark writes that “It has become fashionable to blame Stokely Carmichael the present leader of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (S. N. C. C) and the originator of the Black Power slogan” (A30). Carmichael is often blamed, according to Clark, “for the riots in our urban ghettos, for the defeat of the 1966 civil rights bill, for the fact that Lester Maddox has won the democratic nomination for Governor of Georgia, and for the general civil rights retrogression of the past 6 months” (A30). While Clark is no fan of Stokely’s, he argues that focusing on Stokely distracts from the real causes of problems plaguing black communities (A30).

In the wake of the call for “Black Power,” when rebellions emerged in urban centers in 1966 and 1967, Carmichael’s critics didn’t look to environmental causes, but instead they blamed the rabble-rousing of Stokely Carmichael. For example, when unrest broke

out in Nashville, Tennessee after Stokely Carmichael spoke there in April of 1967, Mayor Beverly Briley identified Stokely Carmichael as the sole cause of disruption (“Since the Riot: A Search for Reason” 1-B). Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. in Atlanta expressed similar sentiments under similar circumstances, blaming Carmichael for unrest in Atlanta (“Atlanta mayor says SNCC started riot” 3).

Editorialist John S. Knight exemplifies most starkly the trading of environmental factors for extreme claims about individual ones: “Unwittingly, Stokely Carmichael and his followers performed a useful service not only for Atlanta, but for our nation. For here was stripped away the myth that negroes are always incited to riot over poor living conditions, lack of employment and denial of civil rights” (“Carmichael and Co.” 2-K). Knight demonstrates that a monofocus on Stokely Carmichael allowed many to deny the existence of discriminatory environmental causes and so to jettison any sense of responsibility for suffering black people. Similarly when human and financial support for the civil rights movement waned in the summer of 1966, critics didn’t blame a continuing pattern of Civil Rights fatigue exacerbated by the passage of the ‘64 and ‘65 Civil Rights Bills, but instead they looked to Stokely Carmichael. When the 1966 Open Housing Bill stalled in the senate, critics did not blame a long and documented history of housing discrimination, racism, and real financial concerns centering on blockbusting; instead they blamed Stokely Carmichael.

In fact they blamed Carmichael not just for the election of Lester Maddox (as pointed out by Clark) but for a wave of conservative political victories in a political turn of tide that many at the time were referring to as a “white backlash.” A very young Mike

Wallace even hosted an episode of *CBS Reports* on September 27, 1966 in which Carmichael featured prominently (“From the Vault: Black Power, White Backlash”; Blue and Murphree 213). Carmichael’s critics, it seemed, blamed him for most anything needing a scapegoat (think a 1966 and 1967 version of “Thanks, Obama”). Carmichael sometimes joked of this displacement of blame. In his address at Berkeley, Carmichael quipped: “Based on the fact that SNCC, through the articulation of its program by its chairman, has been able to win elections in Georgia, Alabama, Maryland, and by our appearance here will win an election in California, in 1968 I’m going to run for President of the United States” (“Black Power Address”).

What is clear is that national media combine amplification and distortion in the wake of the call for “Black Power,” and the result is a destructive image of Carmichael and the call for “Black Power.” As far back as the Black Power Era, Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith argued that “A rhetorical theory suitable to our age must take into account the charge that civility and decorum serve as masks for the preservation of injustice, *that they condemn the dispossessed to non-being*” (my emphasis, 8). I argue that their sentiment predicted well the effect over time of civility policing aimed at Carmichael. In the wake of media reports that amplified and distorted, the reality of Carmichael as a dedicated activist with a deep love for poor black people was traded for one-dimensional images of Carmichael that too easily facilitated scapegoating. And the effect is cyclical: the removal of humanity making Carmichael easier to blame, the constant blame making him less human, the entire process underwritten by amplification and distortion. Distortions of Carmichael’s message would be of lesser concern had those distortions not been so visible

and oft repeated. On the other hand, the amplification of Carmichael's message may have led to much different outcomes had the message not first been so badly distorted.

Carmichael's case demonstrates that amplification and distortion constitute another kind of silencing used by those who police civility. Outright dismissals that ensure that black radical activists and their messages are relegated to the margins are certainly common, but Carmichael's case demonstrates that intense media attention garnered on conditions of civility policing may as effectively silence dissent. His case demonstrates that at the same time (or even because) an activist's personality is amplified, that activist's message may remain obscured, and I argue that this particular civility policing process distorts not only immediate messages, but also longer legacies. That is, the message of "Black Power" certainly gets lost in the attempt to civility police Carmichael, but the injury is then doubled when that distortion allows continued negative historical revision across time. When Carmichael is demonized and his message distorted, when he is dismissed as angry, irrational, and racist, then this image of him is more easily adapted into negative historical narratives.

In the only robust biography of Stokely Carmichael, Peniel Joseph points to several areas where Carmichael has been ill-fitted into historical narratives. These include understandings of Carmichael as emblematic of the sexism against which Second Wave Feminism emerged (*Stokely* 80, 305), that he was an anti-Semite (*Stokely* 287, 305), and that he was both a racial separatist and Dr. King's foil (*Stokely* especially 126-130, 188-190). Each constitutes a complex issue worthy of its own chapter. I have space here, however, to take up only the last of these at length. I address the charges of sexism and

anti-Semitism very briefly, and I direct interested readers to relevant sources on those topics.

The single most important source relative to charges of sexism made against Carmichael may be an email chain housed at crmvet.org/disc/women2.htm. The chain includes responses from many women of SNCC, some of whom were present on the dock at Waveland where Stokely Carmichael made the now infamous comment concerning the position of women in SNCC. Much of the narrative regarding Stokely's proximity to sexism originates with that comment. Within this email chain, participants relate their experiences as women in SNCC, their memories of a position paper authored by Casey Hayden and Mary King on the role of women within SNCC, and some recall the conditions under which Stokely Carmichael made the aforementioned comment. The email chain indicates that many of those present when the comment was made understand it as a joke, question its relevance to the beginnings of Second Wave Feminism, and remember SNCC as having been ahead of its time in their treatment of women. Casey Hayden and Mary King have also elsewhere written about the incident at length and expressed similar conclusions.¹⁴ This in no way dismisses those who were upset by the comment. I simply point to the remembrances of those who were there. My intention is not exoneration, but complication, both with the charges of sexism and anti-Semitism.

¹⁴ King, Mary *Freedom Song*, William Morrow and Co. 1988; Hayden, Casey *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, University Of Illinois Press, 2010; see also both Baker, Elaine DeLott and Hayden, Casey *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine Women in the Freedom Movement*, University of Georgia Press, 2000

Relative to charges that Carmichael was an anti-Semite, his own words are most useful in locating his evolving attitudes toward Jewish people and the state of Israel. Carmichael certainly worked closely with Jewish students and activists during his time in SNCC, but it is also true that as he adopted revolutionary and Pan-African philosophies, he increasingly tied his struggle to powerless black and brown people globally, including Palestinians, and after his move to Conakry, he claimed a distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism that became increasingly difficult to defend. I direct those interested in Carmichael's attitudes toward Israel and Jewish people to the sources in the footnote.¹⁵ This issue and the issue of sexism are complicated. While I offer no answers, I argue that the historical record indicates a reality concerning both that is more complicated than has traditionally been offered.

I now turn in earnest to charges that Carmichael was a racial separatist and Dr. King's foil. In this next section I use rhetorical civility as a lens through which to view historical and archival resources that remind of Carmichael's humanity and so challenge one-dimensional portrayals. Doing so allows a better estimation of Carmichael's rhetorical and material proximity to Dr. King, and more broadly it demonstrates the potential of contemporary thought on civility policing for understanding responses to black radical activism.

¹⁵ Sources relevant to Carmichael's attitudes toward Israel and the Jewish people include Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*; Joseph, *Stokely*; and Lorna Smith Letters dated July 23, 1967 and August 9, 1972

CARMICHAEL, KING, AND LETTERS TO LORNA SMITH

Popular narratives—both in 1966 and at present—sometimes contrast Stokely Carmichael and the call for “Black Power” with Dr. King, the SCLC, and the racial integrationist program articulated within a rhetoric of love and inclusion. I argue that the roots of these narratives can be traced to the process of civility policing marked by amplification and distortion. In an interview given to Michael Thelwell during the completion of Carmichael’s autobiography, Dr. King’s number two in the SCLC, Andrew Young, attributes the opposition of King and Carmichael to inaccurate reporting. Young remembers, “Of the many media distortions of his [Carmichael’s] record, none seemed to affect Carmichael except one. The crude conventional formulation about ‘young militants led by Stokely Carmichael’ turning against Dr. King” (*Ready for Revolution* 485). Young continues, “That really annoyed him [Carmichael], whenever we came across it. ‘But, y’know, it doesn’t really matter, Thelwell. Dr. King knows it never was true.’” (*Ready for Revolution* 485). Young instead spoke of King and Carmichael’s personal relationship as one built on mutual love and respect: “Martin always saw Stokely as a young man with tremendous potential and ability. He liked his spirit and dedication,” (*Ready for Revolution* 485). “I know that, in return,” Young argues, “Stokely’s admiration, indeed love, of Dr. King was deep and genuine” (*Ready for Revolution* 485). He concludes, “I think Dr. King may well have recognized a lot of himself in the younger man, in particular, a stubborn moral courage, honesty, and a selfless willingness to serve our people” (*Ready for Revolution* 485).

Those who pitted Carmichael against King often policed civility to do so. Russell Stewart, for example, writes in Ridgway, New Jersey's *Sunday News* "The goodwill of decent white people has answered the patient and courageous sufferings of negro leaders such as the Rev. Martin Luther King" (Stewart 59). Stewart then contrasts the civility of Dr. King with the indecorousness of Carmichael's speech: "Stokely Carmichael is going to find himself batting zero point zero with the national audience and he is going to accomplish nothing at all with anger and loud talk" (Stewart 59).¹⁶ This move was common in 1966 and 1967, and it wasn't entirely baseless. By wearing professional attire, professing and practicing non-violence, and avoiding profanity in public, the SCLC and those they worked with in fact attempted to thwart detractors who might use a politics of respectability to undermine their efforts. Carmichael, on the other hand, enjoyed pushing the limits of appropriate public speech, even as he often dressed in business attire (though he would often select his clothes as he would his rhetorical appeals—to meet the needs of his specific audiences) and avoided profanity in his public address.

Yet the types of incivility that Carmichael's critics seemed most concerned with—and those they used to contrast him with Dr. King—were his perceived violence and racism. An unnamed editorialist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, writes, "The Kings and the Carmichaels and their followers represent diametrically opposed

¹⁶ It is important to note that Martin Luther King was also unpopular in 1966 and 1967. According to a Harris Poll conducted in December of 1966 only thirty-six percent of white people and sixty-four percent of black people felt that King was helping "the negro cause of civil rights" (Harris 15-A). Carmichael's support, however, was just two percent and eighteen percent of the black and white communities, respectively.

philosophies. The advocates of nonviolence may find it necessary to cut all strings to the militants, and their separatism and violence, to prevent further damage to the negro cause” (“The Damaging Doctrine of Violence” H 22). Along the Meredith March, Carmichael made a point of distancing SNCC’s position from the SCLC’s by stating that non-violence for SNCC was a tactic, not a first principle. This nuanced distinction between practicing and believing, however, was again lost in the reporting, and a rhetoric generally concerned with self- and community-defense was interpreted as an unambiguous promotion of violence.

While the threat of violence loomed large in the imaginations of those who opposed King and Carmichael, some critics found his perceived racism (in contrast with the program of integration) to be of even greater concern. As part of a program of black self-determination Carmichael, argued in 1966 that SNCC could no longer have white people in positions of authority, and SNCC disallowed white people from working in black communities. Carmichael urged black political and economic self-determination, and the “crude conventional formulation” emerging in response to Carmichael’s rhetoric was that he was a racial separatist or, as commonly, a reverse-racist. Both Roy Wilkins and Hubert Humphrey, notoriously, attempted to kill the call for “Black Power” before it displaced The Movement’s traditional rhetoric. At the NAACP’s meeting in July of 1966, they called the call for “Black Power” racism in reverse and compared it to both Hitler and the KKK (qtd. in Joseph, *Stokely* 127). The charge of reverse-racism echoed throughout the nation.

Conservative intellectual William Buckley, Jr. ran with this line in his “On the Right” column (A10). In his response to the massive Spring Mobilization Against the Draft,

Buckley compares not just “Black Power,” but Carmichael himself with the KKK (A10). Under the subheading “Black Ku Kluxer,” Buckley, like others who police civility, ignores the entirety of Carmichael’s institutional critique and instead assesses Carmichael’s speech by stating that Carmichael “screamed” insults at Robert McNamara and Lyndon Johnson and that Carmichael’s audience cheered in response (A10). For Buckley, this is unsurprising, because “a society that breeds Ku Klux Klanners who will cheer obscenities [Carmichael did not use obscenities in his public speeches at this time] directed against every Negro, can certainly produce people who will cheer obscenities directed at the President” (A10). Buckley then makes the outlandish parallel between Carmichael’s anti-racist strategy and those who promote racial hatred: “Carmichael of course is the exact opposite number of the Ku Kluxer, and if he were white he would no doubt be in the front rank of the bitter-drunk zealots, calling for the lynching of the niggers” (A10).

Similar assessments echoed throughout the country. Richard Woodruff, for example, writes in a letter to the editor of *The Shreveport Journal*,

The problem that faces us is being termed “black power” but I feel that it is nothing more than reverse-racism. Men like Stokely Carmichael are interested only in power for themselves and for those who agree with them....The answer to the problem of civil rights is not ‘black supremacy’ or ‘black nationalism.’ I am glad to see that the responsible negro leaders like Roy Wilkins and Rev. Martin Luther King have spoken out strongly against Carmichael’s position” (2A).

Woodruff reads Carmichael’s call for “Black Power” as “black supremacy,” and he directly opposes such racism to King and the “responsible negro leaders” (2A).¹⁷ As did Woodruff,

¹⁷ The charge of reverse-racism will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter. Here I deal with responses that frame Carmichael as a racial separatist who undermined the center of the civil rights movement.

Carmichael's critics often opposed him to Dr. King who was part of a group of "responsible" leaders—or, in Bruce Bioassat's case, "real" leaders. Bioassat, in the *Washington News*, calls Carmichael "the young black segregationist" in a piece titled "Carmichael's Racism gall To true Negro leaders [sic.]" (4). Of course he opposes what he sees as Carmichael's racism with those (the "true Negro leaders") including King "who believe white good will and co-operation are pivotal factors in any upturning in the Negro's general fortunes" (4).

Yet, the historical record precludes uncomplicated opposition between King and Carmichael, including on the issue of racial separatism. I take up just one small portion of that record by looking at a set of letters Carmichael wrote to Lorna Smith, an elderly white woman, across more than a decade. These letters subvert easy vilification and categorization of Carmichael as a hateful racial separatist and as Dr. King's foil. I turn to those letters to better approximate Carmichael's attitudes concerning racial integration and cooperation. At the same time, these letters remind of Carmichael's humanity and so work to counter one-dimensional portrayals that aided negative historical revision.

Peniel Joseph records that Lorna Smith made the long trip from the Bay Area to the Mississippi Delta to assist with Freedom Summer in 1964 (*Stokely* 112). Smith, 66 years old and white, was put to work in an ad hoc library (*Stokely* 112). One day Smith was asked to chauffeur activists to a meeting at which Stokely Carmichael was speaking (*Stokely* 112). After watching Carmichael mesmerize a crowd of 600 gathered in a church in Greenwood, Mississippi, Smith concluded that "if left alive" Carmichael would be a great leader (qtd in *Stokely* 112). Smith and Stokely became fast friends and began writing one

another in a correspondence that continued nearly until Smith's death and long after Carmichael had self-exiled to Conakry. His last letter is dated August 20, 1977 when Smith is nearly eighty years old.

Carmichael's letters to Smith, now housed in Stanford's special collections, are important to the current study for at least three interrelated reasons. First, they are one of the few available sources that provide a window into Carmichael beyond the public image created and amplified by mass media. Two, the letters demonstrate both an interracial intimacy and an interest in interracial politics at the very moment when Carmichael was being called a racist and a separatist. Finally, these letters demonstrate an earnestness to Carmichael's activism that exposes charges that he was an "adventurer," for example, to be both erroneous and motivistic.

The letters demonstrate that at moments in 1966 and 1967 when Carmichael was being called a racist and a separatist, when he was being compared to the Nazi's and the KKK, he was also carrying on a gentle correspondence with 68 year old white activist Lorna Smith. In these letters Carmichael addresses Smith with tender expressions one might more readily expect to find between mother and child. While Smith's letters to Carmichael were not preserved, it is clear from Carmichael's responses that Smith worried about his health, scolded him for not writing often enough, and worried that she was taking too much of his time. Carmichael, for example, wrote on August 23, 1966, as he was in high demand as a public speaker across the country: "If you do not receive an immediate reply to your letters, please do not stop writing. I still enjoy all your letters, even when you 'cuss' me out for not writing." On February 13, 1967 Carmichael responds to another letter,

one in which Smith apparently had asked him to rest and admitted that she had been in a car accident: “Your advice is sound. However at this time it is impossible to follow it. There is so much to be done. It seems as if all the time and energy we have to devote is insignificant; so insignificant, that if we sit still for a minute we feel guilty. There is so much to do. There is no time to rest.” He closed that same letter with concern for his friend’s safety: “Be sweet and please be careful in that automobile.”

A letter written the week prior indicates that Smith must have taken some heat from friends when speaking of her friendly correspondence with Carmichael. “You should inform all of your friends, including Mrs. Mary Carter,” writes Carmichael, “There is nothing I enjoy doing more, and I insist upon doing personally, than reading your letters no matter how long it takes and how tired I am.” He insists that reading her letters “keeps me going and in touch, somehow with life as it should be and I want it to be when I am your age.” After communicating in that same letter that he would be out of touch for the following month, Carmichael closed: “I will miss reading your letters until the month is over.”

It is not just Carmichael’s friendship with an elderly white woman that demonstrates an interracial commitment, but Carmichael expresses that commitment overtly in his letters to Smith, including on May 2, 1967 just after the massive national Mobilization against the draft. Remember that it was in response to Carmichael’s speech during the mobilization that William Buckley, Jr. equated Carmichael with the KKK, calling him a “Black Ku Kluxer.” Yet, Carmichael’s words to Lorna Smith paint another picture. “While you didn’t March on the Vietnam day marches,” he writes, “I know your

spirit was with us and there was such a remarkable crowd that even I was overwhelmed.” Carmichael continues, “In New York there were over 400,000 people. It was truly wonderful to know that so many people are opposed to the war.... I think that maybe if there is any hope in this country, it lies in our generation; *both black and white*” (my emphasis). “Of course,” Carmichael concedes, “there are a few people like you in the older generation that give us hope.”

The statement concerning interracial cooperation indicates a truth about Carmichael’s racial attitudes that has been lost in the rush to label him a racial separatist. In fact, Peniel Joseph has argued that in 1967 Carmichael expressed SNCC positions that didn’t always perfectly align with his personal commitments. But even then, he was arguing for black racial solidarity in particular contexts—independent black political parties; black professionals, businesses, and consumers staying in and contributing to black communities; and having only black activists working and leading in black communities.

Carmichael, during this period, maintained relationships with white people, maintained contacts in predominantly white organizations, and he remained hopeful for the eventual cooperation of black and white people. No where in the letters is this more clear than when he wrote on June 15, 1966:

While SNCC will never become a racist organization, there has to be an understanding that the people who need us most in this country are the disenfranchised black people. And if in fact people are to move on they must build black institutions through which they can carry on with the democratic process. That means they just have political and economic institutions that they control. That isn’t to say they are anti-white. We are going to divert our energies to help build these institutions.

Carmichael's distinctions between racial separatism and a monofocus on uplifting black people was lost on many, but for Carmichael, it was not perpetually in tension with a program of integration. It was instead part of a long strategy toward better integration, what he called "true integration." Carmichael writes in that same letter:

We are working in this country for *true* integration. This means white people move into black neighborhoods and white children go to black schools and black children go to white schools and black people move into white neighborhoods. Until you have this, you do not have true integration. This is a reality that the American must face for we have already faced this (my emphasis).

Of Carmichael's tender expressions toward Smith that complicate his image as a hateful reverse-racist, though, the single line that closes out this same letter written on June 15 stands out. Carmichael composed this letter the day before releasing—with the help of Willie Ricks—the phrase "Black Power" along the Meredith March. He writes to Smith, "It's delightful as always to hear from you and to read your comments. I can't think of anything nice to say except that I rerouted the March on Mississippi through Greenwood in memory of you." The timing of this statement—written just the day before the release of "Black Power" at Broadstreet Park—indicates the very real possibility that both the moment and location of the initial call for "Black Power" were to some extent the result of a small kindness Carmichael performed for his elderly white friend, Lorna Smith.

Collectively, these letters mount a substantial counter to narratives reliant on demonic visages of Carmichael as an angry purveyor of racial hatred. The Stokely Carmichael evident in the Lorna Smith letters can with more difficulty be opposed to Dr. King. Unfortunately, these are not the documents used to formulate Carmichael's image, and this is not the Carmichael that most often gets taken up in reference to Dr. King. Instead

dominant discourses refuse interruption by historical and empirical realities that suggest as many alignments as diversions between the two anti-racist activists. In the next section I take up parallels made between the two men.

OF KINGS AND CARMICHAELS

Not everyone saw Martin Luther King, Jr. and Stokely Carmichael as diametrically opposed in 1966 and 1967. The Civil Rights Movement's fiercest detractors often dismissed them as equally uncivil. Don Bruton, for example, wondered in a letter to the editor of *News-Press*, "Where would the *Rev. Kings and the Stokeley [sic] Carmichaels* and so many of our other glorious leaders be if they had to live by and obey the same laws that govern the white structure" (my emphasis, Bruton 4A). According to Bruton and those opposed to anti-racist agitation (Note that the 1966 Harris Poll referenced above indicates that few white people were in favor of either activist's work.), King and Carmichael were both simply trouble-makers and law-breakers, and, as such, the two were interchangeable. Demonstrating an extremity of this attitude Andrew Tully dismisses both King and Carmichael as Black Power advocates. He writes in a commentary for the *York Dispatch* that "Black Power as conceived by the *Dr. Kings and the Stokely Carmichaels* and then Floyd McKissicks is not the peaceful use of the ballot or lobbying in legislative cloak rooms for civil rights legislation. It is in plain English, raising hell." (my emphasis, Tully 4).

The conflation demonstrates that the displacement of blame (from oppressor to oppressed) in activist contexts not only allows critics to parallel civil rights activists with the often violent racists that come out to meet them (the “both-sides” argument that paralleled Carmichael with the KKK), but the displacement of blame in contexts where civility policing is high also allows critics to collapse distinctions between activists as well. In this way, those willing to openly declare opposition to all civil rights activism often dismissed both the “Kings and Carmichaels.”

The move is so common, in fact, that in 1966 and 1967 (as already demonstrated above) variations of the phrase “Kings and Carmichaels” appear frequently in dismissals of civil rights activism. An unnamed contributor to the *Star Tribune*, for example, writes in response to the controversy surrounding an investigation into Congressional Representative from New York, Adam Clayton Powell: “The attempt to make a racial issue out of the case of Rep. Adam Clayton Powell is the height of absurdity” (“Law, not racism” 4). “If congress had backed down on this one,” writes the contributor, “it might as well have turned the country over to the *Kings and the Carmichaels*. Law no longer would have had the force of law” (my emphasis, “Law, not racism” 4).

Critics sometimes conflate and dismiss King and Carmichael as of the same feather using the same terms—an expressed concern for violence and racism, for example—leveraged by those who opposed them. Where Carmichael was (above) contrasted with “responsible” leaders (such as King, in this formulation), some critics saw less need for distinctions between activist leaders. A guest editorialist for the *Marshfield News-Herald*, for example, writes, “If Negroes hope to continue to make progress, they had better get

responsible leadership and repudiate the *Kings and Carmichaels*” (my emphasis, “Inflammatory Talk” 4). Similarly, where we saw some commentators contrast Carmichael’s violence with King’s strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience, both King and Carmichael are dismissed as fomenters of violence. After both King and Carmichael predicted continuing urban unrest in 1967, for example, an unnamed opinion writer for the *Chicago Tribune* writes, “It seems to us that the proper authorities had better begin to view the *Kings and Carmichaels* and their ilk as exponents of criminal syndicalism, either abetting acts of violence or advocating violence and other illicit acts” (my emphasis, “The 95 Theses of the Rev. Dr. King,” 1-8).

While some contrast Carmichael’s race-conscious (and so racist in their estimation) rhetoric with Dr. King’s calls for racial integration, other critics dismissed them both as responsible for racial hatred. A commenter in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, for example, wrote that “In most cases the ones [black people] that are having problems are caused by the Martin Luther Kings, the Carmichaels and the self-styl-ed Negro leaders, teaching hatred of the races and civil disobedience in the name of civil rights” (“Reader comments” 13). The same commenter continues, writing that if “the *Martin Luther Kings and Carmichaels* could get what they are clamoring for it would not only be a holocaust for the white race, but Negroes as well” (my emphasis, “Reader comments” 13). Note the displacement of blame accompanying the parallel. The problem for this racist commenter is not racism, but those who draw attention to it. For this commenter anti-racist activists are the real problem, not the violent racists that gather to oppose them.

Important to the formulation of these conflations is the truth that the further to the right one travels along the racial-political spectrum, the more King and Carmichael look the same—as rabble rousers attempting to start trouble where “civil” peace once existed. From the racial right, the Kings and Carmichaels cause violence and racism (in black folks, of course). Some critics, though, even as they conflate King and Carmichael, also signal deep underlying division between the two. That is, if all activists were alike, why reference both King *and* Carmichael when either could sufficiently stand in for all activist agitation? That commenters feel the need to reference both suggests that those commenters either perceive each activist as representing a type, or they reference both to answer (and dismiss) other critics who do. In either case, the aim is to dismiss all agitators of all types—both the Kings and the Carmichaels. From this perspective some conflations of King and Carmichael rely upon (or at least are aware of) the same oppositions that Carmichael’s critics used to oppose the two. The conflation of King and Carmichael dismisses not only both activists, but also those who sharpen their support for King against the “incivility” of Carmichael. Perhaps the enemies of civil rights understand King and Carmichael as more or less civil versions of the thing they don’t like. But still, they don’t like it.

After King delivered his “Beyond Vietnam” speech in April of 1967—thus joining Carmichael in his early opposition to the War in Vietnam—parallels from a broader range of critics became even more common and intense. SNCC voiced official opposition both to the war and the draft in January of 1966, writing, “We are in sympathy with and support, the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to a military draft which would compel them to contribute their lives to United States aggression in Vietnam in the name

of the ‘freedom’ we find so false in this country” (“SNCC Statement on Vietnam”). After SNCC published that statement, Carmichael publicly expands and intensifies this opposition to U.S. participation in Vietnam. He further connects the war in Vietnam to white supremacy and U.S. imperialism, and he more overtly and defiantly opposes conscription.

He offered the following at Berkeley: “[T]he War in Vietnam is an illegal and immoral war. And the question is, What can we do to stop that war? What can we do to stop the people who, in the name of our country, are killing babies, women, and children?” Carmichael concludes that students can begin by saying no to the draft (“Black Power Address”). While King had expressed concern over Vietnam before “Beyond Vietnam,” he delivered his official position in clear and expansive terms on April 4, 1967 at Riverside Church. He spoke to a packed house and with Stokely Carmichael in the front row: “We are taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem” (“Beyond Vietnam”). “We watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village,” King argued, “but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor” (“Beyond Vietnam”).

For their positions on the War in Vietnam, King and Carmichael were both understood as traitors or even criminals. James E. Westheider writes that “The chair of the House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, advocated immediate prosecution of draft evaders and wanted charges brought against the ‘Kings and Carmichaels’ for

advocating draft resistance” (Westheider 32). Joseph O’Meara, Dean of the University of Notre Dame Law School covered a wider range of options: “They and others like them (are) either Communists or traitors or cowards.” “Or they are persons of large good will but little insight,” he writes, “who have been euchred into being stooges, or who are seeking some end of their own—ambition, revenge, or whatever,—at the expense of their country” (“Editorial In Question” 8).

As King and Carmichael became leading voices against the war, their detractors dismissed them as equally unpatriotic, a damning charge in 1967, as support, nationwide, for the War was still high. World War II Veteran Harold Russell, for example, in a speech given to a local VFW chapter stated of black soldiers, “I was happy to see that those men were rejecting the Kings and the Carmichaels in this country” (“Vets Told To Take The Lead” 10). Similarly, an unnamed contributor to the *Billings Gazette* writes that after hearing General Westmoreland state that the soldiers have earned the support of Americans: “We hope the peaceniks, the draft card burners, the *Kings the Carmichaels*, Fulbrights, the marchers, and well-meaning dissenters listened” (“Did the peaceniks listen?” 3).

Not only did both men come to the same conclusion concerning the morality of America’s participation in the Vietnam War, but Peniel Joseph records that King’s evolution was to some degree the effect of Carmichael’s influence, writing, “Carmichael’s remarkably sophisticated and vocal antiwar activism frightened American political officials and helped inspire King’s own, more celebrated critique of the Vietnam War” (“Response from Stokely” 131). According to Joseph, soon thereafter, King and

Carmichael headline what was at the time the largest anti-war demonstration in U.S. history “where Carmichael explicitly linked his antiwar activism to larger themes of anti-imperialism, a course that King would increasingly parallel over the course of the next year” (“Response from Stokely” 131). And such rhetorical influence was mutual, according to Joseph: “Each man’s political themes and style rubbed off on the other” (*Stokely* 130).

Ironically, Carmichael’s (and King’s) detractors may have most accurately approximated the two men’s proximity to each other in 1966 and 1967, even as their road to that conclusion was paved by racism. Those who opposed racial progress and institutional change should have been equally concerned with Dr. King and Stokely Carmichael on the other side of the Meredith March. Keith Gilyard and Adam Banks write that “Carmichael was not developing any more radical political platform than King was” when assessing both men’s monographs (41). Gilyard and Banks write that “Carmichael’s book *Black Power*, co-authored with Charles Hamilton and published in 1967, is not more to the left than King’s *Where Do We Go From Here?* (1968), a book that was written at virtually the same time” (41). In 1966 and 1967 both men were challenging U.S. institutions—King in Chicago (and later with the Poor People’s Campaign), and Carmichael in Lowndes county and in urban centers across the nation. King and Carmichael both connected the struggle for civil rights at home with human rights abroad in their opposition to the Vietnam War.

Those opposing King and Carmichael have had to construct Kings that were less radical than their real-life counterparts and Carmichaels that were far more so. Carmichael’s political philosophy in 1966 and 1967 reflected the democratic socialism he

encountered via Bayard Rustin while still in high school, but it was hardly revolutionary in the most paradigmatic sense. King, on the other hand, was far from the political moderate that so many have constructed him as. Thomas F. Jackson, most extensively, recounts King's long association with radical politics in *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*. Jackson writes, "Over the course of his public ministry, [...] King opposed racism, imperialism, poverty, and political disenfranchisement in increasingly radical terms" (1). "Often," Jackson argues, "he referred to the American civil rights movement as simply one expression of an international human rights revolution that demanded economic rights to work, income, housing, and security" (1).

The truth is that in 1966 SNCC had not intended the phrase "Black Power" to signal political revolution, and King during the same time period agreed with much of what the term indicated. King was never opposed to Black Power in the way that many of his contemporaries were. Carmichael addresses this in his autobiography: "He never repudiated Black Power. Never. Despite pressure, even from his own staff, he never yielded to the hysteria. You can check. That's a myth that he attacked us" (514). In fact, according to Joseph, "Privately, King told SCLC staff that he agreed with Carmichael's emphasis on black political, social, and economic power yet remained baffled by his tactics" (144).

Gilyard and Banks quote Dr. King's own words, which indicate disagreement about rhetoric, not politics. They take the following quote from a chapter called "Black Power" in King's *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, and they note that that chapter is the longest in King's final book: "While the concept of legitimate "Black Power" might be denotatively sound, the slogan 'Black Power' carried the wrong connotation"

(43). Gilyard and Banks, in alignment with Carmichael's assessment, argue that while King "never embraced the Black Power slogan [...] he was never simplistically antagonistic toward it" (42). They demonstrate that King and Carmichael agreed on the institutional causes of black suffering, the need for redress, even the need for power, but that they disagreed on the rhetorical choices best suited to achieve it (43).

In an interview with Mike Wallace, Dr. King, like Carmichael, names intuitional racism as necessitating the call for power: "I contend that the cry of 'black power' is, at bottom, a reaction to the reluctance of white power to make the kind of changes necessary to make justice a reality for the Negro" ("MLK: Riot is the Language of the Unheard"). And like Carmichael, King finds urban unrest to be a legible response to institutional racism: "I think that we've got to see that a riot is the language of the unheard. And, what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the economic plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years ("MLK: Riot is the Language of the Unheard").

What most complicates the narrative of Carmichael as King's foil, though, might be the two men's personal relationship. Peniel Joseph writes that "perhaps the most compelling and surprisingly tender political friendship that Carmichael formed during the 1960s was with Martin Luther King Jr." (105). As Carmichael took over SNCC's chairmanship from John Lewis, King reached out to Carmichael, offering needed mentorship, which evolved into friendship (Carmichael, *Ready* 484). Carmichael writes in his autobiography that he was especially moved by King's attention to poor black sharecroppers along the march (*Ready* 511, 513). Joseph records of both King and

Carmichael, “While disagreeing sharply over the use of the “Black Power” term, self-defense, and the capacity for national political reform, Carmichael and King bonded over a shared love of poor Black folks” (“Response from Stokely” 131). “Black Power,” regardless of reporting that seemed to indicate otherwise, never dampened this friendship (Joseph 105; Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution* 485, 514).

Joseph writes that even on points of disagreement, the two largely kept sharp criticisms in house, or in Carmichael’s case, dealt with them through humor (*Stokely* 130). According to Joseph, Carmichael was capable of an expert impersonation of King, and in front of reporters in Lowndes County, Carmichael mocked King’s efforts in Chicago: “Tilting his head back and puffing out his chest, he launched into an expert impression of King. ‘I must have some concessions,’ he said. ‘I must have some concessions’” (*Stokely* 130).

According to Joseph, Carmichael’s good-natured ribbing marked a friendship based on mutual respect (*Stokely*). King, for example, called personally to invite Carmichael to Ebenezer Baptist Church to see him speak against the war (*Ready for Revolution* 515). Carmichael records joking with King before knowing his intentions, telling King on the phone: ‘Hey, now, you know I’ll always come hear *you* preach ‘cause you always could make me tap mah feets’” (emphasis in original, *Ready for Revolution* 515). King didn’t laugh, but instead told Carmichael that he intended to make “*my statement on the war*” (emphasis in original *Ready for Revolution* 515). Carmichael replied, “I’ll be there, Dr. King. I’m a be in the front row of that church” (*Ready for Revolution* 515). In his autobiography Carmichael writes of King as both a mentor and friend, and Joseph records

that King often hosted him for dinner in his home (Carmichael, *Ready* 484, 510-513; Joseph, *Stokely* 105). Joseph records, “Stokely recognized King’s transcendent political and moral appeal in the Black community, and King, likewise, marked Carmichael as a preternaturally skilled organizer who emerged as a spokesperson for an entire generation (“Response from Stokely” 131).

While many compelling parallels can be drawn between King and Carmichael, their critics expressed their similarities in terms of violence and racism. With a clearer picture of Carmichael’s rhetoric and humanity the nature of these charges comes into focus. Clearly, the enemies of black civil rights engaged in civility policing as their accusations of violence and racism masked complete intolerance of institutional critique. Both King and Carmichael pointed out in their public speech that those professing a deep concern about racist and violent speech showed little concern for violence when racists perpetrated it upon civil rights demonstrators or other black citizens.

The same critics who decried Carmichael’s violent rhetoric showed little concern for U.S. state violence inflicted upon Vietnamese people, and they seemed unaffected by the racism inherent in segregation and the system of racial terrorism called Jim Crow. Given such ironies, it is natural to question the terms with which detractors dismissed King and Carmichael. The evidence communicates a concern not for King’s and Carmichael’s violent and racist words, but instead with activist rhetorics that threaten to disrupt racial, social, political, and economic stases benefiting the dominant group at the expense of black humanity.

CONCLUSION

The concern is not that Stokely Carmichael used only civil words even as he was being called uncivil. Carmichael at times used incendiary rhetoric, and as indicated in the epigraph, he did so intentionally, strategically. Carmichael stated, “This is 1966 and it seems to me that it’s ‘time out’ for nice words” (qtd. in Bracey 470). But he continues, “We have to say things nobody else in this country is willing to say...to say the things that need to be said. We have to understand the lies this country has spoken about black people and we have to set the record straight. No one else can do that but black people (qtd. in Bracey 470). Carmichael voices his intention to speak hard truths, those that might be upsetting to the larger community, those that Roberts-Miller taught us will be thought uncivil no matter how gently articulated.

At the heart of Carmichael’s message in 1966 and 1967 lies the justificatory insistence that the accumulation of Black Power is necessary because institutional racism persists in the face of traditional modes of redress. While Carmichael’s critics focus responses on the incivility of his language, the more important incivility, the one they effectively obscure is that which forms the greatest threat to community harmony. Carmichael’s name-calling of prominent politicians had very little potential to disrupt the harmony of a “community committed to injustice” (Roberts-Miller, *Deliberative Conflict* 154). His institutional critique, though, questioned the foundations of U.S. social, economic, and, particularly, political systems that seemed always to leave black people on the bottom. That critique threatened the national identities, racial hierarchies, and cherished narratives of those he addressed. Regardless of Carmichael’s tone, emotion, or lexical

choices, his institutional critique was going to be framed, in Bejan's words, as "beyond the pale of conversational community" (9).

In that context, the news media's monofocus on Carmichael's uncivil language can be understood as diversionary, as holding to one type of civility when real concern lies in the fear that their own community's incivility—protected by a civil harmony—might be discovered. The result is an obscuring that traces across generations and confuses important historical and rhetorical narratives. Carmichael's case is hardly unique; instead it instructs concerning the ways that the media engages with black radical rhetoric, past and present. Carmichael's case serves as a reminder that narratives about black radicals are not to be taken at face value, that they remain a fruitful site of scholarly engagement.

His case also demonstrates the utility of a scholarship on civility for better understanding the rhetoric of some of our most important activist voices, responses to them, and the longer narratives that trace from those engagements. Carmichael, with the type of dissociation that we will get into in the final chapter called for "true" integration. This chapter functions as one small step in the direction of theorizing a "true" civility, one which is concerned with the civility of ideas rather than lexical choices, one that refuses to trade a concern for humanity for a concern for nice words.

Chapter 2: Demagoguery, Reverse-Racism, and *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*

And no one accepts blame. And there is no “white power structure” doing it to them. And they are in that condition “because they are lazy and don’t want to work.” And this is not colonialism. And this is the land of the free. And people should not become alienated.

But people do become alienated.

—*Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, 23*

Calling Stokely Carmichael a demagogue had developed nearly into a cottage industry between the summers 1966 and 1967. Journalists, pundits, politicians, editorialists and lay critics didn’t always agree when assessing SNCC’s new chairman and his call for power, but on one point they were clear—Stokely Carmichael was a demagogue. When the Summerhill neighborhood in Atlanta erupted in violence in September of 1966, *Time Magazine* reported that it came as a “perverse triumph for Stokely Carmichael, 25, the fiery Negro *demagogue* who leads the Atlanta based Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee” (“Stokely’s Spark” 37). After Carmichael spoke at the massive spring mobilization against the draft in 1967, *Life Magazine* reported that, of the speakers headlining the event, “the star demagogue was Stokely Carmichael” (Wainwright 30B). Some charges of demagoguery underscored Carmichael’s perceived racism, others his violence, and still others his lack of patriotism. Often, they did all three.

In April of 1967, for example, both houses of the Tennessee State legislature busied themselves with denouncing Stokely Carmichael as a demagogue, a racist, a fomenter of violence, and a traitor to the United States. In response to Vanderbilt University’s decision to allow Stokely Carmichael to appear alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. at the upcoming

IMPACT Summit, Tennessee State Senators Jerry Agee, Marshall Nave, and Halbert Harvill authored Senate Joint Resolution 35 (SJR35), declaring that “The Tennessee State General Assembly wholly disapproves of the wisdom and judgment of the ‘Impact’ planners in lending to this *dangerous and unprincipled demagogue* the dignity of its platforms” (my emphasis, Tennessee, Congress, House. 434). Agee, Nave, and Harvill couple the charge of demagoguery with grievances that Carmichael is a racist, a traitor, and a promoter violence, writing that “Mr. Stokely Carmichael has been quoted in all news media recently as advocating ‘Black Power’ and as spreading as widely as his ability to gain an audience will permit, doctrines of race-hate and incitements to violence” (Tennessee, Congress, Senate 433). They write that Carmichael, “Under the Free Speech Provision of the Constitutions of a government which he despises and urges others to disobey, spread his racist poison and his anti-American doctrine” (Tennessee, Congress, Senate 434).

SJR 35 inaccurately describes Carmichael as a “non-citizen guest of the United States” (Tennessee, Congress, Senate 433), and this concern with Carmichael’s citizenship status is intensified in a resolution passed by the Tennessee House of Representatives just days after the introduction of SJR 35 (Tennessee, Congress, House 1261). The first resolution passed in the Senate, but was voted down in the house on grounds that it suppressed free speech (Tennessee, Congress, House, Debate on Resolution 13). However, when days of urban unrest followed Carmichael’s speeches in Nashville and neighboring areas (correlation not causation), the Tennessee House—seemingly as penance for failing to pass the resolution that originated in the senate—introduced its own, not just denouncing

Stokely Carmichael, but aiming at removing him from the United States (Tennessee, Congress, House, 1261).

House Resolution 13, authored by Representative Harry Lee Senter of Bristol county, argues that “the Attorney General of the United States be urged to initiate deportation proceedings against Mr. Stokely Carmichael, who seems to hate this country so much” (Tennessee, Congress, House, 1261). Senter argues that Carmichael—who he calls, on the House floor, an “insidious enemy and an unscrupulous demagogue” (“Tenn. Demands U.S. Deport Carmichael” 18)—is “not a citizen of the United States” and “has been going about loudly advocating the overthrow, by force and violence, of the government of the United States” (Tennessee, Congress, House, 1261). Because Carmichael is an “alien” and “does not comport himself as a guest,” he should be forced to leave a country “that he patently does not like and whose citizens in turn are at least beginning to tire of the pleasure of Mr. Carmichael’s company” (Tennessee, Congress, House, 1261). The resolution was approved with a nearly unanimous vote.

In the previous chapter I argued that Carmichael’s critics used civility policing to dismiss him, to protect a racist status quo, and to frame him as culpable for a host of undesirable outcomes. I argued that these three combined to erase Carmichael’s humanity and allowed his critics to badly write him into historical narratives, especially those that opposed him to Martin Luther King, Jr. In this chapter, I focus on a more particular rhetorical concept—demagoguery—that Carmichael’s critics weaponized in the process of civility policing. My argument is three-fold. First, Carmichael’s critic’s engage in

demagoguery according to both historical and contemporary definitions, and they do so while charging Stokely Carmichael with being a demagogue.

Second, the charge of demagoguery constitutes a particularly appealing tool for silencing anti-racist activist rhetoric, especially in the racial-political context that followed the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Bills. That is, in contexts where *all* references to race are understood as equally racist, the charge of demagoguery has the potential to conflate rhetoric that recognizes racial divisions with that which creates and exploits them. And, third, Carmichael's own rhetoric both evades charges of demagoguery and exposes his critics' rhetoric as demagogic.

To better understand the accusation of demagoguery, I look at criticisms ranging from small town editorials, to letters written to J. Edgar Hoover, to congressional resolutions. To better understand Carmichael's position relative to charges of demagoguery and his responses to them, I reference an array of his written and spoken words covering the period in question, and I give particular emphasis to *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, the book Carmichael co-authored with professor of political science, Charles V. Hamilton. I don't, however, perform traditional analysis of *Black Power*; I instead reference it as the most comprehensive collection of Carmichael's thoughts in the year following the release of "Black Power." I understand the book as both exemplifying Carmichael's political philosophy and as answering his critics, particularly those who label him a demagogue.

Because I understand the accusation of demagoguery as a subset of the larger indictment of incivility, insights gained in the previous chapter reemerge even as the

chapter centers historical and current scholarly understandings of “demagoguery,” a term that has, in light of current political realities, again caught the attention of scholars in rhetoric. Marnie Lawler McDonough, for example, writes that “the mainstreaming of the rhetoric of demagoguery demands resuscitated attention to this topic” (152), and Skinnel and Murphy in the introduction to a recent *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* special issue devoted entirely to the topic of “demagoguery” argue, “We have never been more relevant. Rhetoricians are well positioned and well trained to describe what demagoguery is, where it resides, how it works rhetorically, and how we might resist it” (229). A new scholarship on demagoguery has emerged, including essays by Patricia Roberts-Miller (“Demagoguery”), Ryan Skinnel, Jennifer Mercieca (“Dangerous Demagogues”), Michael Steudeman (“Demagoguery”; “Rethinking”), Marnie Lawler McDonough, and CV Vitolo-Haddad and monographs by Roberts-Miller (*Demagoguery and Democracy* and *Rhetoric & Demagoguery*) and Mercieca (*Demagogue for President*).¹⁸ As this scholarship renews “demagoguery” as a scholarly term of critique, though, Stokely Carmichael’s case reminds of the carefulness with which that project must be carried out. The term “demagoguery” can better serve democratic purposes when we account for the ways it has been misused to discredit activist voices of the past.

¹⁸ Scholars in this group writing before the 2016 election include Roberts-Miller (2005) and Joshua Gunn (2007)

HISTORICAL DEMAGOGUERY: EMOTIONALISM, DISHONESTY, AND RACISM

Carmichael's critics often compare him to historical demagogues, including Theodore Bilbo, Joseph McCarthy, George Wallace, Lester Maddux, and George Lincoln Rockwell. Columnist Bruce Galphin, for example, writes in the *Atlanta Constitution* that Carmichael's "social philosophy is strictly black Bilbo." He continues, "We Southerners in particular should recognize the technique [using demagoguery], since demagogues dot our historical landscape. We know them best in white skin, but the basic rules work for any race, creed or color" ("Stokely Carmichael" 4). Nearly a year later this same writer continues his dismissal of Carmichael as a demagogue. After Carmichael warned an Atlanta audience of police violence and then police violence followed, Galphin writes, "It is a beautiful example of a self-fulfilling prophecy, no different from the white Mississippi demagogues" who warned that of anti-black racial violence ("Making the Worst Come True" 4). Galphin concludes, "The golden era of demagogues was before my time, but I have seen some pretty effective ones" ("Making the Worst Come True" 4).

Of course, scholarship concerned with demagoguery predates even traditional demagogues like Bilbo. In his famous 19th Century treatise on American democracy, James Fenimore Cooper described the demagogue as one who "appeals to passions and prejudices rather than reason, and is in all respects a man of intrigue and deception" (98). For Cooper, the demagogue is "of sly cunning and management, instead of manifesting the frank, fearless qualities of the democracy he so prodigally professes" (98). While definitions of demagoguery vary widely both historically and at present, the central features of Fenmore Cooper's definition trace across time. These include (1) the charge that a rhetor

is appealing to emotions instead of using logical arguments, (2) that the rhetor is exploiting prejudice, and (3) that the rhetor in question is dishonest and/or insincere.

These three facets are certainly present in definitions circulating at mid-century. Reinhard Luthin, for example, opens his 1954 tome on southern demagogues by asking “What is a demagogue?” (3). His answer: “He is a politician skilled in oratory, flattery, and invective; evasive in discussing vital issues; promising everything to everybody; *appealing to the passions* rather than the reason of the public; and arousing racial, religious, and class prejudices” (my emphasis, 3). Luthin frames the demagogue's promises as insincere and his appeals as overly emotional. Similarly, Barnet Baskerville in a study of Joseph McCarthy writes of the demagogue, “In achieving his ends he tells the people what they wish to hear; he makes effective use of personalized invective and catch phrases; he uses causes and issues when they serve his purpose, drops them when they do not; he plays upon the ‘mass mind,’ substituting *heat for light, emotion for thought*” (my emphasis 9).

This concern that “heat” has been traded for “light” is the most consistently articulated feature of demagogic rhetoric, and, as evident in Luthin and Baskerville’s definitions provided above, those concerned with demagoguery construct emotion and reason as opposed and mutually exclusive categories. Of course, not every writer makes the case of mutual exclusion. Lomas, for example, writes that the demagogue “substitutes oversimplification for simplicity and directness, bogus evidence for genuine facts, pseudoreasoning for honest argument, emotionalism for *factually based emotional appeal*, and loaded language for colorful language” (my emphasis, *The Agitator* 19). Lomas at least concedes that not all emotional argument is irrational, but such an acknowledgment is the

exception, a point demonstrated in Kerry Owens' summary of Allan Louis Larson: "Those who pander to passion, prejudice, bigotry and ignorance, *rather than reason*, fall into the category of demagogue" (320). Passion "rather than reason" marks the demagogue's appeal. The consistent framing of the two terms as oppositional suggests that charges of demagoguery were not simply charges that a speaker was overly emotional, they were also charges that a speaker was irrational, and therein lies the dynamism of "demagoguery" as not only a term of critique, but also as a term of dismissal. Observing the emotional qualities of a rhetor's appeal may damage that rhetor's ethos, but charging someone with irrationality frames that person's argument as nonsensical, impenetrable, or otherwise unworthy of consideration.

That accusation is especially serious when paired with the charge, as articulated by Luthin, that "demagoguery is the process by which skillful speakers and writers try to influence public opinion by using the traditional tools of rhetoric *with complete indifference to the truth*" (Lomas, *The Agitator* 19). In a review of the literature on demagoguery Justin Gustainis writes that with few exceptions, "studies conclude that the demagogue is a liar, or, at least, that he finds questions of truth to be irrelevant" (157). Gustainis also summarizes Lomas' answers to "why the demagogue and truth are nodding acquaintances, at best, if not total strangers" (16). These include that "the demagogue may be so ignorant as to be unable to distinguish truth from falsehood," that "he may employ deliberate deception because it allows him to achieve his goals, and that "his own prejudices may prevent him from seeking the truth" ("Rhetoric of Demagoguery" 16). This final reasoning—the concern with prejudice—is of particular relevance when considering

accusations of demagoguery leveled at those, like Carmichael, whose anti-racist discourse drew attention to racial divisions.

Scholars of demagoguery conclude that personal prejudice had the potential, though, not only to separate the demagogue from truth, but they were also united in identifying the exploitation of prejudice as the demagogue's most predictable strategy for soliciting emotional response. While the concern with prejudice is evident in definitions already rendered, Wilma Dykeman makes the argument in explicit terms. She writes that once a crowd gathers, the Southern demagogue celebrates white men, expresses concern for the protection of women, vilifies the banker and the intellectual, and, then, "At the climax he deals a body blow to the specter of miscegenation" (558). "On the horrors of racial intermingling he dwells long and graphically.... His stand on this issue is firm and unequivocal—and unchallenged" (558). In fact, "Race," Dykeman argues, "is the one factor which binds together the whole fabric of Southern politics. It is the fundamental cause by which to explain Southern demagoguery" (566). While Luthin, expresses a similar thought at the end of *Southern Demagogues*, he refuses to limit the demagogic exploitation of racial prejudice to the American South: "While on the surface there appeared to be vast differences among northern and southern demagogues, most of them exploited race and religion in their campaign for power" (302).

Those making the accusation at midcentury certainly understood a demagogue to be, as Josh Gunn wrote in a more recent study centered on Huey P. Long, "[a] passionate person who appeals to the emotions of an audience" (7). But conceptions of demagoguery

in circulation in Carmichael's moment also include charges that the demagogue is a lying and irrational racist.

CALLING STOKELY CARMICHAEL A DEMAGOGUE

Carmichael's critics inconsistently applied definitions of demagoguery, but on the three points outlined above, they shared broad agreement. In their view, Stokely Carmichael was—like Theodore Bilbo, Huey Long, or George Wallace—a rhetor who privileged emotional appeals, who did so to exploit racial division, and who refused to be constrained by the truth in the process. A contributor to the *Baltimore Sun*, for example, writes in January of 1967 that “The traditional white Southern demagogues” exploited racial divisions “for selfish reasons” (“Demagoguery” A12). “When the South was still largely a poverty stricken area,” this writer argues, “such politicians found they could work against the best interests of the white tenant farmer and textile worker if they were clever enough in exploiting racial animosity” (“Demagoguery” A12). He concludes, “Carmichael's style is so similar to that of the Eugene Talmadges and the Ben Tillmans and other such humbugs, that it is not hard to believe those who claim his aim is similar” (“Demagoguery” A12).

Eugene Patterson, another contributor to the *Atlanta Constitution*, condemns Carmichael in the wake of rioting that broke out in Atlanta, stating that Carmichael follows a “twisted path” (4). In early September long standing tensions were strained when a police officer shot an unarmed black man in Atlanta's Summerhill neighborhood (Joseph, *Stokely* 139). Carmichael arrived on the scene and used incendiary language, urging residents to

demonstrate in response (Joseph, *Stokely* 139). Though Carmichael was gone before violence erupted, Atlanta's Mayor Ivan Allen (and, subsequently, many across the nation) blamed SNCC and Carmichael for the rioting that followed (Joseph, *Stokely* 139).

According to Peniel Joseph, Carmichael would eventually be arrested and charged with “inciting a riot and disturbing the peace,” though “Atlanta officials debated whether to charge Carmichael with insurrection, a crime that carried the death penalty in Georgia” (Joseph, *Stokely* 142). In the wake of these incidents Patterson—connecting Carmichael's rhetoric, urban unrest, and waning enthusiasm for civil rights—blames “Black Power” for the Senate's failure to pass the 1966 Civil Rights Bill (4). “Black Power,” according to Patterson, is “foolishness and folly,” gaining in popularity only because “a few demagogues can recruit savage mobs” (4). “Negro demagogues did it as effectively in Summerhill and on the Boulevard,” he writes, “as white bullies did it in Grenada” (4). According to Patterson, “They [demagogues] can dazzle the inexperienced or the unknowing” (4). His evidence: “[W]itness campus enthusiasm for Carmichael that rivals poor white belief in Lester Maddox” (4).¹⁹

Some commenters aligned Carmichael's “demagoguery,” his perceived exploitation of racial resentment, not only with the rhetoric of traditional Southern demagogues, but also with even more overt forms of racism. A University of North

¹⁹ Maddox, of course, is the rabid segregationist politician who became Georgia's governor on a state's rights platform and who gained notoriety by confronting civil rights activists aiming to integrate his restaurant (Severo). In 1964 Maddox got word that sit-in activists were coming to integrate his restaurant. He and his customers armed themselves and confronted the activists, successfully turning them around.

Carolina student, for example, wrote these racist words in the *Daily Tar Heel*: “Catering to the whims of rioters who value stolen whiskey more than gainful employment, he [Stokely Carmichael] comes very close to being a true demagogue—Governor Wallace-style” (Rothman 2). “Come to think of it,” this contributor continues, “it’s too bad Stokely isn’t white like Governor Wallace (Rothman 2). Then he could be where he belongs—in the Klan” (Rothman 2).

Those accusing Stokely Carmichael of demagoguery very often find his arguments and the racism of white supremacists to be indistinguishable. For example, one editorialist declares that “Stokely Carmichael is a fool” before arguing (with a weak understanding of historical timelines), “The Klan and the White Citizens Council [...] have been repeating one refrain for two hundred years: WHITE POWER” (Stewart 59). According to this writer, marching and “chanting black power” offer “no solutions” (Stewart 59). “Black Power, and the resentment and hunger for recognition, were always there,” he claims, but, “[o]nly a shallow demagogue would stoop to releasing those dark passions” (Stewart 59).

For Carmichael’s critics, his emotional and racist demagoguery is anything but benign. The editorial board of the *Waco News-Tribune* begins, “Stokely the negro self-proclaimed civil rights leader, in fact is a dangerous demagogue who passionately advocates Negroes shedding the blood of whites and seems to be leading a charmed life” (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces Expected Results” 4). “Carmichael,” according to the board, “is one of the most dangerous men in the nation, not solely because he is a Negro conspirator against peace between the races, but because he is being allowed to tear Negro and white relationships apart and produce chaos” (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces

Expected Results” 4). “He perverts facts, blames whites for the Negroe’s [sic] own failures, and,” according to the board, “says if the Negroes follow him he will give them all they ask for, and for free” (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces Expected Results” 4). “How long,” they ask, “will emotional Negroes continue to support him at the risk of blighting their civil rights gains and their future?” (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces Expected Results” 4).

Collectively, those accusing Carmichael of demagoguery in 1966 and 1967 find him guilty of the three characteristics identified in the early scholarship on demagoguery. Carmichael stands accused of “releasing dark passions” and of exploiting racial division, and, as demonstrated in the last quote (and, in alignment with the historical definition of “demagoguery”) Carmichael’s critics believe that he “perverts facts” along the way. Note that critics use these charges to parallel his words with those of overt white supremacists, thus rhetorically constructing a false equivalency between Carmichael’s anti-racist rhetoric and the anti-black racism that he counters. The chapter returns in the concluding section to explore the operation of such a move within the colorblind racial-political context that followed the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Bills.

RETHINKING DEMAGOGUERY

As the project turns toward more recent scholarship on demagoguery, it is worth noting that scholars at midcentury weren’t entirely unaware of demagoguery’s problems. In a review of the older scholarship on demagoguery, Justin Gustainis summarizes Charles Lomas’s thoughts given in *The Agitator in American Society*: “Although the agitator may

resort to demagoguery, agitative rhetoric is not, in itself, demagogic” (155). More recently Ryan Skinnel has distinguished “dissent” from “demagoguery,” arguing “that the former exists to make best-government-in-practice more fair and responsive to the ‘common good’” (261). Still others have split the difference, arguing that activists often use demagoguery, but that we should attempt to distinguish between good and bad demagogues (Mercieca, “Heroic”; Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective”)

Patricia Roberts-Miller—while attempting to revive “demagoguery” as a term of critique in 2005—identified the tension that animates the scholarly disagreement above as just one manifestation of a central “dilemma” in the field of rhetoric. She writes, “Restrictions regarding ‘reasonable’ behavior have often acted (in consequence, if not intention) to exclude already marginalized groups,” but at the same time, she acknowledges, “there must be some kind of restriction regarding violence, threats, and coercion, or this is no longer deliberation” (“Democracy, Demagoguery, and Critical Rhetoric” 459). Roberts-Miller then asks, “Can we develop a critical rhetoric that articulates standards for good public discourse that does not exclude the already excluded?” (“Democracy, Demagoguery, and Critical Rhetoric” 460). She insists that we can.

Both the history of the term and its current instantiations have in some way reflected this dilemma. Early concern with demagoguery was taken with the term’s normative potential. And I use “early” here as a relative term. Several writers have traced the concern with demagogues to Athenian democracy in the 5th Century B.C.²⁰ This history of

²⁰ See, for example, Michael Signer’s *Demagogue: The Fight to Save Democracy from Its Worst Enemies* 38-70, and Jennifer Mercieca’s *Demagogue For President: The*

demagoguery leads to Athens because as James Fenimore Cooper in *The American Democrat* wrote, “The true theater of a demagogue is democracy, for the body of the community possessing the power, the master he pretends to serve is best able to reward his efforts” (102). Earlier scholars (encountered above), attempt to name undesirable speakers and speech with the term demagoguery, but (as pointed out by more recent scholars), they fail to acknowledge the ways their definitions exclude important activist voices. The words of Carmichael’s critics rendered above demonstrates the point well. Work on demagoguery that trickled in after this period indicated less enthusiasm for the term’s normative potential. In 1989, for example, Steven R. Goldzwig attempted to deal with the tension between norming and exclusion by abandoning the project of using “demagoguery” to name unproductive rhetoric altogether. That is, Goldzwig argues that activist rhetoric is essentially demagogic—the implication being that preserving “demagoguery” as a term of critique necessarily dismisses valuable activist voices.

Within rhetoric, Goldzwig’s essay effectively retired the term “demagoguery” until Roberts-Miller attempted to revive it in 2005. She argues that the term and its normative function are worth preserving, and she attempts to resolve the tension between normativity and exclusion with a nuanced definition of “demagoguery,” one that she hopes is capable of pointing to unproductive rhetoric without universally dismissing activist voices. She defines demagoguery as follows: “Demagoguery is polarizing propaganda that motivates

Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump 22-24, which is the most recent book in rhetoric on the subject.

members of an ingroup to hate and scapegoat some outgroup(s), largely by promising certainty, stability, and what Erich Fromm famously called ‘an escape from freedom’” (“Democracy” 462). Of note is Roberts-Miller’s concern with demagoguery as a discursive field instead of with individual demagogues.

Darsey, Goldzwig, and Hogue and Tell each resist the resuscitation of demagoguery and Roberts-Miller’s definition by expressing anxiety at the term’s potential for exclusion. Darsey, for example, writes that “[Roberts-Miller’s] definition seems to require that I put Eugene Debs in the same ethical class as Joe McCarthy, a move I am not willing to make and a move that historical opinion largely rejects.” (468). Darsey, though, confuses a concern with demagoguery as a discursive field as necessitating ethical-rhetorical classifications of individual demagogues. Darsey is joined by Hogue and Tell who express similar anxiety over the term’s potential for exclusion. They write, “Resurrecting demagoguery might be useful in the effort to fashion a new critical rhetoric, as Roberts-Miller suggests. But unless we dismantle old stereotypes and distinguish carefully between rhetorical and political definitions of the term, ‘demagogue’ will remain ‘more of an epithet than an analytical term’ - a label that we use simply to ‘discredit those who offend our rhetorical or ideological sensibilities’” (480). While one will find little here that actually disagrees with the argument they ostensibly critique, clearly these scholars’ concern for the way the term “demagoguery” can be weaponized outweighs their hope in the term’s normative potential.

As noted above Goldzwig argues that the term demagoguery is exclusionary in another sense. He writes that when scholars use “demagoguery” as a term of critique, they

potentially inhibit continued exploration of rhetorically important figures. He writes, “Rhetorical critics have been demonstrably unwilling to dismiss oppositional, divisive, or strident discourse as part and parcel of these revisionist accounts. To my mind, this is a healthy development” (477). For Goldzwig, as well as Darsey and Hogue and Tell, “demagoguery” is a term of dismissal with little critical or generative potential.

Hogue and Tell argue that the conversation concerning appropriate discourse standards continues in other scholarly corners—or in Jennifer Mercieca’s reading of them and those writing alongside them—that “demagoguery studies were thriving, albeit under other names” (Mercieca 267). If Goldzwig, Darsey, and Hogue and Tell, maintained an interest in shaping the contours of productive public discourse, they were done with “demagoguery” as a term of academic critique, and with these criticisms they inaugurated another long period of scholarly silence on demagoguery in rhetorical studies.

The current analysis of critics that dismiss Stokely Carmichael as a demagogue may seem to affirm the critical scholarship. Carmichael’s critics, in fact, often use the term “demagogue,” uncritically, as an epithet as suggested by Hogue and Tell. In reality, the analysis demonstrates that Roberts-Miller’s critics and Carmichael’s critics align because they apply unproductive definitions. That is, Darsey, Goldzwig, and Hogue and Tell, never seriously consider the potential of more robust and discriminating definitions, including Roberts-Millers. Instead, they fixate on the exclusionary dangers of old ones.

If preoccupation with the term’s potential for exclusion prevented further work on demagoguery, in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, scholarly attention has again shifted to the term’s normative potential. It did so as a public discourse marked by

demagoguery became a cultural-rhetorical norm. Borrowing from Roberts-Miller's 2005 definition, I argue that we inhabit a more conspicuously polarized rhetorical moment, one marked by the scapegoating of the press, women, immigrants, people of color, and most anyone that does not identify as white and male, and one where the President of the United States exacerbates the demagogic present while promising the type of certainty that constitutes "an escape from freedom" (Erich Fromm qtd. in Roberts-Miller "Democracy" 462). That is, as Donald Trump reflected and perpetuated the worst of nationally circulating polarizing discourses, both popular and scholarly interest in the term again picked up, and new work on demagoguery has begun to appear. In Ryan Skinnel's *Faking the News*, for example, scholars in rhetoric—Joshua Gunn, Jennifer Mercieca, Michael Steudeman, Patricia Roberts-Miller, and Skinnel among them—call out the ways that Trump's rhetoric is unproductive, dangerous, or deceptive.

Important to the current study, scholars returning to demagoguery's normative potential this time join Roberts-Miller in attempting discriminating definitions and defining features of demagoguery that better preserve its normative potential while accounting for the term's exclusionary dangers. In one essay from *Faking the News* titled "Demagoguery and the Donald's Duplicitous Victimhood," for example, Steudeman argues that Trump leverages a rhetoric of victimhood to frame his own acts as heroic, writing, "The demagogue's victimhood and strength have a complementary relationship. After all, a person has to be 'under siege' in order to plausibly fend off enemies on all sides" (9). Steudeman claims that such a rhetoric of victimhood allows Trump to convert "issues of policy into questions of identity," and, important for the current project, that Trump's

rhetoric of victimhood creates a false equivalence between his own pain and those he victimizes (11). This is particularly relevant to the current project in connecting the charges of demagoguery and racism. Stuedeman writes, “Being accused of Racism is, Trump suggests, worse than being subjected to it” (14). We will return to this notion later in the essay to understand how and why Stokely Carmichael’s anti-racist rhetoric is itself called racist.

Faking the News was followed by (and in some ways evolved into) a 2019 *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* special issue on demagoguery in which Jennifer Mercieca, Michael Steudeman, CV Vitolo-Haddad, Ryan Skinnel, and Patricia Roberts-Miller elaborated the ways the words of Trump and others like him were demagogic and so diminishing the quality of public debate. Jennifer Mercieca demonstrated the ways Trump, Alex Jones, and Neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin were not “heroic demagogues,” but instead “dangerous” ones that used “weaponized communication,” which she describes as the “strategic use of communication as an instrumental tool and as an aggressive means to gain compliance and avoid accountability” (266). Mercieca described “heroic demagogues” as “legitimate and heroic ‘leaders of the people’ who defend the rights of the people from the other parts of the state and do so by leading justly, respecting the rule of law, and allowing themselves to be held accountable for their words and actions” (270). This particular acknowledgement of “good” demagogues, though, very nearly agrees with Goldzwig that activist rhetoric is inherently demagogic even if some of it is productive. We will see below that Roberts-Miller, in a book-length treatment of demagoguery, leaves the question of “good” demagoguery open even while arguing the existence of some harmless demagoguery. We

will also return to the question of activism as demagoguery and the question of good demagoguery in relation to Carmichael and the call for “Black Power.”

Ryan Skinnel centers a different characteristic of demagoguery, but one also relevant to the current study, as he explicates the often anti-institutional nature of demagoguery. He writes that “Democracies rely on institutions that limit democracy” (254), and that “demagogic rhetoric encompasses, and even prioritizes, arguments that attack the legitimacy of democratic institutions to regulate ‘the will of the people’ (usually very loosely defined)” (255). He continues, “A primary characteristic of demagogic rhetoric is that its practitioners attempt to turn democracy against itself, and they do so by advocating for supercharging the will of the demos to attack the limits of democratic institutions” (255). That is, when Trump incites his popular base to undermine the legitimacy of the press writ large, when he questions the conclusions agreed upon by multiple intelligence agencies, or when he claims the U.S. electoral system is “rigged,” he is being anti-institutional and so demagogic. Again, we will return to Skinnel’s contribution in the analysis to ask how Carmichael—as one who coined the term “institutional racism,” promoted radical democracy, and challenged the legitimacy of several U.S. institutions, including the press—complicates categorizing rhetoric with an anti-institutional agenda as demagogic.

This new scholarship should alleviate the concern that using “demagoguery” as a normative term would stop scholarly conversations. Demagoguery in fact emerges as an incredibly generative term, allowing continually richer understandings of demagogic rhetorics and the rhetors that employ them. Two book length treatments of demagoguery

demonstrate the point well. In *Demagogue for President: The Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump* Jennifer Mercieca traces in granular detail Trump’s demagogic path from longshot hopeful to President of The United States, and along the way she explicates a list of features found in Trump’s particular brand of demagoguery, including paralipsis, reification, ad populum, ad baculum, and, of course, ad hominem. Far from dismissing Trump as a rhetorical figure unworthy of scholarly attention, Mercieca instead dives deep into the rhetorical complexities of the most successful demagogue in American history.

In *Rhetoric and Demagoguery* Patricia Roberts-Miller—choosing not to address the Trump phenomenon directly—offers an even more detailed definition of demagoguery, and she shores up her case for demagoguery as a rhetorical culture (instead of as that which is contingent upon individual demagogues).²¹ Roberts-Miller constructs an impressive list of features that demagoguery often has, but she distills from her definition only a handful of essential characteristics. For demagoguery to be demagoguery, she argues, it must include all of the following: “In-group/out-group(s); Scapegoating of an out-group; Emphasis on identity (which is group membership); Motivism; The insistence that the in-group is victimized; A call for purifying the community of the out-group(s)” (173). Her

²¹ Roberts-Miller’s definition reads as follows: “Demagoguery is a polarizing discourse that promises stability, certainty, and escape from the responsibilities of rhetoric through framing public policy in terms of the degree to which and means by which (not whether) the out-group should be punished/scapegoated for the current problems of the in-group. Public debate largely concerned three stases: group identity (who is in the in-group, what signifies out-group membership, and how loyal rhetors are to the in-group); need (usually framed in terms of how evil the out-group is); what level of punishment to enact against the out-group (restriction of rights to extermination)” (173).

list of non-essential features include “binary paired terms,” “categories grounded in the ontic logos,” “naive realism,” “projection,” “strategic misnaming,” “apocalyptic metanarrative,” “strict father model,” “authoritarianism,” “arguments from personal certainty,” and “deductive reasoning” among others (174). Roberts-Miller then reads these across texts that are not all obviously demagogic.

Far from stopping the conversation these studies along with other recent scholarship on demagoguery constitute a call and a blueprint for studying a variety of rhetoric and rhetors, including those that have been labeled demagogues. That is, when Goldzwig argued that “there is unique purchase in mounting and sustaining reinterpretations of those rhetors who traditionally have been labeled demagogues” (477), he was mistaken only in supposing the statement to counter the utility of “demagoguery” as term of critique. That is, Goldzwig was right to argue for further investigation of those who have been dismissed as demagogues; he just underestimates the term “demagoguery” for carrying out the mission.

THE DEMAGOGUERY OF DEMAGOGUERY

The most interesting thing about the rhetoric of those applying mid-century definitions to denounce Stokely Carmichael as a demagogue is how guilty they are of, well, demagoguery (according to their own definitions). Is it not emotionalism to the end of exploiting prejudice when Carmichael’s critics refer to him—a citizen of the United States—as “foreign” or “alien” or when they continually reference Trinidad or the West Indies as his home? Is it not insincere emotionalism to refer to the “sleazy streets of the

Summerhill district” as did *Time Magazine* when attributing violence in Atlanta to Carmichael (“Stokely’s Spark” 37)? Or to further trade in racist stereotypes of black communities when arguing that Carmichael’s demagoguery plays “to the whims of rioters who value stolen whiskey more than gainful employment (Rothman 2). The project has demonstrated that many denunciations of Carmichael are in fact passionate and play on racial prejudices. Criticisms objective in tone do not begin, “Stokely Carmichael is a fool” (Stewart 59). And it is hardly an objective analysis that parallels an activist that had repeatedly put his life on the line to further the progress of racial equality with racists that have bombed and murdered in the name of white supremacy.

The new scholarship makes clear, however, that definitions of demagoguery applied by Carmichael’s critics are not very useful. Each feature of the mid-century definition is so wildly subjective that one might conclude as did a writer in the *St. Louis Dispatch* that “One man’s demagogue is another man’s prophet” (Hitchcock 2C). Specifically, more recent scholarship argues against emotionalism as the defining feature of demagoguery. This scholarship warns against understanding a demagogue as (in Joshua Gunn’s words) a “passionate person who appeals to the emotions of an audience” (7). The truth is that Carmichael’s denouncers were not wrong because they were emotional or using emotional appeals (there were other reasons), and my application of the old definition is no more useful than those made by Carmichael’s critics.

Their willingness to abandon emotionalism as the defining characteristic of demagoguery divides scholars now writing on demagoguery from those who are without hope in the term’s critical potential. Ryan Skinnel, for example, argues that definitions

centering emotionalism aren't very discerning. He writes that defining demagoguery in terms of "its populist nature, its passionate (and unethical) emotional appeals, its negative consequences, or the deplorable moral character of the rhetor" may not be productive "for distinguishing demagogues from non-demagogues" (250). Patricia Roberts-Miller argues that focusing on emotionalism is unproductive because it distracts. "The problem is not that demagoguery distorts decision making by causing people to be more 'emotional' (whatever that would mean)," she writes, "the problem is that it reduces all issues to questions of in-group loyalty and purity, thereby ensuring we don't deliberate policy" (76). "That reduction," she argues, "can be done with a 'reasonable' tone" (76). From this perspective, the problem when Carmichael's critics categorize him as an angry non-citizen who releases "dark passions" in an audience is not simply that they are wrong (they are), but it is that their conversation centers on Carmichael's tone and outgroup identity instead of on his institutional critique.

For more recent scholars, the defining feature of demagoguery is not emotionalism, but division. Roberts-Miller writes that "in a culture of demagoguery all political issues are reduced to the question of in-group (good) and out-group (bad)" (*Rhetoric* 2). In a culture of demagoguery, she argues, the in-group focuses on anything but the outgroup's arguments. The in-group instead speaks of the out-group's identity and motives and their own status as victims (of the out-group) (*Rhetoric* 17).

As can be seen in the criticisms quoted thus far, in 1966 and 1967, references to Carmichael's identity and motives are prevalent while serious engagement with his institutional critique is shockingly absent. We might also understand the *manner* in which

Carmichael's critics accomplished such a distracting demagogic division (in place of productive deliberation) as "reification" according to Jennifer Mercieca's use of the term in *Demagogue for President* (32). Noting that the term's latin root is "thing," Mercieca argues that Donald Trump's demagoguery objectifies and dehumanizes—when he describes Syrian refugees as a "Trojan Horse" or when he calls for a ban on Muslims, for example. Carmichael's critics similarly frame him as a racial, cultural, and national outsider who threatens the safety of the United States. Both Tennessee congressional resolutions referenced at the outset of this chapter, for example, spend substantial ink establishing Carmichael's otherness and acknowledge nothing of substance in either Carmichael or his words. HR 13 introduces "Mr. Stokely Carmichael" as "a citizen of Trinidad, British West Indies" and, specifically, as "not a citizen of the United States" (Tennessee, Congress, House 1261). Similarly, SJR 35 introduces SNCC's chairman as "a non-citizen guest of the United States" who "has repeatedly violated the hospitality of this country by insulting its elected officials, attempting to dishonor its armed forces and their purposes in a bitter war in Viet Nam" (Tennessee, Congress, House. 433). And Carmichael, the alien outsider constitutes a threat as he attempts to do all this, "to persuade others to ignore their obligation to serve their country's flag in a time of need *and danger*" (my emphasis, Tennessee, Congress, House. 433).

A monofocus on issues of outgroup identity constitutes just one way that demagoguery avoids the responsibility of democratic deliberation. Roberts-Miller identifies another. She writes that "motivism" is an essential feature of demagoguery, and she defines it as "the dismissal of an argument purely on the grounds that the person making

the argument has bad motives” (25). The danger of motivism, according to Roberts-Miller, is that “it depoliticizes policy deliberation by replacing argumentation about policies with non-falsifiable assertions about motives” (25).

Critics who indicate little understanding of Carmichael’s words express certainty that he is ill-motivated when speaking them. Bruce Galphin, who we saw charging Carmichael with demagoguery above, doesn’t know exactly what motivates Carmichael, but he knows it isn’t good. “Make no mistake about it,” he writes, “Stokely Carmichael and his Snick cohorts would not be content if the people of Dixie Hills suddenly had good jobs, pleasant homes, parks and the other goals they now speak of” (“Making the Worst Come True” 4). Some more clearly indicate that Carmichael’s motives are selfish: “Men like Stokely Carmichael are interested only in power for themselves and for those who agree with them” (Woodruff 2A). Some argue that his motives are anarchistic: “He is not merely turning his back on the best interests of the black man. Destructiveness is an end in itself” (Noyes 6). “The more damage he is able to do to the cause of the Negro,” this writer argues, “the more power he will wield” (Noyes 6). Still others thought his motives were connected to the global threat of Communism. “He is more red than black” said the Coordinator for the John Birch Society in Tennessee before Carmichael’s speech at Vanderbilt University (qtd. in Welch 7).

The problem is not that Carmichael’s critics are wrong about his motives (again, they are), but that they substitute motivistic assertions for debate of his arguments and their policy implications. Carmichael’s critics don’t debate; instead they condemn and accuse. They accuse him, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, of almost single-handedly

destroying the civil rights movement. They blame him for the failure of the 1966 Civil Rights Bill, for the successful election of conservative politicians, and a general “white backlash.” And as is clear in the writings of Carmichael’s critics encountered above, they blame him for racism and violence. That is, another central feature of demagoguery is scapegoating, which Roberts-Miller argues is “when the in-group holds the out-group responsible for something the outgroup didn’t do at all, or for which it is only partially responsible” (16). Certainly, the causes of each effect laid at the feet of Carmichael are multiple and complex, but in the writings of Carmichael’s critics they are simple and sure.

The charge (that we’ve encountered at length in the previous chapter) that an anti-racist activist is the one responsible for racism is a particularly demagogic twist and one that, when considering Michael Stuedeman’s thoughts, can be seen as another distraction from policy deliberation, this time one that is dependent on a rhetoric of victimhood. Stuedeman writes that “It is through a rhetoric of victimhood that Trump converts issues of policy into questions of identity” (11). According to Stuedeman, instead of dealing with arguments, demagogues, scapegoat an outgroup and claim that that outgroup is victimizing them. In the case of Carmichael’s critics, they express exasperation that Carmichael would talk of America or white America as racist. Stuedeman, using two other scholars, argues that the false claim to victimhood allows one to rhetorically construct pain and to then parallel their rhetorically constructed pain with the pain of actual victims of oppression. Stuedeman quotes Lauren Berlant (who quotes Patricia G. Davis): “When two claims of pain are set side-by-side, it is possible to draw false equivalencies between them. As rhetorical scholar Patricia G. Davis says, it only takes a short leap from this equivocation

to decide that ‘claims of racism, rather than racism itself...inflict injury upon those who are accused of racist behavior’” (12). In Carmichael’s case, this move allows them to parallel Carmichael’s accusations that white America is racist with the actual racism of those who have burned, bombed, lynched in the name of white supremacy. We have seen that it is a common move among Carmichael’s critics to compare him to the Klan, Rockwell, and South African Apartheid.

These critics were concerned with the worrisome effects of his dangerous racism or demagoguery. Roberts-Miller argues that demagoguery frames the outgroup’s actions as causing desperate situations, and she writes, “Desperate times require desperate measures” (*Rhetoric and Demagoguery* 22). “[T]hose desperate measures are usually some kind of punitive policies that will control out-group behavior, prevent in-group/out-group contact, or purify the in-group” (22). Carmichael, in 1966 and 1967, is framed as a patsy of Communists and as fomenting violence across the United States. Dean O’Meara, for example, in a highly esteemed law journal, accuses Carmichael of being a “stooge” of the Communists, and he describes Carmichael as “a violent character” who “seems to breed riots” (O’Meara 1107, 1109). And we’ve already encountered critics concerned with Carmichael’s potential to spread violence and racism, and they articulate that concern in hyperbolic terms that indicate that the Carmichael situation is getting out of hand, is becoming desperate.

Carmichael’s critics, in demagogic fashion, were eager to meet a desperate situation with desperate measures. Take, for example, the previously referenced provision proposed by Representative Cramer as an amendment to the failed 1966 Civil Rights Bill. This “anti-

riot” amendment proposed to make interstate travel for the purposes of inciting a riot a federal crime, and it seemed a strange companion to a civil rights bill imagined to protect civil rights workers and which would have inaugurated Open Housing in the U.S. When Cramer proposed the amendment to provision V of the bill, he argued, “This is an anti-riot, this is an anti-Rockwell, this is an anti-Ku Klux Klan amendment” (qtd in “1966 Civil Rights Act Dies in the Senate”).

Given that Cramer is a Southern politician who voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act and who will emerge as a leading voice against school bussing for the purposes of integration, his concern for quelling white supremacy is specious at best (“H.R. 7152”; Reed 17). More likely his concern is with urban rioting linked to Carmichael and “Black Power” in the public imaginary, and his parallel of urban rebellion with Rockwell is made possible only by a rhetorically constructed victimhood that parallels his oppression with that of actual victims in the manner referenced by Stuedeman. This move reflects those we’ve seen Carmichael’s critics make between black militant demand and anti-black racism encountered thus far in the study.

The 1966 Bill failed without enough votes to override a filibuster, but Cramer would again introduce his anti-riot legislation the following year. This time the connection is clear in his mind: “I don’t think there is any question but that this will go a long way toward controlling the activities of Stokely Carmichael, Lincoln Rockwell, and the Ku Klux Klan or anybody else who causes a riot,” Cramer said (“Salons Push Bill Aimed at Stokely Carmichael” A13). It will bring the FBI into the picture to determine what national effort is being made, what national organizations exist that are promoting this sort of thing,

which is approaching national conspiracy” (“Salons Push Bill Aimed at Stokely Carmichael” A13). And by the time it was signed into law as part of the 1968 Civil Rights Act, many would refer to the anti-riot provision as the “Stokely Carmichael Act” (Brown 22, footnote 127).²²

Even without the anti-riot provision signed into law, Lyndon Johnson and his cabinet in the fall of 1967 were leaning heavily on Attorney General Ramsey Clark to prosecute Carmichael according to existing law for “conspiracy to incite riots” (Brown 17; footnote 97). Legal scholar Lonnie T. Brown writes that in the wake of rioting in the summer of 1967, Lyndon Johnson and his cabinet met to discuss the possibility of prosecuting Carmichael. Brown writes that in the August second meeting Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John Gardner were among those who pressed Clark to prosecute Carmichael for conspiracy to incite a riot (Brown 22). Clark’s responses included that the Justice Department had a close watch on Carmichael and any attempt to prosecute on conspiracy to riot charges would be overturned upon appeal (Brown 22).²³

Brown expresses some confusion, though, at both the administration’s and Attorney General’s monofocus on conspiracy charges when, according to Brown, Carmichael’s

²² According to the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, much of the two days spent debating the bill was spent denouncing Stokely Carmichael and other militant activists (“Bill to Protect Civil Rights Workers Passes House”).

²³ Brown also records that “the FBI and Vice President Hubert Humphrey sought to employ enhanced microphone surveillance of his activities” and that Clark continually resisted such measures (17, footnote 97). Also, the Kerner Commission was also called to investigate riots that took place in the summer of 1967.

statements against the draft could have been more successfully prosecuted (Brown 22). As we've already seen, Carmichael's critics certainly concerned themselves with what they saw as his anti-American demagoguery. American Legion Posts in Nashville and surrounding areas, for example, adopted resolutions calling Carmichael a "demagogue" and a "rabble rousing denouncer of the United States and its policies" ("Carmichael Charge Filed" 24). The Tennessee state legislature seemed to find Carmichael's statements against the draft nearly as disconcerting as his potential to incite violence. As noted in Brown, Joseph O'Meara, Dean of Notre Dame's law school, made a convincing case in the *American Bar Association Journal* for prosecuting Carmichael on charges related to his anti-draft rhetoric (Brown 24). In that piece, titled "No Man Is Above the Law" O'Meara argues that Carmichael's statements urging young men to resist the draft violate Title 18, Section 2388 and Title 50, Section 462 of federal law. Violation of the first statute is to be punished by no more than ten-thousand dollars and twenty years imprisonment (1108). As pointed to by Brown, O'Meara writes that "Carmichael's language is more violent, more provocative, more likely to inflame young men against conscription and to defy the draft than the statements made by Schenck and Miller [a previous case that was successfully prosecuted]" (Brown 24; O'Meara 1109). "I submit," O'Meara argues, "that Stokely Carmichael is guilty of attempting to sabotage the draft and should be prosecuted without further delay" (O'Meara 1110).²⁴

²⁴ O'Meara's opinion did not go unchallenged. Three months later Maurice Kelman mounted, in the same journal, a convincing rebuttal to O'Meara's argument.

While cries to prosecute Carmichael echoed across the nation, some desired even more extreme forms of punishment. The Tennessee State Legislature's two resolutions with which I opened the chapter not only take issue with Carmichael's anti-war and draft-resistance rhetoric, they find his un-American demagoguery so intolerable that they wish him deported from the United States. This is where the demagogic call for purifying the outgroup becomes most clear. The reasons expressed for wanting Carmichael deported varied. Some concerned themselves with the potential of Carmichael's words to incite violence, some with his un-American rhetoric, and many did both. One editorialist writes, "We hear a lot of talk about a long hot summer. As a mere suggestion, I would say deport Stokely Carmichael, who isn't even a citizen" (Copeland 4A). Another contributor writes, "I was really surprised to see Stokely Carmichael's impudent face on the front of the best paper around here, when we know his background and Russian inspiration....Why not deport Stokely Carmichael like Josephine Baker" (Bentley 4D). And the racist editorial board for the *Johnson City Press* writes, "Personally, we don't believe that Stokely Carmichael ought to serve in the armed services of the United States. He'd be no credit to the ranks....The best way to handle him would be to make him feel the fire of that higher law [a reference to one of Carmichael's oft-used lines]—deport him back to whatever pigsty origin in the West Indies he once claimed as home" ("What Other Editors are Saying" 4).

Some thought it prudent to take their concerns with Carmichael's presence in the United States directly to the head of the FBI. One concerned citizen, whose name has been redacted in declassified FBI documents, addresses his letter to "Mr. Hoover" (Letter to J.

Edgar Hoover, 8 September 1966). “Wherever Stokely Carmichael goes,” this citizen writes, “there is rioting, violence and murder, so there is plenty of action accompanying his talk (Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 8 September 1966). “I believe that Stokely Carmichael and his organization are threats to our national security” (Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 8 September 1966). He concludes, “Does the FBI consider Stokely Carmichael a threat to the security of the United States. [sic] If so, why has he not been deported?” (Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 8 September 1966).

Another concerned citizen (whose name has also been redacted) writes, “Was shocked at the remarks of Stokely Carmichael. I consider it a threat of insurrection. Does this man have his American naturalization papers...or is he a subject of Trinidad? I consider him very dangerous, and if he is not an American should be deported” (Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 21 Aug. 1966). Hoover responds to another writer whom he addresses as Mrs. Lee: “You may be interested to know that matters regarding naturalization and deportation are not within the investigative jurisdiction of the FBI.” He offers, “I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of your communication to the commissioner of Immigration Naturalization Services, U.S. Department of Justice 119 D Street, Northeast Washington D. C.” (Hoover 38).

Note that embedded within these letters and other criticisms encountered thus far is a threat of demagogic purification even more severe than imprisonment or even deportation. That is, many use words such as “sedition,” “insurrection,” or “treason.” Not to be outdone by their Tennessee counterparts, for example, both houses of the Alabama State legislature affirm in April of 1967 a resolution accusing Carmichael of “sedition and

treason,” and they send a copy (as did the Tennessee legislature) to Attorney General Ramsay Clark (“Ala. Senate Rips Stokely Carmichael” 2; “Carmichael Cited” 2). Peniel Joseph informed us (above) that when Atlanta officials considered Carmichael’s fate in the wake of rioting in their city, they “debated whether to charge Carmichael with insurrection, a crime that carried the death penalty in Georgia” (*Stokely* 142).

Similarly, treason was a crime that was in 1966 and 1967 punishable by death. “Sedition” was (and still is) a crime punishable by death, though under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which is applicable only to service members (“10 U.S. Code §894. Art. 94. Mutiny or Sedition”). That little chance existed of Carmichael being tried for such high crimes doesn’t diminish the existence of a demagogic rhetorical culture. While it is unlikely that Carmichael would be sentenced to death according to any of these statutes, important for the current study is that a discursive culture existed within which such suggestions were commonplace.

Clearly, according to more recent scholarly conceptions of demagoguery, Carmichael’s critics participate in a demagogic culture marked not simply by emotionalism, but by division, scapegoating, and purification in the form of imprisonment, deportation, or worse. Interestingly, Carmichael, a natural rhetorician, was ever aware of his critic’s bad faith argumentation. It would be anachronistic, of course, to claim that Carmichael had in mind the features of Roberts-Miller’s definition of demagoguery. However, he returns charges levied by his critics in ways that frame his critics as demagogic according to new definitions. I turn now to Carmichael’s words.

CRITIQUING INSTITUTIONS

The term demagoguery, by any definition, has the potential to dismiss or condemn. The promise of the most recent scholarship on demagoguery, though, is that when properly defined the term might also discern. The avenue traveled in this next section tests that ability by applying newer conceptions of demagoguery to Carmichael's words to approximate his proximity to demagoguery. It is also the case that the critique of those charging Carmichael with demagoguery is aided by determining if those charges are in fact true. To answer those questions, I turn to Carmichael's words, especially those laid out in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, the book he co-authored with professor of political science Charles V. Hamilton. The project doesn't attempt a traditional rhetorical analysis of *Black Power*, but instead considers it as the single most comprehensive text that Carmichael (with Hamilton) during the period in question.

While the co-authored book is published in the fall of 1967, its formation covered nearly the entire first year following the release of "Black Power." Carmichael records in his autobiography that after Roy Wilkins and Vice President Hubert Humphrey called "Black Power" reverse-racism²⁵ at the NAACP's convention in July of 1966, SNCC's executive committee asked their chairman to come up with a statement. Carmichael with input from friends and colleagues developed SNCC's first position paper on "Black Power," which would be published as "Toward Black Liberation" by the *Massachusetts*

²⁵ Scholars of race challenge the idea of reverse-racism. Robin Diangelo argues that only when "a racial group's collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control" does it constitute racism (20).

Review in the fall of 1966 (Carmichael and Thelwell 526). In December of the same year, at the end of a debate between Carmichael and Bayard Rustin, Toni Morrison, Carmichael's old English teacher from Howard (now with Random House), approached Carmichael and asked him to turn the paper into a book (*Ready for Revolution* 548; Rustin, *I Must Resist* 325). As indicated in a letter to Lorna Smith, Carmichael was hard at work on the book by February of 1967. Carmichael writes:

I have not finished the book yet. So I don't think it will be published until late Spring. The book is taking a lot more time than I thought it would and it is causing quite a bit of trouble for me. I'm not used to writing, and this is, in fact, my first book. As soon as it is out, I will be sure to send you a special autographed copy. Promise. (Letter to Lorna Smith, February 4, 1967)

This history is important for two reasons. First, it connects the content of *Black Power* with Carmichael, and, second, it establishes the purpose of the book, which was to answer critics. On the first point, there has been some debate over Carmichael's hand in authoring *Black Power*. But the history rendered above, along with any comparison of *Black Power* with Carmichael's other writings and speeches, settles the question.²⁶ On the second point, Carmichael writes in his autobiography that he identified criticism of "Black Power" when setting on the position paper, and these included the "language of political abuse: "racist," "Klansmen in blackface," demagogues," "hate mongers," "adventurists," etc., etc. But the single recurring constant was the sanctification of "integration." (525-526;

²⁶ David Garrow has questioned Carmichael's authorship, but the history above as well as a content that is easily traceable to *Toward Black Liberation* and Carmichael's other speeches and writings subverts such a critique.

my emphasis). Note that Carmichael is writing in response to charges that he is a demagogue. Did he then use demagoguery to answer such charges?

Stokely Carmichael is at times a passionate speaker who used emotional appeals to excite his audience. That, really, is only to say that old definitions are unproductive and that Carmichael is an adept rhetor. The question is whether Carmichael argues in good faith according to more discerning definitions. The truth is that when Stokely Carmichael spoke (or wrote) in 1966 and 1967 he sounded like a demagogue. He condemned “white society,” blamed such for the troubles of black America, and he seemed to ascribe punishment when he states, for example, that black people should “smash everything that Western Civilization has built” or that they need to “bring this country to its knees” (qtd. In Joseph, *Stokely* 133).

Carmichael and Hamilton certainly open *Black Power* by declaring an in-group: “This book is about why, where and in what manner black people in America must get themselves together. It is about black people taking care of business—the business of and for black people” (vii). Their continuation of the thought also names an outgroup: “The stakes are really very simple: if we fail to do this, we face continued subjection to a *white society* that has no intention of giving up willingly or easily its position of priority and authority” (vii; my emphasis). Throughout the book Carmichael and Hamilton signal this same outgroup with words such as “white society” (82, 53), “white America” (61, 184), and “the white power structure” (7, 22).

The co-authors assign culpability in ways that their critics understand as scapegoating. That is, the writer already encountered who accuses Carmichael of being a

“dangerous demagogue who passionately advocates Negroes shedding the blood of white” also writes that “He perverts facts, blames whites for the Negroe’s [sic] own failures, and says if the Negroes follow him he will give them all they ask for, and for free” (“Firebrand Demagoguery Produces Expected Results” 4). Carmichael and Hamilton do blame “white society,” “white America,” and “The White Power Structure” for black poverty (16), inadequate black schools and lack of educational opportunities (159, 23), police brutality in black communities (9), manipulation of the political boundaries to further disenfranchise black people (15), and high black unemployment (19) among many other charges. In fact, they spend an entire chapter, called, “White Power,” tracing the social and psychological harm committed by white institutional power upon black lives from slavery to their present. There they argue that the position of black people in America is that of a colonized people, and they conclude that “the colonial power structure” has “clamped a boot of oppression on the neck of black people” (23).

In Carmichael and Hamilton’s estimation, the threat to black lives posed by this out-group is causing a desperate situation, and Roberts-Miller told us that demagogues frame situations as desperate to justify desperate measures in the form of punishment or purifying of the out-group. The situation is so dire, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, that it requires black self-determinative strategies under the banner of “Black Power.” They justify disallowing white activists from leadership positions within SNCC, and they spend an entire chapter arguing that coalitions between white and black run organizations are not prudent under current circumstances.

The point is that Carmichael and Hamilton's rhetoric does adopt an ingroup/outgroup binary aesthetic marked by the appearance of scapegoating and by attempts at purifying the out-group. They seem to declare motives unjust, argue from identity, and generally appear to use demagogic strategies outlined in recent scholarship. Consider for a moment, however, how seriously current scholarship on demagoguery takes issues of truth. Jennifer Mercieca, for example, uses the Greek term *parrhesiastes* to differentiate the demagogue from the "authentic truth-teller," (unpublished manuscript 16), and Patricia Roberts-Miller argues that truth is particularly important in relation to the charge of scapegoating (*Rhetoric and Demagoguery* 189). To determine whether a group is scapegoating, Roberts-Miller argues, we must determine (1) "whether they have done the thing for which they are accused," and (2) "whether it was bad" (*Rhetoric and Demagoguery* 189). I argue that in Carmichael's case, answering the first question requires first making another determination.

At the most basic level, to determine the truth of a charge against a group or individual, one must first be certain of the identity of the accused. In Carmichael's case that means taking a close look at what exactly he means with condemnations of "white society." Roberts-Miller writes that answering the question of scapegoating requires "looking into the text" and approaching it "carefully and in context" (*Rhetoric and Demagoguery* 189). Doing so in Carmichael and Hamilton's case requires that a reader take seriously their division (what I argue in the next chapter is a "dissociation") of racism into types at the outset of *Black Power*. They write that "Racism is both overt and covert" and that "it takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual

blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community” (4). They call these “individual racism” and “institutional racism” (4).

In order to explain the distinction, Carmichael provides the following examples, which due to their importance to the current study and to Carmichael’s rhetoric generally, I quote in full:

When white terrorists bomb a black church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city--Birmingham, Alabama--five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism” (4).

With this passage Carmichael and Hamilton identify two possible sources—individual and institutional racism—for the negative outcomes they later attribute to “white America,” but note that institutional racism is written as responsible for destroying one-hundred times more lives than that of individual racists. Clearly Carmichael and Hamilton’s deepest concern is with institutions, not with individual racists, and they are overt about maintaining this focus throughout the text. That is, they move from the division of racism to a historical explication of the parasitic nature of white controlled state institutions upon black nations and communities. They apply the colonial metaphor throughout *Black Power*, and it is always state, economic, educational, or social institutions that Carmichael and Hamilton hold responsible for negative black outcomes. The assertion of “institutional racism” does not function as an isolated insight, but, instead, it is to inform the entire analysis. Carmichael indicates the concept of “institutional racism” with signifiers such as

“white America” and “white society,” and claims that these have consistently left black people without the resources they need.

Carmichael and Hamilton are not indifferent to the hateful acts of individual racists, of course. In fact, at several points in *Black Power*, they call out individual racism and so racists, and, to make the determination of demagoguery, the same test of veracity must be applied to those instances as well. When Carmichael and Hamilton focus on individual white people, though, they do two things that distinguish their accusations from demagoguery, scapegoating, and so racial conspiracy. First, when accusing white individuals, Carmichael and Hamilton focus on issues where culpability is non-controversial, and, second, they use the term “racist” to qualify their claims. For example, they write, “Black people of this country have not lynched whites, bombed their churches, murdered their children, and manipulated laws and institutions to maintain oppression. White racists have” (47). First, these incidents are empirically verifiable. A history of lynching, church bombings (including one where four little girls were killed), and manipulation of laws, is non-controversial. Second, Carmichael and Hamilton never indicate that all white individuals participated, but instead they use terminology like “white racists” or “racist whites” to draw attention to the violence of the racists who did. This is not a claim that all white people are racist, but simply an acknowledgment that some are and that they have committed empirically verifiable violence upon black bodies.

Given those two premises, “racist” works as both a qualifier and an interpellative challenge in Carmichael’s accusations. Carmichael makes that point explicit when speaking at Berkeley in the fall of 1966, stating: “I think what you have in SNCC is an

anti-racist racism. We are against racists. Now if everybody who is white see themselves [sic] as a racist and then see us against him, they're speaking from their own guilt position, not ours, not ours" ("Black Power at Berkeley"). Carmichael and Hamilton's arguments against racist whites allow any white individuals to exclude themselves from the culpable group simply by identifying as non-racist. In this way, outgrouping "racists" or "racist whites" subverts the charge of scapegoating by definitionally guaranteeing veracity. That is, by limiting his outgroup to "racist" white people who perform verifiable acts, he is (by definition) only outgrouping and excoriating the guilty. The tautological nature of holding racists responsible for perpetrating empirically verifiable acts of racism escapes the possibility of inaccuracy and so the charges of scapegoating and demagoguery. The answers to Roberts-Miller's questions regarding the existence of demagogic scapegoating are that the accused did in fact do that which they were accused of doing, and it was of great harm to the outgroup.

Carmichael and Hamilton's charges in *Black Power*, though, are generally made using terminology that stands in not for racist individuals, but for institutional forces. Outgrouping and scapegoating a race constitutes racism, but Carmichael and Hamilton's division of racism frames not white people, but American institutions as the outgroup of central concern. Again, such a move avoids accusations of scapegoating and racial conspiracy insofar as it is empirically verifiable. I won't belabor the point of the existence of institutional racism. Scholars such as Kalil Muhammed, Ira Katznelson, Ibram Kendi, Michele Alexander, Richard Rothstein, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor to name just a few have well-traveled the ways in which institutions controlling criminal justice, housing,

science, government stimulus, education and many others have consistently benefitted white people while leaving black people behind. It is also accurate for Carmichael to call such institutions white as positions of power in each were almost universally held by white people through Carmichael's moment (and into ours). Consider that Carmichael and Hamilton write during the same year that Edward Brooke from Massachusetts won election to the U.S. Senate. He was the first black man in the 20th Century to do so ("African American Senators").²⁷

The confusion concerning scapegoating and so demagoguery results when Carmichael and Hamilton's audiences fail (or refuse) to recognize that they use language such as "this country," "white society," "white America," etc. to call out institutions and not individuals. When Carmichael's critics mistake his outgroup as consisting of all white people, then his rhetoric appears demagogic according to the other metrics established by Roberts-Miller as well. For example, if Carmichael and Hamilton had accused all white people of overt racism and of being individually responsible for the negative outcomes in black communities, then he certainly would have been scapegoating, and the same confusion of individuals for structures might frame Carmichael and Hamilton's arguments as overly concerned with identity and as falsely identifying motives.

Carmichael spoke to this very issue when he appeared on NBC's August 21, 1966 episode of *Meet The Press* with other civil rights activists, including Dr. King. The show's

²⁷ Carmichael's naming of institutional racism is in distinct contrast to Jewish conspiracy, for example, which makes claims about Jewish control, power, and benefit that accord in no way with reality.

host, Lawrence Spivak, asked Carmichael if he believed that all white people were racist. Carmichael returned that there is a “system in this country that is set up, that affects all of us black and white allows for white supremacy to reign in this country and that it does not allow for any white person to view a black person as his equal but rather to view him as inferior because of the system.” Important for Carmichael is that this “has nothing to do with the white person himself (“Meet the Press”). “He or she might be a good guy or a bad guy,” says Carmichael, “but that the system just allows for seeing black people as inferior and that the few black people who are allowed to escape are viewed as exceptions to the rule.” (“Meet the Press”)

Clearly Carmichael’s central concern is with the effects of systems, not the attitudes of individual whites, and I argue that this fact complicates charges that Carmichael uses simple demagoguery.²⁸ Ryan Skinnel puts forward a seemingly more relevant metric, writing that “demagogic rhetoric encompasses, and even prioritizes, arguments that attack the legitimacy of democratic institutions to regulate ‘the will of the people’ (usually very loosely defined)” (255). “Democracies rely on institutions that limit democracy” (254), and demagogues benefit from disrupting those barriers. Skinnel is not wrong. Demagogues do attack portions of a system that limit their influence, but the statement doesn’t account for the veracity of charges made against the system. Skinnel focuses on Trump and his attacks

²⁸ During 1966 and 1967, he was certainly guilty of rhetorical excesses, and he sometimes gave in to name calling in reference to the most visible political leaders. At Berkeley, for example, he called Lyndon Johnson a “buffoon” and his Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, a “fool” (“Black Power at Berkeley”). It is not difficult, though, to frame similar instances as Carmichael being metonymical, using the name of a powerful politician to point at the entire institution.

on the press, and when Trump dismisses watchdog reporting as “fake news” or when he attacks the electoral system as “rigged,” he is guilty of demagoguery, not because he is attacking certain portions of the system, but because he is, in fact, lying.

Stokely Carmichael also attacks the press, in fact nearly every time he speaks, but if the study has shown anything to this point, it is that the press miserably failed Carmichael and the call for power. Media coverage of Carmichael and the call for “Black Power” in 1966 and 1967 were too often “fake news.” Trump's attacks on the electoral system were egregious, not because they were pointed, but, again, because they were outright lies. Carmichael also attacks the legitimacy of elections, evidenced by his support for the MFDP and his organizing the LCFO. However, little more than a year after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the black vote, particularly in the South, was still under attack (see especially Berman, *Give Us the Ballot*). The truthfulness of an institutional critique, not simply its existence marks the presence of demagoguery.

Roberts-Miller writes that demagoguery “undermines the ability of a community to come to reasonable policy decisions and tends to promote or justify violence” (*Demagoguery and Democracy*). Honest charges against a system, however, may open up pathways for policy deliberation. Also, a voiced threat to a system is a lousy parallel with interpersonal violence. When one group of people begins to demonize another, deliberations concerning policy become pointless. We know *what* (or, more often, *who*) the problem is, and the solution at demagoguery's extremity is to remove the problem. Rhetoric aimed at deporting or even killing Carmichael constitutes a paradigmatic example.

Rhetorically, outgrouping a system of overlapping and mutually reinforcing social, economic, and governmental constraints, though, has much different results. If one finds these systems responsible for the problems of the outgroup, then what remains is the responsibility of dramatically altering or replacing those systems. One can imagine that the substantial challenge of making those changes would require intense deliberations regarding the structures of institutions, new ways of operating or conceiving or leading them, and reimagining their foundational purposes. From this perspective, relatively little meaningful deliberation aimed at addressing racial inequality can take place *until* the existence and nature of “institutional racism” is acknowledged. A rhetoric attempting to place blame, not on individuals, but on “white society” might be the pathway toward deliberation, not its demagogic end. And if that deliberation is allowed to take place, then, far from violence, the result might be a discursive path toward a more equitable world. The result of successful institutional critique might be deliberation aimed at altering social and economic systems to better meet the needs of suffering people.

COLORBLIND RACISM AND FRAMING THE OPPOSITION AS DEMAGOGIC

Of note among Carmichael’s critics is how often they position themselves as friends of black civil rights. They write as citizens simply concerned that Carmichael’s demagoguery will imperil the hard-won successes of a rights movement previously marked by a rhetoric of love, non-violence, and, especially, integration. Carmichael’s critics fetishize integration to the end of labeling all race-conscious rhetoric—whether activist or

white supremacist—as equally racist. In this context, the charge of “demagoguery constitutes one weapon in these critics’ arsenal for accomplishing that goal.

From this perspective, Carmichael’s critics use the charge of demagoguery as another avenue for silencing him and any others who dare make institutional critiques that recognize existing racial divisions. On the other side of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Bills, two things took place contributing to a colorblind rhetorical context. First, the moment the 1964 bill passed, its opponents became Title VII’s most passionate adherents (see especially Zelizer). That is, while the bill is intended to prevent discrimination against minority groups, many southern politicians, for example, apply the law to prohibit race-conscious policy that could benefit oppressed groups (see Katznelson). That application would become most coherent in opposition to Affirmative action policies. Second, many who had (even if begrudgingly) supported black civil rights through the VRA, decide they’ve traveled far enough on the civil rights train and need to go no further than de jure equality (and even short of that considering the negative response to calls for open housing accompanying the failed 1966 Civil Rights Bill). This group, too, contributed to a context of colorblind racism in the wake of the civil rights bills.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Michelle Christian write that in the post-civil rights era, a style emerged to continue discriminatory policies while appearing race-neutral—or colorblind. They write, “Because overt racist talk is no longer tolerated, contemporary racial discussions must be done in code or with shields that allow actors to express their views in a way that preserves their image of race-neutrality.” According to Bonilla-Silva and Christian, “Colorblind racism has five components: avoidance of racist speech,

semantic moves, projection, diminutives, and rhetorical incoherence.” Most of these are easily identifiable in the texts of Carmichael’s critics. Many of Carmichael’s critics, for example, avoid saying overtly racist things (“avoidance of racist speech’), call black anti-racist activists racist (“projection”), and do so while proclaiming their own allegiance to the traditional civil rights movement (a version of “semantic moves”).

The charge of demagoguery in a colorblind context operates as another weapon within a discriminatory language coded to hide the prejudice of the speaker. That is, with the charge of “demagoguery,” Carmichael’s critics secure the moral high ground while silencing activism that challenges their position atop a racial hierarchy. This is accomplished by equating anti-racists with white supremacists. Such rhetorical trickery is only possible in a color-blind context where all mention of race is equally bad. Bonilla-Silva and Christian also argue that colorblind racism emerged as a strategy to protect existent racial power relations. One would predict, then, that the more threatening a rhetoric is to established racial hierarchies, the more likely one is to encounter color-blind strategies opposing it. Considering Carmichael’s substantial criticisms of American institutions as connected to white supremacy, the presence of colorblind rhetorical strategies is unsurprising.

The fact that Stokely Carmichael’s critics fetishize integration demonstrates the point. That is, when Carmichael called for black self-determinative strategies his critics (some sincerely) responded by expressing an undying loyalty to integration. Of this phenomenon, Carmichael would later write in his autobiography:

With Black Power, even the conservatives—the William Buckley's of the world—who had bitterly opposed every aspect of the integration struggle and had denounced both civil rights bills were heard to squeal indignantly,” What, now they don't want to integrate? What do these people want anyway?” To which I'd say, hey, make up your minds. What do you conservatives want anyway? To marry our sisters? (525).

The extreme adherence to integration as the only acceptable civil rights strategy affirms a colorblind context and lays the groundwork for framing race-conscious positions like Carmichael's as racism and so equal to a rhetoric of white supremacy.

Carmichael and Carmichael and Hamilton, though, attack those weaponizing an extreme adherence to integration. Carmichael and Hamilton's most interesting move is to return the charge of racism to critics who accuse Carmichael of racism while pledging allegiance to “integration”: “Integration as a goal today speaks to the problem of blackness not only in an unrealistic way but also in a despicable way” (54). “It is based,” they argue, “on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, black people must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school” (54). “This,” they assert, “reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that ‘white’ is automatically superior and ‘black’ is by definition inferior” (54). “For this reason,” they claim, “‘integration’ is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy” (54).

Carmichael made this move often, both in speech and writing. He would conflate integration (as currently practiced) with assimilation and frame the latter as ultimately racist in perpetuating the myth that what constitutes progress is proximity to whites, not equal resources. They argued that “integration” siphons off the “skills and energies from the black ghetto into white neighborhoods” (55). They argue that integration “allows the

nation to focus on a handful of Southern black children who get into white schools at a great price, and to ignore the ninety-four percent who are left in unimproved all-black schools” (54).

Carmichael and Hamilton’s arguments concerning the effect of integration on identity may be their most damning argument, though. They write,

‘Integration’ also means that black people must give up their identity, deny their heritage. We recall the conclusion of Killian and Gregg: ‘At the present time, integration as a solution to the race problem demands that the Negro foreswear his identity as a Negro.’ The fact is that integration, as traditionally articulated, would abolish the black community, but the dependent colonial status that has been inflicted upon it. (55)

Here the *Black Power* authors frame integration as practiced as humiliating and dehumanizing, requiring that black people trade their identity for access and resources, and they frame integration as black cultural suicide. They frame integration as seeking the extinction of the black community. Their response is that the “racial and cultural personality of the black community must be preserved and that community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity” (55).

Carmichael and Hamilton’s charge that integrationists perpetuate racism is interesting because it reframes the terms of victimhood. While integrationists couple their charge of racism with a claim to victimhood—that such racism will ruin the Civil Rights Movement—by claiming that their integrationist accusers are actually those facilitating racism, Carmichael and Hamilton rewrite integrationists’ victimhood as facetious—as the demagogic aggressor claiming to be the victim of the crime which he is in fact committing.

Maybe the most important factor in determining demagoguery, though, is the ingroup's willingness to punish the out-group. When the proponents of philosophies (such as Black Power and integration) compete, they are often arguing for the erasure of the other. Certainly, integrationists were not arguing for less Black Power. Carmichael and Hamilton acknowledge such, writing that the rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement "convinced some that that course [integrationist activism] was the *only* course to follow. It misled some into believing that a black minority could bow its head and get whipped into a meaningful position of power. The very notion is absurd" (51). In fact, integrationists wanted Black Power eradicated, completely replaced by integration. Carmichael and Hamilton's promotion of Black Power, though, didn't argue the complete erasure of integration, at least as an idea.

Carmichael and Hamilton write, "Such situations [ones where integration affirms white supremacy] will not change until black people become equal in a way that means something, and integration ceases to be a one-way street" (55). Carmichael and Hamilton also quote the National Council of Churches essay published in the *New York Times* on July 31, 1966: "Without the capacity to participate with power, i.e., to have some organized political and economic strength to really influence people with whom one interacts, integration is not meaningful" (49). Note that in both cases Carmichael and Hamilton don't wish for the extinction of integration; instead embedded is a desire for a better integration.

In fact, this was a point that Carmichael made often in his speeches.

Here is Carmichael addressing such at UC Berkeley:

We must now set up criteria and that if there's going to be any integration, it's going to be a two-way thing. If you believe in integration, you can come live in Watts. You can send your children to the ghetto schools. Let's talk about that. If you believe in integration, then we're going to start adopting us some white people to live in our neighborhood. ("Black Power Address")

By carefully treating their opponents' position, Carmichael and Carmichael and Hamilton escape the charge of demagoguery. Note that Carmichael and Hamilton again—as with the use of “freedom” and “democracy”—use the language of their opponents against them. In fact, one might see it as a weaponized concession. Carmichael and Hamilton essentially agree with the contention that integration is a worthy goal, just they make the distinction—what I will argue in the next chapter is a dissociation—that “real” integration would be beneficial for black people, but the only “apparent” integration currently practiced is siphoning off needed black resources. This move constitutes simultaneous agreement with an opposition's general philosophy and complete disagreement with their implementation. It allows Carmichael and Hamilton to do both—to agree with their opposition and to argue for the erasure of their practice. This move also calls out an opposition, disallowing them to continue practicing discriminatory actions under an ill-fitting banner. That is, it attempts to dissociate the practices of tokenism and assimilation from the idea of integration.

What Carmichael and Hamilton leave us with is a substantial challenge to colorblind racism made through an attack on one of its most affirming doctrines—not integration, but assimilation. By undermining the groundwork upon which charges of demagoguery (and so reverse-racism) were made in 1966 and 1967, Carmichael also exposes the accusation of demagoguery as leveled against him as what it was—a weaponized strategy within a colorblind context to silence black activist response.

Chapter 3: Dissociating Power and Racism at Berkeley

Stokely Carmichael dramatically altered the way we talk about race, but as demonstrated thus far, that influence was in spite of his reception by much of America. Wayne King of the *Detroit Free Press* writes of an address Carmichael gave just weeks after his famous call for “Black Power” in Greenwood, Mississippi: “The exhortation came in a lengthy, *rambling* speech before 500 persons in Cobo Arena” (8-A; my emphasis). Similarly, while reporting on Carmichael’s most famous speech given at UC Berkeley, Laurence Davies of *The New York Times* strings together a few of Carmichael’s most inflammatory statements, acknowledges hecklers in the crowd, and then writes, “Mr. Carmichael in his *wide ranging* talk of 55 minutes, covered the war in Vietnam, the draft, civil rights, and a group of other subjects, in what was billed as a black power conference” (63; emphasis added).

These critics attacked what they saw as the peripatetic nature of Carmichael’s speech in the immediate wake of the call for “Black Power.” Even the more sympathetic, but unnamed author of the write-up in *The Daily Cal*, UC Berkeley’s student newspaper, struggled to identify the relationship between the many facets of the speech Carmichael gave at UC Berkeley. The unnamed author argues that “Carmichael attacked white power, American society and foreign policy, and the draft” before providing untethered quotes from different portions of the speech and indicating little connection between them (“Carmichael Knocks” 16). In 1966 those reporting on Carmichael’s speeches perceived

him as an interlocutor that covered a lot, but without a clear path toward a discursive destination.

Those who read Carmichael as covering many topics were not wrong. Carmichael's speeches in 1966 were in fact filled with references to topics such as police brutality, educational inequity, economic disparities, political disempowerment, and a list of other injustices visited upon black people. The purpose and structure of these seemingly disparate references, though, emerges only when understanding that Carmichael is not giving short shrift to so many topics, but instead communicating the multifaceted nature of just one—institutional racism.

In this chapter, I argue that Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca's "dissociation of concepts" names the process by which Carmichael divides both "power" (with the call for "Black Power") and "racism" (with Carmichael's long attempt to communicate the existence of "institutional racism") and that it is his critics' sometimes willful failure to recognize these dissociative attempts and the strategies Carmichael adapts to facilitate them that led to perceptions that Carmichael was a rambler. Along the way I make three arguments. First, I argue that Carmichael's attempt to communicate the existence of "institutional racism" can be understood as a "fan-type" dissociation meant to clarify term II of his traditional dissociation of "power," and that in this context the dissociation of "racism" functions to clarify and justify for his white audience the necessity of the call for "Black Power." Second, I argue that at UC Berkeley Carmichael adapted a strategy for communicating the existence of institutional racism before a shared vocabulary existed for

doing so. Finally, I elaborate the ways Carmichael's dissociation of "racism" challenges both dominant narratives and negative perceptions of black people.

The "rambling" accusation in combination with others that have been taken up in this dissertation—that Carmichael was "uncivil," a "demagogue," and a "reverse-racist"—have in dramatic ways damaged his legacy. In this chapter I will argue that characterizing Carmichael's anti-racist rhetoric as "rambling" (or irrational or delusional) is unjust. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I build on the work of Andreea Ritivoi and Janice Fernheimer to explicate the potential of dissociation as an anti-racist strategy. Particularly, I make room for what I term "subversive dissociation," a strand of anti-racist "dissociative disruption" (Fernheimer's term) used by Carmichael. I then introduce dissociation as a concept and demonstrate that both Carmichael's call for "Black Power" and his and Charles V. Hamilton's naming of "institutional racism" constitute mutually reinforcing anti-racist dissociative attempts. The chapter moves to an introduction of the Berkeley speech and establishes that Carmichael's central goal in the speech is communicating the existence of "institutional racism." After which, I elaborate Carmichael's adaptive strategy at Berkeley for communicating the existence of institutional racism before any shared term for doing so has gained broad acceptance. Carmichael's dissociative attempts are then categorized as "subversive dissociations," and I expound upon the characteristics and utility of "subversive dissociations," "linguistic common property," and the tools outlined by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca for challenging dissociations. Finally, I observe the ways Carmichael leverages the

dissociation of “racism” to challenge those that help perpetuate racist applications of dominant narratives.

DISSOCIATION, POWER, AND RACISM

Scholars of anti-racist rhetoric insufficiently consider Chaim Perelman and Lucy Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “dissociation of concepts.” This neglect surprises when considering the long pursuit of justice out of which *The New Rhetoric* and other writings of the New Rhetoric Project were born (see especially Frank and Bolduc “From Vita Contemplativa to Vita activa”). Scholars taking up dissociation have most often centered the dissociative attempts of powerful rhetors without acknowledging who has power, who does not, and how the difference affects the form and outcome of a dissociative attempt (Maddux; Olson; Zarefsky “Lyndon”). More recent studies, though, have begun to revise thinking around power and dissociation, and a move, led by Andrea Ritivoi and Janice Fernheimer, is now underway to recover dissociative attempts made within relationships of unequal power.

Ritivoi observes that Romanian exiles’ claims to state legitimacy during the Romanian Diaspora were both dissociative and influenced by powerful state institutions (193). She writes that in the wake of the Second World War the Romanian National Committee, composed of *émigrés* in the United States, attempted to dissociate “nation” from “nation state” by claiming to represent the non-communist, pre-Soviet government (190). The US State Department provided limited endorsement, finding the Committee’s argument convenient to the Western goals of recognizing Romanian sovereignty without having to acknowledge the legitimacy of Soviet controlled Romania. Ritivoi argues that

the Committee was in some ways successful not because “of inherent argumentative force but because it was buttressed by a complex ideological discourse and supported by powerful institutions” (193). Ritivoi exposes how institutional politics can be determinative of the success or failure of dissociation as a rhetorical strategy, and more broadly she identifies the need to attend to political environment as a relevant factor.

In *Stepping Into Zion: Hatzaad Harishon, Black Jews, and the Remaking of Jewish Identity* Janice Fernheimer extends dissociation’s utility within relationships of unequal power by considering how a seemingly disempowered group of African Americans who identified as Hebrew Israelites used dissociation to challenge state formulations of Jewish identity in an effort to gain Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return (61). Led by Ben Ammi, this group sought to dissociate Jewish “religion” from Hebrew “heritage” as a basis for their claim to Israeli citizenship by way of Hebrew ancestry (30, 68). Lacking the institutional power to gain recognition of their terms through traditional means, Ammi’s group garnered and leveraged international media attention by relocating to Israel, rejecting a concessive offer of citizenship contingent upon official conversion, and publicly claiming that the state’s refusal to recognize them was the effect of racism (79, 29). The state, in response, did not radically alter the terms of Jewish identity, nor did they grant those of Ammi’s group immediately Israeli citizenship. Instead of viewing the dissociative attempt as having failed, however, Fernheimer coins the term “dissociative disruption” to highlight the productive effects across time of the dissociative attempt (and of those like it) that are not immediately or fully accepted. Understanding Ammi’s dissociative attempt as “dissociative disruption,” emphasizes, for example, that Ammi’s group forced the state to

clarify and articulate the parameters of Jewish identity, and that they set the stage for future deliberation between their group and the Israeli government (77, 79).

Ritivoi's charge to account for environmental factors and institutional power, in combination with Fernheimer's push to center the delayed or partial successes of those operating in fields of unequal power, makes way for scholars interested in the dissociations of those who were, like Perelman, "in search of justice" (Frank 253). Structural forces frequently prevent those seeking justice from achieving stated goals or even from being heard. The injury is then doubled when knowledge makers and gatekeepers omit, undervalue, or misrepresent these "failed" rhetors and their rhetorical efforts. Ritivoi and Ferheimer trace the dissociations of less powerful rhetors to theorize dissociative attempts within asymmetrical power relations, and thus they clear one path for understanding and revaluing the rhetorical attempts of those, like Carmichael, who dared speak truth to power. To further develop dissociation as a tool of the less powerful, scholars might explore the diversity of adaptive strategies that less powerful rhetors employ to achieve the partial or delayed successes signaled with "dissociative disruption." An analysis of Civil Rights and Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael's dissociations—especially that of "racism" attempted at UC Berkeley in his well-known speech given in the fall of 1966—builds on current theories of dissociation by observing and developing dissociation's potential for challenging racially discriminatory narratives.

Stokely Carmichael is most often remembered for having raised the call for "Black Power" in the summer of 1966 along the route of the Civil Rights Movement's last great march. Carmichael, newly elected chairman of SNCC, along with fellow SNCC activist

Willie Ricks, released, famously, their organization's new slogan to the national media on June 16, 1966 at Broad Street Park in Greenwood, Mississippi (Branch 486; Carmichael, *Ready* 507; Joseph, *Stokely* 114). "Never again," Keith Gilyard and Adam Banks write, "would the Civil Rights Movement be discussed only with reference to terms like 'Freedom Now' or 'We Shall Overcome'" (40). Other parts of Carmichael's legacy, though, have received less attention. For example, by the time Carmichael raised the call for "Black Power" he was already a Howard University graduate with a degree in philosophy who had constructed an incredible civil rights resume. Just shy of twenty-five years old, Carmichael had participated in the student sit-ins, rode along on the Freedom Rides, marched, picketed, worked with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), and created with John Hulet the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), which worked for independent black politics in Alabama and had as its symbol the black panther (see especially, Joseph, *Stokely*). Working to expedite the rate of racial progress, SNCC, and so its chairman, had by 1966 moved from a reformist agenda centered on achieving racial integration to a platform that challenged foundational U.S. institutions. An analysis of the adaptive dissociative strategies that Carmichael improvised at Berkeley for the purposes of challenging dominant racial narratives elaborates both the forms that the "dissociative disruptions" of less powerful rhetors might take and the purposes for which they might be productive.

On October 29, 1966 Carmichael addressed a mostly white crowd of roughly 10,000 that came to UC Berkeley's outdoor Greek Theater to hear him clarify SNCC's new

slogan and program.²⁹ After the call for “Black Power” had been met with months of confusion and paranoia from nearly every corner, the Berkeley chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) invited Carmichael to speak at a “Black Power” conference organized on UC Berkeley’s campus (Bloom and Martin 129). As harbingers of the New Left, members of SDS constituted a sympathetic, racially progressive audience, many having participated in Freedom Summer or other civil rights activism. As SNCC shifted toward self-determinative strategies marked by the call for “Black Power” they also officially disallowed white activists from working alongside them in black communities (Carson 191-205, 236; Jeffries 180-181), and only a small number of white activists remained in SNCC at the time of Carmichael’s speech at Berkeley (Carson 236). At Berkeley, Carmichael would clarify white activists’ role in the Black Freedom Struggle by inviting them to organize in two ways—first, by going into white communities to fight racism at its root, and, second, by moving from protesting the war in Vietnam to joining SNCC in open and active draft resistance.

Carmichael had an even larger purpose, though, a dissociative one that provided the logical foundation both for SNCC’s ideological shift and for the role of white activists in racial struggle. Carmichael attempted to dissociate the previously unified concept “racism” by exposing the existence of “institutional racism,” especially as it operated within and through dominant narratives. Understanding dominant racial narratives as

²⁹ For more on the Berkeley speech, see Joseph, *Stokely* 159; Bloom and Martin 39-42; Trombley C1; Davies 62; “American Is A Racist Nation” 4.

constructed using what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca call “linguistic common property” reframes the dissociation of “racism” and other anti-racist dissociations from less powerful agents as attempts to counter the sedimented effects of older dissociations with the terms of new ones (423). That revision increases the stakes for such partially successful “dissociative disruptions” as more than one set of terms and their attendant realities are contested, and it unlocks several strategies for countering dissociations that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca outline but which have yet to appear in the literature (427).

I offer the term “subversive dissociations” to mark a subset of anti-racist “dissociative disruptions” that take on dominant narratives as “linguistic common property” with the tools of counter. While all dissociations are subversive insofar as they alter or subvert understanding concerning some concept, the word “subversion” carries connotations of systemic counter. Those who take on terms of racist thought that perpetuate through and interact with dominant narratives may radically alter the character and operation of political, social, or economic systems. In this context, Carmichael’s dissociation of “racism” was an originary “subversive dissociation” as it provided the language—“institutional racism”—needed to signify the target of other anti-racist dissociations of this type. Analyzing how Carmichael’s dissociation of “racism” interacts with the claim to meritocracy and conceptions of black labor builds on Ritivoi and Fernheimer’s work to elaborate the utility of dissociation as an anti-racist strategy that makes available *The New Rhetoric’s* tools of counter for that purpose.

DISSOCIATING POWER AND RACISM

The mostly negative and universally dramatic national response to Stokely Carmichael's call for "Black Power" in 1966 necessitated his subsequent attempts, including in his speech at Berkeley, to dissociate "racism." The call for "Black Power" was itself a dissociation, though it did not take typical dissociative form. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that dissociation is the process of separating and then ranking elements of a conception previously understood as unified (411, 413, 416). This process is most often accomplished, they write, by applying a "philosophical pair," of which "appearance/reality" is prototypical, to split a single concept into two (415). The resulting concepts they label term I and term II, term II corresponding with "reality" and so attributed greater value (416).

The call for "Black Power" attempts to split along racial lines the previously unified concept "power." Carmichael doesn't name the second term of the dissociation, though, and according to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca he doesn't need to. They write that rhetors sometimes introduce only a single term alongside language that indicates the term's superiority or inferiority to an implied counterpart (442). Jasinski calls such shorthand dissociations "condensed dissociations" (179), and Carmichael's call functions as such, naming one concept—"Black Power"—needed to counterbalance another—substantial power held by the dominant group that is not exercised to benefit black people. The condensed dissociation allows Carmichael to racialize power without using the term "white power," which may have conjured images of hateful segregationists instead of the complex systems that he sees as disadvantaging black people.

The dissociation of “power” failed in its most overt goals, and Carmichael did not gain immediate or complete acceptance of its terms. Instead, the call for “Black Power” was repudiated by an array of onlookers, pundits, politicians, and even fellow activists.³⁰ When viewing the dissociation of racism as “dissociative disruption,” however, the call for “Black Power” can be reframed in terms of its productive effects, including (among many others) garnering black pride, bringing national attention to institutional critique, and redirecting national attention toward Carmichael and SNCC. To address the panicked response to the call for “Black Power” SNCC dispatched Carmichael to venues across the nation to explain and promote their new slogan and the self-determinative strategies it signaled. During this time, Carmichael delivered hundreds of speeches, made television appearances, authored articles in the *New York Review of Books* and the *Massachusetts Review*, and co-authored a best-selling book: *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*.

What becomes clear when reviewing the available texts is that to explain the call for “Black Power,” Carmichael felt it necessary to clarify its implied counterpart. One danger of using “condensed dissociations” is that they operate enthymematically, allowing an audience to fill in the omitted term, and that audience may not always do so in the manner the rhetor intended. Martin Camper and Zachary Fechter, foreground the dangers of leaving too much “enthymematic free space” in contexts where racist dominant

³⁰ For more on the initial release of the phrase “Black Power” and its reception in national media, see Branch 486-495; Carson 215-228; Joseph, *Stokely* 114-139; Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution* 507-526.

narratives circulate, and they urge anti-racist rhetors to delimit with careful framing the “range of possible ways that an audience might complete or interpret that enthymeme” (3).

Even as Carmichael was careful not to position the call for “Black Power” as a response, predominantly, to “white power” comprised of overt white supremacists, his critics often connected him to such and subverted his purposes in at least two interrelated ways. First, Carmichael’s critics identified the call for “Black Power” as a response to an overtly anti-black racism that was in decline and so interpreted as not substantial enough to warrant such a dramatic or militant response. Second, critics’ sole focus on overt white racists opened the door for mischaracterizations of the call for “Black Power” as responding to hate with hate, to white supremacy with black supremacy (*Stokely* ix, 127).

Carmichael narrowed the “enthymematic free space” of his dissociation of “power” and distanced himself from his critics’ focus on “racism” by attempting what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have called a “fan-type” dissociation (431; see also Anderson “Dissociation” 116; Anderson “Exploring”; Camper 72; Goodwin 152-155). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that when a term resulting from a dissociation requires clarification, a rhetor might dissociate the new term in question, thus introducing two additional terms (431). Carmichael performs this move by first conceding “racism” as the term implied in his condensed dissociation of “power” and then dissociating that previously unified term.

In the well-known opening lines of *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, Carmichael and his co-author Charles V. Hamilton dissociate “racism” as follows: “Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against

individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community” (4). They then name their terms: “We call these individual racism and institutional racism” (4). Carmichael and Hamilton clarify the new concepts in a way that also indicates which might be understood as Term I and which as Term II. They write that “individual racism” is what occurs when “white terrorists bomb a black church and kill five black children,” but that “when five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism” (4). Note that the valuation of terms is clear as Carmichael communicates that the greatest threat to black people was only apparently (Term I) “individual racism,” but in reality (Term II) “institutional racism” destroyed far more black lives than its counterpart.

Carmichael and Hamilton also write that “institutional racism” is more difficult to counter as, importantly, it operates regardless of the *intentions* of any individual. In the passage from *Black Power* quoted above, Carmichael points to the agents of “individual racism” as “terrorists,” but for “institutional racism” the “conditions” of several overlapping types of institutional neglect are positioned as culpable for damaging black lives regardless of any individual’s racial animus. Without an individual source to identify, correct, or punish, “institutional racism” is difficult to identify and correct. Consider that Carmichael’s relationship to both “institutional racism” and the role of “intent” are more complicated than an intentional/unintentional dichotomy suggests. For Carmichael, just because “institutional racism” *can* perpetuate without mal-intended agents, doesn’t

mean—including in the example above—that it does or that the maliciously intended don't play a substantial role. A fuller account of Carmichael's relationship to intent will be demonstrated later in the essay using Joe Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin's distinction between "direct" and "indirect" types of "institutional racism."

That the dissociation of racism appears in one form or another across Carmichael's texts created in the wake of SNCC's new slogan is unsurprising. Accepting the terms of the dissociation of "racism," especially the existence of "institutional racism," gives clarity to the call for "Black Power." When institutional forces in the U.S. are understood as collectively disadvantaging black lives, then appeals to those institutions for redress seem futile and calls for black communities to organize around self-determinative strategies gain salience.

THE BERKELEY SPEECH AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Carmichael's attempt to dissociate racism was a long and evolving project. Scholars of race write of *Black Power*—published nearly a year after the Berkeley speech—as the genesis of the term "institutional racism," and the co-authored book certainly provided the largest and most diverse of Carmichael's audiences the opportunity to encounter the term. A look, however, at Carmichael's other texts clearly demonstrates that he was invested in dissociating not only "power," but also "racism," long before the publication of *Black Power*, and it suggests Carmichael's investment in communicating the existence of "institutional racism" as he took the podium at the outdoor Greek Theater at UC Berkeley. As Carmichael forgoes using the emerging term "institutional racism" at Berkeley, and as

both journalists and scholars have struggled to identify the purpose and structure of the speech, tracing Carmichael's development of the term is important for identifying his central concern with communicating at Berkeley the existence of "institutional racism."

Carmichael, for example, uses the language from *Black Power* in an essay published in the *Massachusetts Review* at about the same time that he spoke at Berkeley. In that essay, titled "Toward Black Liberation," Carmichael dissociates "racism" just as he did in *Black Power*, only in 1966 he uses its prototypical form "institutionalized racism" (643; emphasis added). He uses the same clarifying examples—the bombing of a church versus the lack of food, housing, and healthcare—and articulates these just as he had with Hamilton, save for a few minor variations (643). Carmichael later recalled that he collaborated with Michael Thelwell on the essay in the months preceding his speech at Berkeley (*Ready for Revolution* 526). The timing of the dissociation of racism in "Toward Black Liberation" and its replication in *Black Power* indicates that at Berkeley Carmichael was amid a sustained effort to dissociate racism.

As the existence of term I "individual racism" was uncontroversial (though widely understood just as "racism") any strategy for dissociating "racism" hinged on communicating the existence and nature of the dissociation's term II. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that "in relation to term I, term II is both normative and explanatory," thus framing "individual racism" as only apparently the greatest threat to black lives depends on the normative function, and so existence, of "institutional racism" (416). "Institutional racism," though, is a difficult concept to communicate at present, and was even more so in 1966 when no resonate vocabulary existed for describing it.

Carmichael would later make a habit of reading the *Massachusetts Review* article—with its explication of “individual racism” and “institutional racism”—to white audiences, but at Berkeley he spoke extemporaneously and attempted to communicate the existence of “institutional racism” without using either term—a move that will be explicated in the following section.

Recognizing Carmichael’s central purpose at Berkeley as illuminating “institutional racism” is important for understanding the dissociative strategies he employs both in service of that mission and to counter dominant national narratives. As will be demonstrated, failure to recognize “institutional racism” as the organizing principle of the speech left some audiences confused. In the absence of Carmichael’s explicit naming of terms, scholars observing the speech have used Carmichael’s immediate context to focus on his more overt purposes, particularly, his making common cause with white activists over opposition to the Vietnam War (Joseph, *Stokely* 157-158; Bloom and Martin 129-130).

That context is important but most salient when understood in relation to the dissociation of “racism.” Just shy of six months prior to Carmichael’s appearance at Berkeley, SNCC had made it their official policy to ban white members from working in black communities, and only a small number remained in the organization in the fall of 1966 (Carson 236). White activists responded with confusion and sometimes disillusionment, wondering what role, if any, they were to assume in the struggle. At Berkeley, Carmichael explained to white activist students their role in light of SNCC’s change in policy. SNCC had come out against the war in January of that year, and a month before Carmichael spoke at Berkeley, he and Carl Oglesby, president of SDS, had signed

a joint statement against the draft (Joseph, *Stokely* 158). At Berkeley, Carmichael attempted to unite both groups in purpose by expediting SDS's move from protest to resistance (Bloom and Martin 128).

In this effort at Berkeley, Carmichael denounced Western imperialism, U.S. foreign policy, the War in Vietnam, and especially the draft; however, he also spoke of poverty, integration, education, housing, police brutality, and a list of other topics that aren't obviously related to Vietnam ("Black Power Address"). As demonstrated in the introduction to this chapter, Carmichael had been called a "rambler" after the Cobo Hall speech and Carmichael's topical breadth in the Berkeley speech similarly puzzled journalists. We saw Laurence Davies of the *New York Times* provide an altogether unflattering depiction of the Berkeley speech in which he refers to Carmichael as "wide-ranging," and the unnamed reporter from Daily Cal struggled to connect the many facets of "institutional racism" laid out by Carmichael.

As will be demonstrated below, Charles Stewart and Victoria Gallagher's more recent scholarship on Carmichael's words supports reading him through the lens of institutional critique, but studies during the Black Power Era were less amenable. This distinction likely reflects the reality that despite Carmichael's efforts the term "institutional racism" didn't gain wide usage in his moment and, in fact, wouldn't until the 1990s (Phillips 173). Early studies of Carmichael focus mainly on issues of style and include essays such as Pat Jefferson's two essays "Stokely's Cool Style" and "The Magnificent Barbarian at Nashville" and Larry S. Richardson's "Stokely Carmichael: Jazz Artist." Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede during the same period compares two of

Carmichael's speeches—one delivered to a mostly white audience, the other to a mostly black audience—and notes Carmichael's adaptive choices. Following the Black Power Era scholarship, rhetoricians wouldn't show comparable interest in Carmichael for three decades until Charles J. Stewart analyzes the role of Carmichael's rhetoric in the shift from civil rights activism to Black Power militancy. Stewart takes up Carmichael's words at Berkeley and in several other texts before concluding that his turn toward Black Power rhetoric was not a break with the Civil Rights Movement but instead an evolutionary outgrowth.

Stewart does reference "white supremacy" and "institutional control" as at least partly responsible for Carmichael's turn toward a more militant rhetoric, thus making room for a study of Carmichael's engagement with "institutional racism" (441). Stewart, though, also emphasizes "frustration, disillusionment, and cynicism" as motivating Carmichael's turn toward Black Power (443). Such an emphasis doesn't adequately consider Carmichael's place in a lineage of activists that were motivated by hope or a sense of justice to take a militant stance against institutional forces (see Joseph, *Waiting*). Furthermore, naming and emphasizing "cynicism" as Carmichael's primary motivation has the potential to deemphasize "institutional racism" as an existent, oppressive force formidable enough to warrant—as a logical response—self-determinative strategies and their accompanying rhetoric.

The only study of Carmichael's rhetoric to follow Stewart's, and the only robust treatment of the Berkeley speech, most overtly names Carmichael's purpose as illuminating institutional forces, and it points to the dissociative nature of the speech.

Victoria Gallagher writes that at Berkeley Carmichael used “reversal,” “deconstruction,” and “reconstruction” to challenge the dialectical nature of racial narratives and to make whiteness and its privileges visible to white students (149-153). Gallagher frames Carmichael’s words in Burkean terms, claiming that at Berkeley he operated within the “comic frame” and challenged five “oppositional dialectical pairs” traditionally defined and valued using Burke’s “paradox of purity.” These include, “rich/poor, violence/non-violence, integration/freedom, moral/political, black/white” (149). According to Gallagher, Carmichael presented these terms, but with valuations opposite those perpetuated in dominant narratives. For example, and pertinent to the current study, Gallagher writes that the conception that work is commensurately rewarded in the U.S. frames poor black people as lazy—the only explanation for black poverty when accepting the meritocratic premise (150). She sees Carmichael reverse the terms “rich/poor” within this narrative to demonstrate that wealthy white people that don’t hold traditional jobs are not also denigrated as lazy (150). In this way, Gallagher observed that Carmichael challenged the meritocratic narrative and its negative implications upon poor black people. Similarly, with “non-violence,” Gallagher writes that Carmichael challenged that concept as a universally celebrated good when “non-violence” seemed only to be preached to black people, even as white people perpetuated violence on black civil rights workers with seeming impunity (150). For Gallagher, Carmichael’s deconstructive moves encouraged his mostly white audience to develop an awareness of their own racial identities and the privileges they entail (153).

Gallagher’s analysis demonstrates that both Carmichael’s words and the narratives he challenged—especially the claim to American meritocracy—can be framed using paired terms not unlike those that result from dissociation. This suggests not only the utility of dissociation for understanding the Berkeley speech, but also of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s underused tools for countering dissociations. Also, Gallagher argued that Carmichael’s purpose at Berkeley was to reveal white privilege to white students. In so far as white privilege constitutes the relative advantage one group enjoys when unencumbered by “institutional racism,” then Gallagher points to Carmichael’s central purpose at Berkeley as dissociating “racism.”

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND SETTING THE STAGE

On October 29, 1966 while standing before a mostly white crowd of roughly 10,000—a fifty-foot banner that read “Black Power and its Challenges” draped behind him (Bloom and Martin 41)—Stokely Carmichael continued his sustained effort to dissociate “racism” by communicating the existence of what he had already written of as “institutionalized racism” and what he and Hamilton would later call “institutional racism.” He opened the speech by talking of racially oppressive institutions: “Seems to me that the institutions that function in this country are clearly racist, and that they’re built upon racism,” and after spending the speech demonstrating the discriminatory effects of overlapping economic, political, education, social, and psychological forces, he closed by speaking of institutions: “So that the question stands as to what we are willing to do, how we are willing to say ‘No’ to withdraw from that system and begin within our community

to start to function and to build new institutions that will speak to our needs” (“Black Power Address”). In fact, Carmichael used some form of the word “institution” twenty-four times at Berkeley.

Not yet exhibiting confidence in the terms “institutional racism” and “individual racism,” Carmichael attempted to dissociate “racism” at Berkeley without ever using those terms. Dissociation most often operates at the level of terms and definitions (see especially Schiappa 35-48), but Carmichael attempted to describe and develop, without the use of a stable term, the phenomena that would later be known as “institutional racism.” Such a move constitutes an extremity of Jasinski’s “condensed dissociations” by omitting not one, but both terms of the dissociation. While one might derive that simply by calling institutions racist, Carmichael is, in essence, positing a term II, I argue that such a move would neither have resonance in 1966, nor would it have communicated what he (and later he and Hamilton) meant by developing “institutional racism.” That is, the conception of “institutions” as racist is legible much later largely because of Carmichael’s (and Hamilton’s and Thelwell’s) efforts, referenced above, to communicate the phenomenon of “institutional racism.” Simply calling institutions “racist” would have also encouraged his audience to locate the central concern with *single* institutions, which I argue is a misinterpretation, even if it is one that appears in some current definitions.

Kristen Lavelle and Joe Feagin cite Carmichael and Hamilton when defining “institutional racism” as “the process by which racial oppression is imposed upon subordinate racial groups by dominant racial groups through institutional channels,” and, importantly, they describe it as having a “cumulative impact” as the policies of multiple

institutions combine and interact to discriminate (437-439). John Powell et al., however, differentiate “institutional racism” from “structural racism,” arguing that “institutional racism refers to practices and conditions in a single institution,” while structural racism considers how “the interaction of multiple institutions creates disparate effects” (72).

Carmichael, both at Berkeley and in his more overt explications of “institutional racism” referenced so far, communicates a collective oppressive force that aligns with current scholarly conceptions of “structural racism,” and particularly with Robert Hanser’s description, which includes social and psychological factors (533-534). In both *Black Power* and “Toward Black Liberation” Carmichael attributes damage done to black children, not to a single institution, but to the combination of inadequate “food, shelter, and medical facilities” and “acts by the total white community,” and in the Berkeley speech Carmichael will attend specifically to the oppressive function of dominant narratives.

In each of those texts two characteristics of “institutional racism” emerge as central to Carmichael’s effort to dissociate “racism.” First, and most obviously, “institutional racism” is a *collective* endeavor not dependent upon the actions of any individual, and it most often involves more than one institution. Second, and closely related, Carmichael’s “institutional racism” does not require the malicious *intent* of a single individual agent. On the issue of collectives, Carmichael, throughout the speech, divides “racism” using the philosophical pair “individual/collective,” by placing several terms that represent collectives in positions of agency, and so attributing oppressive functions to “institutions,” “this country,” “white people,” and “white supremacy” (“Black Power Address”). This is central to Carmichael’s strategy for communicating institutional racism, and as such it will

be taken up at length in the next section, which explicates Carmichael's two-pronged communicative strategy.

On Carmichael's second characteristic of "institutional racism"—that which concerns the role of intent—Lavelle and Feagin determine, again extrapolating from Carmichael and Hamilton, that "institutional racism" is not dependent upon the "feelings" or "intent" of any individual actor or group, but that it can be witnessed in the disparate negative effects upon racially subordinate groups (437-438). The processes or attitudes that develop within institutions during years of slavery or extreme racism are repeated in policies and their impact in the present regardless of any mal-intended agent (437-440).

Carmichael, though, is not willing to completely abandon intent. At Berkeley, he references myriad forces that discriminate regardless of any individual's intent. These include courts, police, political parties, education systems, the military, and especially important for the current analysis—dominant narratives. In some cases, however, Carmichael calls out the intentional acts of those who direct institutions or who apply dominant narratives. For example, he is troubled by governmental leaders who on the other side of the '64 and '65 Civil Rights Acts continued to intentionally direct institutional power and resources to deny the black vote, to inhibit meaningful school integration, and to oppose the recently stalled Fair Housing Act, and he labels a number of state and national leaders as "racist" or "immoral," including James Eastland and George Wallace ("Black Power Address").

Joe Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin make room for Carmichael's concern with both institutional oppression that operates regardless of intention and for that which is

directed or intentional. They divide “institutional racism” into types— “direct” and “indirect”—the former naming the intentional use of institutions to discriminate, and the latter referencing often unintended operations of systems that nonetheless racially discriminate even as those directing them may be pursuing other goals (16). As will be demonstrated in the following section, when addressing one particular facet of institutional racism—the application of dominant narratives—Carmichael condemns both “direct” and “indirect” institutional racism as part of a strategy that extends current theories of dissociation.

To this point in the chapter, I’ve argued that Carmichael’s central purpose at Berkeley was communicating the existence of institutional racism, and, now, with a clearer understanding of what Carmichael meant by “institutional racism” or “institutionalized racism” I turn to his strategy for communicating that oppressive phenomenon, for bringing it into existence for many in his audience who had not been encumbered by its effects. While making that transition, I argue that a failure to recognize Carmichael’s strategy for communicating institutional racism makes his words difficult to understand and that such confusion precipitated charges that he was a rambler.

COMMUNICATING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Communicating the existence of institutional racism is a complex endeavor under any circumstances. The accumulative, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing nature of sometimes abstract and sometimes concrete oppressive forces makes reference to any single oppressive force utterly insufficient to the task of communicating the larger

phenomenon. At the same time rhetors that attempt to communicate multiple theses simultaneously will often be read as confusing. Critical race theorists have long used Marilyn Frye's birdcage metaphor to illustrate this difficulty. Iris Marion Young, for example, wrote that one who examines the bird's imprisonment by looking at individual wires will find the bird's confinement confusing (92). "One wire at a time," she wrote, "We can neither describe nor explain the inhibition of the bird's flight. Only a large number of wires arranged in a specific way and connected to one another to enclose the bird and reinforce one another's rigidity can explain why the bird is unable to fly freely" (92-93). Young's articulation of Frye's metaphor suggests that to communicate institutional racism at Berkeley, Carmichael needed both to put before his audience (give presence to) several constraining forces at once while at the same time demonstrating their interconnectivity.

Carmichael's strategy at Berkeley for communicating the existence of institutional racism was two-pronged, and I argue that it is was a failure to recognize that two-pronged strategy that—in combination with a list of other factors, including racism—facilitated the charge that Carmichael was a rambler. First, Carmichael signaled the philosophical pair "individual/universal" with which he would dissociate racism. He then used shorthand phrasing to bring into existence the referent of institutional racism for his mostly white audience. Carmichael communicated the philosophical pair individual/collective by placing collectives in positions of agency, attributing oppressive functions to "institutions," "this country," "white people," and "white supremacy" ("Black Power Address"). Carmichael asks, for example, if white activists can "begin to move into and tear down the *institutions* which have put us all in a trick bag that we've been into for the last hundred

years?” (“Black Power Address”; emphasis added). He states, “*This country* is a nation of thieves. It has stole [sic] everything it has, beginning with black people,” and Carmichael sometimes links terms of collective agency together, “It is *white people* who make sure that we live in the ghettos of this country. it is *white institutions* that do that” (“Black Power Address”; emphasis added).

Carmichael’s imprecise use of the identified terms accomplishes two interrelated goals. First, it communicates a collective oppressive force that exceeds the connotations of any one of his chosen terms. Only as a group can the terms perform the function of term II in his dissociation of “racism” at Berkeley, approach the meaning he will later develop as the term “institutional racism,” and indicate the normative concept against which individual racists can be distinguished. Second, it constitutes an effort to reposition agency from black people to white collectives, including the one that was before him in the Greek Theater. Carmichael was overt about this mission, beginning the speech by poking fun at those who blamed either him, SNCC, “Black Power,” or urban rebellions for everything from a wave of conservative enthusiasm to the failure of the 1966 Civil Rights Act in the Senate the previous month (“Black Power Address”; “1966 Civil Rights Act dies in Senate”). He stated that, instead, these undesirable outcomes resulted from the “incapability of whites to deal with their own problems inside their own communities” (“Black Power Address”). Carmichael quipped that if he was as powerful as his accusers implied, then, “In 1968, I’m going to run for President of the United States” (“Black Power Address”).

As Carmichael carried the goal of repositioning agency throughout the speech by critiquing collective oppression, his near omission of individual acts of racism indicated the relative valuation of collective versus individual acts or racism. As demonstrated, Carmichael did not omit all mention of individuals. He did rail against now infamous sheriffs Lawrence Rainey and Jim Clark, as well as a list of political leaders including California gubernatorial candidate Ronald Reagan and President Lyndon Johnson, but in each case these individuals were framed as representatives of institutions (“Black Power Address”). For example, as Carmichael implicated Sheriff Rainey in the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner during Freedom Summer, he also located him as an elected representative of the criminal justice system in Mississippi: “The white population — in Neshoba County, Mississippi — that’s where Philadelphia is — could not — could not condemn [Sheriff] Rainey, his deputies, and the other fourteen men that killed three human beings. They could not because they elected Mr. Rainey to do precisely what he did” (“Black Power Address”). This pattern of collectivizing even the individual held true throughout the speech, indicating that of the pair collective/individual, the former was the concept of relative import in his critique.

Concerning the second part of Carmichael’s strategy for communicating institutional racism—his use of shorthand phrasing—Carmichael’s long familiarity with his New Left audience proved important. With an audience that was more than half the size of the entire UC Berkeley student body, it was certainly untrue that all who came to hear Carmichael were white radical activists, yet, as he spoke at an event organized by SDS, and as he made direct reference to “white activists” throughout the speech, one can assume

Carmichael's approximation of this group constituted one of his central audiences ("Black Power Address"; *University of California Berkeley General Catalogue 1966-1967* 10). With an audience as sympathetic as New Left radicals, Carmichael could use shorthand phrasing to stand in for whole arguments, a type of *pars pro toto*, where arguments truncated almost to the point of absurdity signaled whole conversations and conclusions that those of the New Left considered foregone.

At Berkeley, each truncated argument could be understood as a wire of the cage, and, importantly, the brevity of the phrasing allowed Carmichael to posit several "wires" in quick succession, the second, third, or fourth given presence before the first had time to fade from memory, thus presenting, at once, substantial constraint upon black progress. Consider, for example, Carmichael's statement concerning poverty: "A man is poor for one reason and one reason only: 'cause he does not have money — period. If you want to get rid of poverty, you give people money — period" ("Black Power Address"). As an alumni of Bronx High School of Science who traveled in the orbit of leading leftist intellectuals at an early age, and as a graduate of Howard University who was offered (and turned down) full funding to perform graduate work at Harvard, Carmichael certainly understood economics in more complex terms than that statement might indicate, but the variable Marxist-Leninist material analysis of his New Left audience can be signaled with such a simplification, metaphorically bringing before his audience a wire of the birdcage. Note that for his audience, the shorthand gives presence to the already held New Left belief that poverty constitutes an imposed burden, not an earned one.

To more fully illustrate the strategy, I will quote a section of Carmichael's speech in which he explicates "white supremacy attitudes." Because Carmichael's strategy is accumulative, it is necessary to quote at length. Carmichael states at Berkeley,

That has been the rationalization for Western civilization as it moves across the world and stealing and plundering and raping everybody in its path. Their one rationalization is that the rest of the world is uncivilized and they are in fact civilized. And they are un-civil-ized. And that runs on today, you see, because what we have today is we have what we call "modern-day Peace Corps missionaries," and they come into our ghettos and they Head Start, Upward Lift, Bootstrap, and Upward Bound us into white society, 'cause they don't want to face the real problem which is a man is poor for one reason and one reason only: 'cause he does not have money — period. If you want to get rid of poverty, you give people money — period. And you ought not to tell me about people who don't work, and you can't give people money without working, 'cause if that were true, you'd have to start stopping Rockefeller, Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, the whole of Standard Oil, the Gulf Corp, all of them, including probably a large number of the Board of Trustees of this university. So the question, then, clearly, is not whether or not one can work; it's Who has power? Who has power to make his or her acts legitimate? That is all. And that this country, that power is invested in the hands of white people, and they make their acts legitimate. It is now, therefore, for black people to make our acts legitimate. Now we are now engaged in a psychological struggle in this country, and that is whether or not black people will have the right to use the words they want to use without white people giving their sanction to it; and that we maintain, whether they like it or not, we gonna use the word "Black Power" — and let them address themselves to that. ("Black Power Address")

In this short section of the speech, Carmichael signals a surprising number of constraints upon black economic, social, and political progress, including a charge of immoral colonial U.S. foreign policy with "It moves across the world stealing and plundering"; federal uplift programs as diversionary and ineffective with "Head Start, Upward Lift, Bootstrap, and Upward Bound us into white society"; the racism of assimilationist attitudes with "into white society," which was found in the previous statement; neglect of the impoverished with "If you want to get rid of poverty, you give people money"; the malice and hypocrisy

of meritocratic thought with “And you ought not to tell me about people who don’t work, and you can’t give people money without working”; the privilege of power brokers of the dominant group with “You’d have to start stopping Rockefeller, Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, the whole of Standard Oil, the Gulf Corp, all of them, including probably a large number of the Board of Trustees of this university”; white control of dominant narratives with “Who has power to make her acts legitimate”; and linguistic paternalism with “Right to use the words they want without white people giving their sanction to it.” These are settled arguments among many radical students at Berkeley. SDS, for example, had long critiqued U.S. foreign policy including the war in Vietnam, and their materialist political orientation would have them in favor of distributive policies and systemic change and skeptical of self-help programs (Students for a Democratic Society 239-241).

Carmichael does not simply list constraints, nor does he offer a measured discussion of each point. Those strategies would have allowed his audience to consider constraints individually. Instead his language structurally replicates the cage in Frye’s metaphor in at least two ways. First, as can be seen in the passage above, the density of Carmichael’s phrasing simulates the tight proximity of collectively constraining cage wires. For example, not only does “Upward Bound us into white society” signal the two critiques acknowledged above, in context, the phrase also challenges the narrative of commensurate reward in the U.S. Second, Carmichael’s structure above, and throughout the speech, also simulates the overlapping and mutually reinforcing relationships among wires of the cage. For example, by having particular constraints languish or re-emerge throughout the speech, Carmichael

demonstrates one constraint's relationship to several others. The imposed burden of poverty is the most obvious example of the strategy as Carmichael entangles it with, or places it in variable proximity to, constraints or combinations of constraints that included parasitic foreign policy, unequal education, white control of dominant narratives, unequal political power, slavery, police brutality, and racist housing policy to name a few ("Black Power Address"). The effect of the strategy is to bring into the consciousness of his audience an entanglement of racial constraints that collectively stifle black social, political, and economic potential.

SUBVERSIVE DISSOCIATIONS

Fernheimer's study of Black Jewish identity opened the door for scholars to investigate and revalue dissociative attempts that were not completely or immediately successful. Carmichael's words at Berkeley were neither of those things. While he called for an end to the Vietnam War and a reimagining of American political institutions, the war would not end for nearly a decade, and the two major political parties persist. In fact, Carmichael appeared at Berkeley during a period of rapid institutional decline for SNCC, and by the end of the decade the organization held little sway in national conversations on race (Carson 296). The speech looks much different, though, when reframed, as Fernheimer suggests with "dissociative disruption," in terms of its partial successes and influence across time.

Carmichael's dissociation of racism did have variable success with different audiences. First, for white activists, it explained SNCC's ideological shift, which had resulted in their (essential) expulsion from the organization. That is, once white activists grasped the existence of substantial discriminating systemic power—within which they were implicated—the necessity of black people coming together without them to combat those systems became commonsensical. The existence of institutional racism also clarified and provided exigence for the two charges that Carmichael gave white activists at Berkeley. First, they were to work against racism by building new institutions in white communities instead of assuming authority in black ones. Second, they were to organize around draft resistance. The presence of institutional racism clarified the magnitude of the opposition and so the scope of the mission, disabusing white activists of the notion that their purpose in The Black Freedom Struggle was solely to oppose overtly racist individuals or to combat segregation in the South. Instead white activists were pitted against a much larger oppressive force. In this new context draft resistance constituted one site of shared opposition to institutional racism.

While the cheering on the available audio indicates Carmichaels' hold over his audience, the energy of the moment translated into action as well ("Black Power Address"). According to Bloom and Martin, prior to the Berkeley speech, very few students challenged the draft (129). They write that the day after hearing Carmichael speak, however, those in charge of the Black Power conference formed an anti-draft committee, organized a public anti-draft workshop to take place that same evening, and they distributed fliers promoting the event (129). These actions led to others, and within two months of the speech, draft

resistance was accepted at the SDS National Council (129). Considering SDS's influence over both the New Left and the anti-war movement, the indirect impact of Carmichael's words at Berkeley are difficult to overstate.

Those with fewer shared references found it more difficult to understand Carmichael's *pars pro toto* strategy. Audience members such as the reporters referenced in the introduction to this chapter—Davies, and the unnamed reporter for the *Daily Cal*—instead interpreted his shorthand as bringing up a lot but developing little. When hearing the passage of the speech replicated above, those not on the political left may have heard unfinished arguments and questions begged instead of recognizing a tapestry of interwoven constraints upon black lives. From this perspective, Carmichael's condemnation of U.S. foreign policy was as much conclusion as argument, and for those who were invested in dominant narratives, he had done little to convince them concerning the racialized and parasitic nature of America's relationships to developing countries. Instead when Carmichael moved from a condemnation of the War in Vietnam to a short phrase condemning urban uplift programs, then poverty, then meritocracy, he appeared to those with fewer shared references to have brought up several topics without developing any of them.

“Dissociative disruption” points to Carmichael as a less powerful rhetor, and it supports reframing his speech in terms of partial successes, but Carmichael's particular strategy for communicating the existence of institutional racism moves beyond “spectacle” according to definitions forwarded by Pough and Fernheimer. That is not to say that Carmichael didn't create spectacle. Pough lists Black Power activism as a prime example

of the phenomenon, and Carmichael sometimes disrupted and garnered attention with purposeful polemics, including at Berkeley (28). Carmichael, though, was also genuinely surprised at the national attention given the term “Black Power” and himself by association (*Ready For Revolution* 523). From this perspective Carmichael at Berkeley attempted to leverage attention thrust upon him in the midst of what historians have called a “white backlash” to urban rebellions and “Black Power” in the wake of legislative civil rights victories. In either case, it is not spectacle, but his *pars pro toto* strategy that forms the center of Carmichael’s dissociation of racism. As a result, Carmichael’s strategy constitutes a particular type of anti-racist “dissociative disruption,” and it serves as an opportunity to further theorize dissociative challenges to dominant narratives. Carmichael’s two-pronged strategy at Berkeley demonstrates that when marginalized rhetors speak truth to power, they might disrupt in the ways that Ammi’s group did, but they might not. Ammi’s dissociative attempt constituted one form that a dissociative challenge from the margins might take. Carmichael’s attempt to dissociate racism constitutes another, and further studies of marginalized rhetors speaking truth to power will reveal additional creative strategies. As such, “subversive dissociations” constitutes a call to discover the many adaptive strategies employed in response to the racist exercise of power. In this way “subversive dissociations” in conjunction with “dissociative disruption” broadens the available means for reclaiming anti-racist activist voices such as Carmichael’s, allowing them to be revalued in terms of their effects across time.

“SUBVERSIVE DISSOCIATIONS,” “LINGUISTIC COMMON PROPERTY,” AND THE TOOLS OF COUNTER

Observing Stokely Carmichael’s dissociation of “racism” at Berkeley with greater acuity reveals the relationship between a less powerful rhetor’s dissociation and the dominant narratives it challenges. I offer the term “subversive dissociations” to account for anti-racist dissociations that challenge dominant narratives, and “subversive dissociations” constitutes a call to seek out the dissociative foundations of such narratives and to understand them as reliant upon what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca call “linguistic common property.” That move frames the anti-racist dissociative attempt, including Carmichael’s, as an effort to counter the terms of older dissociations with terms of newer ones. In that context, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s tools for countering dissociations become useful for combatting racism.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that dissociations are “always prompted by the desire to remove an incompatibility arising out of the confrontation of one proposition with others” (413). At Berkeley, Carmichael is overt about the incompatibility of central concern. He first signals his intention to dissociate by using the word “myth.” Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that the word “myth” indicates an attempt to dissociate “opinion” from “truth,” the “subjective” from the “objective,” or the “verbal” from what is “real” (438). Carmichael states, “We have taken all the myths of this country and we've found them to be nothing but downright lies” (“Black Power Address”). Carmichael’s use of the word “lies” in the same line reinforces his effort to dissociate dominant national narratives from objective truth, but it also brings in-tow connotations not signaled by the

word “myth.” While myths eschew a strict true/false dichotomy and often affect regardless of intention, lies are intentional rhetorical acts.

Carmichael names the “myth”/“lie” that he takes to be of central concern: “This country told us that if we worked hard we would succeed,” flagging his concern with the ubiquitous meritocratic American narrative—that which insists that work is commensurately rewarded in the U.S. (“Black Power Address”). He then identifies the experience that he finds in tension with the meritocratic narrative: “And if that were true we would own this country lock, stock, and barrel.” He continues, “It is we who have picked the cotton for nothing. It is we who are the maids in the kitchens of liberal white people. It is we who are the janitors, the porters.... Yes, it is we who are the hardest workers and the lowest paid” (“Black Power Address”). Placing the meritocratic narrative in opposition to what is “true”—like his use of the word “lies”—seems to signal intentional deception, but intended by whom? “This country” is positioned as the liar, and such collective terms, as argued, point to institutions and collections of institutions. As institutions cannot intend, Carmichael’s statement is best read as condemnation of the institutions that have perpetuated the meritocratic myth in contexts where black lives were harmed, regardless of intent. At the same time, the examples Carmichael provides to contradict the meritocratic narrative—domestic work under Jim Crow and slavery—constitute situations where those in power (remember Carmichael named James Eastland and George Wallace) leveraged the meritocratic narrative to maintain economic and racial hierarchies. In Feagin and Feagin’s terms, Carmichael takes on both “indirect” as well as “direct” “institutional racism.”

In doing so Carmichael observes two conceptions at odds with one another (the meritocratic narrative in tension with slavery and un(der)rewarded black labor), and so identifies a situation that is optimal for resolution by dissociation. The problem for Carmichael is that a dissociative resolution to this incompatibility already exists. As a result, Carmichael’s dissociation of “racism” is best understood as a challenge to this originary, widely accepted, and deeply racist dissociation—that of labor into racial types. In this dissociation “white labor,” as substantial, real, and reward-worthy, is dissociated from “black labor.” These terms were then “associated” within “linked paired terms” in a pattern similar to that which Patricia Roberts-Miller uses in her recent book *Rhetoric and Demagoguery* to demonstrate a different racist narrative (17). The narratives Carmichael challenges can be represented as follows:

black	biologically or culturally inferior	undeserving	justly unrewarded
labor ::	::	::	::
white	biologically & culturally superior	deserving	justly rewarded

This dissociation is of the type Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca reference when writing, “The concepts resulting from a dissociation, once they have become *linguistic common property*, seem thus to take on an independent existence” (423 emphasis added).

The “independent existence” of the terms above is what allows them to circulate and harm regardless of intent, as “indirect” institutional racism, and because those terms function as “linguistic common property,” it is also true that powerful individuals can

leverage them to maintain economic and racial hierarchies. In both cases the “independent existence” of these terms and their attendant associations—from slavery to the present—has been to preserve the meritocratic narrative by framing black people and so black labor as either biologically or culturally deficient, therefore undeserving, and so justly unrewarded (Kendi 3-5; Muhammad 22-23). The racial dissociation of labor, as “linguistic common property,” functioned in Carmichael’s moment (as it does at present) as the commonsensical explanation for why black people were far more likely to suffer, from poverty, for example, than their white counterparts.

While Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that terms I and II of a dissociation are not oppositional (422), racial (in this case racist) distinctions can still be understood as dissociative because they are not logically opposed. Instead “Black” and “white” are fused with other philosophical pairs to unjustly separate qualities of a previously unified concept such as labor. In one predominant iteration, the “white” term is positioned as the more “real” term II against which the only “apparent” “black” term can be minimized or dismissed. This is the dissociative process that divides unified concepts in refrains that rap is neither art nor music or that African-American Vernacular English is slang or jive and so not “real” English. Similarly, in the racist dissociation of “labor,” white labor is attributed the qualities of “real” or reward-worthy labor, and “black” labor is separated as having only the appearance of such, thus leaving the meritocratic narrative undisturbed by the un(der)reward of black labor.

While racial distinctions are often dissociative, they are not all necessarily racist. Carmichael’s own dissociation of “power” along racial lines demonstrates the point. The

distinction is that Carmichael's dissociation identified existing phenomena to the end of increasing transparency, while the dissociation of "labor" narrates racial division where none exists for the purpose of maintaining dominant narratives that reify racial hierarchies. Recognizing racist distinctions both as dissociative and as supporting dominant narratives, though, reframes Carmichael's effort at Berkeley as an attempt to counter one dissociation (of "labor") with another dissociation (of "racism"). Because dominant narratives rely upon "linguistic common property," the "subversive dissociations" that counter them can be understood as dissociative attempts to counter or reverse the terms of other dissociations, and the strategies for countering dissociations that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca outline for this purpose become useful.

While a few studies have broached the topic of reversing dissociations (see, for example, Porter; Vickers) none has addressed them as outlined in *The New Rhetoric* in a sustained way. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's strategies comprise attacking term I, attacking term II, claiming the original term was not the cause of an incompatibility, claiming the new terms do not resolve the incompatibility, and countering one dissociation with another (427). Carmichael uses a combination of these strategies, and foremost among them he indicates that the racial dissociation of labor did not resolve the incompatibility between meritocratic thinking and un(der)rewarded black labor. As shown above, he accomplishes this by pointing to the continuing un(der)reward of black labor while dismissing the "linguistic common property" that explains it as commonsensical. That is, he attempts to discredit an originary dissociation while simultaneously offering his own as a defensible resolution.

The broad acceptance of the racial dissociation of labor, though, made Carmichael's purposes more challenging as it ensured that just giving presence to undesirable economic outcomes—"we are the lowest paid"—would not necessarily indicate for his audience the incompatibility between meritocratic thinking and black experience. Of this phenomenon, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write, "The new concepts resulting from the dissociation may acquire such a consistency, be so fully developed, and appear so indissolubly linked to the incompatibility whose removal they make possible, that the forceful presentation of the incompatibility may seem to be another way of stating the dissociation" (413). For too many it was certainly the case that highlighting black poverty would not signal an incompatibility between claims of a justly rewarding economic system and the experiences of black people. Instead merit and reward had lost distinction. To be impoverished was to be undeserving. No incompatibility. No systemic implications.

In response to this ubiquitous and racist narrative that implicated black people in their own suffering, Carmichael uses all the strategies identified by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca for countering dissociations, beginning with opposition to its central terms (427). He attacks terms I of the racial dissociation of labor—first taking on the conception that black people are biologically inferior, and he later moves to a direct counter of the cultural arguments that were displacing biological ones. Carmichael states at Berkeley: "We are oppressed as a group because we are black, not because we are lazy, not because we're apathetic, not because we're stupid, not because we smell, not because we eat watermelon and have good rhythm" ("Black Power Address"). Note that each

refuted claim of black deficiency is of an essence, a characteristic, or quality, and features some of our country's greatest racist hits.

In academic circles biological arguments relative to the intelligence and motivation of black people had been discredited well before the *Brown* decision (Jackson, 9-10), and while they continued to circulate in popular rhetoric in 1966, their propagation became decreasingly politic in the wake of the '64 and '65 civil rights bills. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor writes, "The Black movement of the 1960s disgraced outward displays of racial animus, even as race continued to animate American politics by other means" (52). Regardless of the status of biological racism, the racial dissociation of labor was hardly in danger of collapse. Roberts-Miller instructs that "evidence" for arguments meant to maintain white supremacy don't logically support the claims to which they are attached; instead, such "evidence" is a convenient justification for conclusions already drawn (135). Similarly, dissociations that perpetuate dominant racial thinking do not easily collapse when challenged. They survive until their proponents can scramble together something with an evidential appearance. Carmichael draws attention to this shifting nature of "evidence" for the un(der)reward of black labor as he moves from countering biological arguments to countering cultural ones: "The assumptions of this country is [sic] that if someone is poor, they are poor because of their own individual blight, or they weren't born on the right side of town; they had too many children; they went in the army too early; or their father was a drunk, or they didn't care about school, or they made a mistake" ("Black Power Address"). Here Carmichael trades characteristics and essences for actions, and he

dismisses these as well: “That’s a lot of nonsense. Poverty is well calculated in this country” (“Black Power Address”).

By 1966 cultural arguments concerning black deficiency had begun to displace (or at least accompany) biological ones. Oscar Lewis, Michael Harrington, and Nathan Glazier, to name a few, had long promoted social scientific arguments that implicated culture in undesirable economic outcomes among black people, but it was Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report, released both just prior to and following the Watts rebellions in the summer of 1965, that did the most to popularize the conception that the collective actions of black people were the true cause of black suffering (Mukhopadhyay and Chua 431; Hinton 75-78). The Moynihan Report, notoriously, argued that the predominance of female headed black households (a result of slavery!) were to blame for black poverty (Moynihan). The report cited a “tangle of pathologies” among black people as prohibiting black progress, and it offset this victim blaming narrative with no meaningful systemic critique and no real challenge to racial hierarchies (Moynihan). Those wishing to explain black unrest in Los Angeles and then in Chicago just months before Carmichael’s speech adapted cultural explanations from Moynihan’s findings (Hinton 75-78). As a result, the arguments of convenience that Carmichael would counter at Berkeley quickly became commonplace popular justifications for black suffering.

The point is not that Carmichael was scientifically refuting biological and cultural arguments. He was not, and he would not have needed to for the racially progressive white activists to whom he spoke most directly. Instead he drew attention to the incompatibility between the meritocratic narrative and un(der)rewarded black labor as well as to the

arbitrary and shifting nature of resolutions (the above arguments that biological or cultural deficiency explained black people's state of unreward) to that incompatibility. While illuminating the incompatibility between the meritocratic narrative and un(der)rewarded black labor, and while demonstrating the arbitrary nature of its resolutions, Carmichael offered the dissociation of "racism" (and so the existence of institutional racism) as a resolution. Accepting the existence of "institutional racism" positions un(der)rewarded black labor as unjust, thus undermining the meritocratic narrative. The dissociation of "racism" explains undesirable black outcomes as the result of racism, even as the '64 and '65 Civil rights bills and their removal of de jure racism, convinced too many that racism no longer constituted a major roadblock to black success.

Because Carmichael concedes the term "racism" as that which necessitates the call for "Black Power," but at the same time divides that term in a way that subverts his critics' arguments, the dissociation of "racism" is a compromise. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write that all dissociations are (413). That is, Carmichael's critics saw racism (traditionally conceived) as the only factor that could explain undesirable black outcomes without implicating black people in their own suffering, and—confusing de jure equality with de facto equality—many were inclined to dismiss "racism" as a substantially inhibiting factor. Carmichael concedes (the compromise) the point of "racism" as the central concern, but by expanding the definitions of "racism" he also turns it in his favor. Even if "racism" had to some degree been addressed by federal legislation, that was only one type of racism, "individual racism," and the more nefarious collection of racial constraints that Carmichael and Hamilton would name "institutional racism" continued to impede black progress,

leaving “institutional racism” as a far more plausible explanation for black suffering than the shifting and seemingly interchangeable resolutions it countered.

CONCLUSION

The analysis above constitutes a harsh rejoinder to those who would label Stokely Carmichael a rambler. When understanding the multifaceted nature of structural oppression and when also recognizing the communication of institutional racism as Carmichael’s *raison d’être* in 1966 and 1967, the adaptive genius of Carmichael’s rhetorical strategies in defense of Black Power emerges. The analysis, though, also broadens the available means for others who were seeking racial justice. The addition of “subversive dissociations” takes seriously Ritivoi’s charge to attend to environmental factors, and it builds on Fernhiemer’s “dissociative disruption” to demonstrate the utility of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s term as an anti-racist strategy. “Subversive dissociations” finds dissociation at work not only in anti-racist rhetoric, but also in the narratives it challenges. A central contribution of “Subversive dissociations” is its charge to interrogate the foundations of dominant narratives countered, and the analysis suggests that when the narrative is racial, it will also be dissociative. As a result, “Subversive dissociations” becomes one tool for exposing the constructedness of racial divisions that have been naturalized as “linguistic common property” and the narratives that derive from them.

From this perspective, dissociation is useful as an anti-racist strategy because it was first a dynamic tool for those perpetuating racist narratives. Kathryn Olson writes that when someone encounters evidence that contradicts a “highly valued knowledge claim,” they

will sometimes use dissociation to revise their “knowledge criteria” and dismiss the inconvenient evidence as only apparently disconfirming (46). Similarly, Carmichael’s case demonstrates that when those invested in a dominant narrative (the claim to meritocracy in this case) find that non-white experiences (un(der)rewarded black labor) don’t fit that narrative, the incompatibility is “resolved” with racist dissociations that dismiss such experience as in some way unreal, thus preserving the valued narrative and the racial hierarchies it reifies. The dominant group’s proximity to institutional power allows these racial divisions of once unified concepts—“labor” in the above analysis—to be so successful that they become commonsensical and their terms function as “linguistic common property.” Once solidified as “linguistic common property” the terms of racist dissociations are positioned both to circulate and harm as “indirect” institutional racism, but they also function as tools of oppression that can be picked by those in power.

Exposing the dissociative foundations of racist narratives is a hopeful act, though, as observing an oppositional narrative with greater clarity allows one to counter it with greater precision. In the case of racial narratives reliant upon “linguistic common property,” such an exposure also unlocks Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s tools of dissociative counter. Carmichael’s case demonstrates the utility of these tools, particularly, that an anti-racist dissociative attempt is more likely to unsettle “linguistic common property” when—while positing one’s own dissociation—the tools of counter are used to expose the arbitrary nature of the foundational racist dissociation’s relationship to the original incongruity. Carmichael’s case also demonstrates, though, what Fernheimer argued, that dissociative victories will always be partial when opposing those more aligned

with institutional power, but Fernheimer also instructed that it is important to acknowledge those victories.

The dissociation of “racism” has been variably, partially, and unpredictably successful from its inception. The 1968 National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, for example, seemed to accept the terms of the dissociation. Lyndon Johnson established the group, which included Otto Kerner, to investigate causes of unrest. The group found that uprisings were not the result of black power ideology or a global communist conspiracy as feared by Johnson, but instead they were a reaction to imposed misery (“Report of The National Advisory Commission”). The causes of black suffering were not individual; they were institutional the commission wrote: “What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” (“Report of The National Advisory Commission”).

To be clear, the dissociation of “racism” did not with any finality unseat the racial dissociation of “labor” and its implication of black people in their own suffering. Not then and not now. Lyndon Johnson largely ignored the Kerner Commission’s findings, and a look at contemporary major media demonstrates that cultural arguments for negative social and economic outcomes among black people abound at present—but, importantly, they don’t live alone. While some commentators gain popularity by arguing the non-existence of “institutional racism,” the fact that so many find it necessary to dissociate “institutional racism” as “myth,” and “real” racism as that which is perpetuated by malicious individuals

indicates the extent to which Carmichael has permanently complicated our understanding of racism.

Conclusion: A (Not So) Radical Response to Institutional Racism

To this point I've had two overarching and interrelated goals. First, the project has attempted to lay bare the rhetorical mechanisms by which those in power silence dissent. Second, I've tried to view with greater clarity Stokely Carmichael's rhetorical strategies and legacies. I opened the dissertation with a discussion of discourse norms, specifically "civility policing," arguing that civility policing preserves unjust harmonies (Roberts-Miller, *Deliberate Conflict* 154), displaces blame from oppressor to oppressed (Welch 110), and silences dissent (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 223).

In the dissertation's first chapter I demonstrated that by engaging in civility policing, Stokely Carmichael's critics amplified a distorted version of his message. News media ran endless stories on Carmichael and the call for "Black Power," but they often reported his most salacious statements while omitting his critique of American institutions. The result was that audiences interpreted "Black Power" as unjustified incivility marked by violence, racism, and sedition. Stokely Carmichael and the call for power were in turn blamed for a host of negative consequences, including urban rebellions, and Carmichael was vilified and demonized in ways that negatively and erroneously shaped historical narratives about him and the Black Freedom Struggle more broadly (see, especially, Joseph, *Stokely*). One such narrative is that Carmichael was a racial separatist and Dr. King's foil (Joseph, *Stokely*, especially, 126-130, 188-190). My analysis of historical sources, including Carmichael's letters to Lorna Smith, challenges this simplifying and reductivist understanding of Carmichael and reveals a thoughtful and sincere activist dedicated to helping poor black people. I demonstrated that Carmichael was hopeful

regarding black and white cooperation, and he aimed at what he called “true integration” (Letter to Lorna Smith, June 15, 1966).

In Chapter 2, I argued that Carmichael’s critics dismissed him with accusations of “demagoguery.” I used historical sources and an older scholarship on “demagoguery” to argue that critics making the charge meant in 1966 that Carmichael was appealing to emotions, lying, and exploiting racial divisions. I showed that Carmichael’s critics compared him to Southern demagogues such as Theodore Bilbo or George Wallace. They even compared him to the KKK. That the old definition of “demagoguery” allowed comparison of an anti-racist activist with the most overt forms of white supremacy reflects poorly upon the usefulness of that definition. I turned to more recent scholarship on demagoguery with particular focus on Patricia Roberts-Miller’s definition.

Application of the more robust definition demonstrated that accusations against Carmichael exhibited features of demagoguery including the tendency to frame all argument in terms of us vs. them and a willingness to punish an outgroup. Carmichael’s critics argued that he should be imprisoned, deported, and even killed. On the other hand, Carmichael’s own words, especially those within *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, reveal that Carmichael outgroups not individuals, but systems. Because Carmichael’s claim that American institutions have failed black communities is verifiably true (see, for example, Katznelson), he escapes the charge of demagoguery. The chapter concluded by arguing that the charge of demagoguery was particularly attractive within a color-blind context. Carmichael challenges that context by framing integration (as practiced) as an assimilationist perpetuation of white supremacy.

While the two preceding chapters—centering “civility” and “demagoguery”—name rhetorical processes by which those in power attempted to silence Stokely Carmichael, Chapter 3 built upon Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “dissociation of concepts” and Janice Fernheimer’s “dissociative disruption” to better understand the adaptive rhetorical strategies Carmichael used in his most famous speech given at Berkeley. I offer the term “subversive dissociation” as a charge to locate the dissociative foundations of dominant racial narratives. Once dissociations that privilege white experience as “real” and black experience as only “apparent” gain broad acceptance they can be understood as the “linguistic common property” from which dominant racial narratives derive. I identified the racist dissociation of labor that Carmichael countered at Berkeley as “linguistic common property.” Doing so unlocked Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s tools of counter for observing how Carmichael’s fan-type dissociation of “power” and “racism” worked to destabilize dominant racial narratives around merit and reward.

I conclude the dissertation by analyzing the words of those who challenge current anti-racist rhetoric, especially the term “institutional racism.” Stokely Carmichael’s critics met his institutional critique with civility policing marked by charges of demagoguery, violence, and reverse racism. Those who challenge institutional critique in the present make similar moves, though they don’t always use the same terms. They engage in civility policing, promote pure agency, and reverse the charge of racism. Collectively, these moves mask critics’ allegiance to a system that provides them both material and psychological benefits, and, importantly, like their predecessors, they prevent good faith deliberation concerning anti-racist policy.

I look at essays, op-eds, and commentary from conservative venues, and I apply Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's four "frames" of color-blind racism. I consider, however, neither overtly white supremacist rhetoric, alt-right rhetoric, or the sometimes blatantly racist words of President Trump and his most ardent supporters. Instead, I look at publications such as the *National Review*, *City Journal*, and *The Wall Street Journal* to find that writers even within more reputable conservative journals avoid seriously engaging institutional racism, its impact upon black communities, and productive policy interventions.

THE FRAMES OF COLOR-BLIND RACISM IN CONSERVATIVE ARGUMENT

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues that while the most overtly racist ideas concerning the inferiority of black folks have faded, "a new powerful ideology has emerged to defend the contemporary racial order: the ideology of color-blind racism" (68). He describes four "frames," or "set paths for interpreting information" used among the dominant group. According to Bonilla-Silva, these frames—"abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, minimization of racism"—operate to blame victims for their own suffering, as did more overtly racist forms (69). Because I reference these frames throughout the conclusion, I provide Bonilla-Silva's definitions of each.

Bonilla-Silva writes that "abstract liberalism" "involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., 'equal opportunity,' the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters" (69). Importantly, Bonilla-Silva writes that "By framing race-related issues in the language of liberalism, whites can appear 'reasonable' and even

‘moral,’ while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial equality” (70). “Naturalization,” according to Bonilla-Silva, “allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences” (69). He uses the example of segregation, which whites claim “is natural because people from all backgrounds ‘gravitate toward likeness.’ Or that their taste for whiteness in friends and partners is just ‘the way things are’” (70). “Cultural racism,” for Bonilla-Silva, “relies on culturally based arguments such as “Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education” or “blacks have too many babies” to explain the standing of minorities in society” (71). Finally, Bonilla-Silva writes that “minimization of racism...suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances,” which he identified in statements such as “It’s better now than in the past” and “There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there” (71).

In this opening section, I read Bonilla-Silva’s frames of color-blind racism across Robert Cherry’s recent response in the *National Review* to reports that the coronavirus has been killing black people at disproportionate rates and that the tragedy can be traced to racial inequities in housing, food access, healthcare, employment, etc. (see Bouie; Kendi “Stop Blaming”). Cherry’s argument is of interest to a study that has centered (often racist) responses to institutional critique because it is in some respects representative of an intellectual class of conservative writing on race, which rhetorically positions itself as above the fray of the racism that Donald Trump and his supporters wear as a badge of honor. Cherry’s argument is like much of this class of writing in that it is remarkably civil by definitions found unproductive in the dissertations opening chapters. That is, it uses an

objective (even caring) tone, but an application of Bonilla-Silva's frames of color-blind racism demonstrates that his message varies little in substance from the criticism that Carmichael encountered in 1966 and 1967.

Cherry opens by acknowledging inequity: "It is unquestionable that black Americans have been disproportionately adversely affected [by Covid-19]." Cherry, however, criticizes the *New York Times* for explaining these disparities in terms of "racism" and for claiming "that black Americans are bearing the brunt of the coronavirus." Cherry concedes that "In New York City, blacks make up 28 percent of coronavirus deaths," but, he counters, "[T]hose over 65 years old compose over 70 percent." Note Cherry's attempt to diminish the impact of institutional forces on black communities by foregrounding the relative magnitude of harm to senior citizens. He deduces that "[N]ationally, senior citizens [not black Americans] continue to bear the brunt of deaths." This last claim, of course, fails to recognize that one can be both elderly and black. The claim that mortality rates are highest among senior citizens hardly negates the claim of disparate impact to black communities.

Cherry also downplays the virus's economic impact on black communities: "Nor are black Americans the most affected by the economic effects of the coronavirus." Instead, he argues, "Immigrant communities bear much more of the economic impact of the lockdown." Again he provides relative statistics intended to diminish perceptions of disproportionate harm to black people, writing, "Latinos own 2.5 times as many businesses with paid employees as black Americans," and, "Though only one-third of the black population, Asians own nearly five times as many businesses." While the implication that

business owners suffer more than their employees is suspect to say the least, Cherry's use of the "model minority" trope certainly operates to shame already suffering black communities.

Still, Cherry began by acknowledging the coronavirus's disparate impact on black communities. According to Cherry the *Times* attributes the disparity to institutional racism. Cherry claims that personal health decisions have been under-examined. Cherry concedes that some environmental factors have aggravated underlying health conditions that increase mortality rates among the coronavirus's black victims. Cherry is not centrally concerned with those environmental factors. Instead, he asks, "[W]hat causes these underlying health deficits?" A robust exploration of the causes of health and healthcare disparities between racial groups would point to environmental factors, to mutually reinforcing systems of oppression (see, for example, Bailey et. al). Cherry instead makes the racist claim that underlying health conditions in the black community result when recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) buy soda instead of fruits and vegetables. "Ten years ago," he argues, "when it was found that 10 percent of food stamps were being spent on sugary soda, many politicians, including Mayor Bloomberg, recommended food-stamp use restrictions. Michelle Obama refused to support these restrictions." Cherry argues that proper SNAP regulation would have curbed both obesity and Type 2 diabetes, both of which put people at a much higher risk of dying from Covid-19.

Cherry's argument is well-written, references empirical research, and is delivered in a tone that oscillates between objective and caring. He writes, for example, "It would be

cruel to focus on personal behaviors, including dietary choices, as the primary cause of black and Latino disproportionality.” “We must address,” he argues very briefly in closing, “the housing and income deficits substantially responsible for the differential impacts of the coronavirus.” But then an important shift: “However,” he concludes, “ignoring personal decisions and placing the entire burden on structural racism will not help us find the solutions to improve future well-being.” That is, Cherry cares. He cares enough to say (racist) things that others are unwilling to say in order to get at the real problem. It seems he also cares about the black community enough to diminish their suffering and then blame them for that suffering while conflating them with “food stamp” recipients.

Bonilla-Silva’s frames can assist in identifying the racist reasoning underlying Cherry’s argument. Bonilla-Silva writes that “abstract liberalism” is the most important frame of color-blind racism, and it lies at the heart of Cherry’s argument. For Bonilla-Silva, those engaging in color-blind racism apply, abstractly, “the language of liberalism” (70), and regardless of Cherry’s closing disclaimer, his argument hinges on the appeal to personal responsibility, or “personal decisions” in his words. Bonilla-Silva’s other frames, especially “minimization of racism” and “cultural racism” facilitate “abstract liberalism’s” operation. While statistical realities (see APM Research Lab Staff) make it implausible for Cherry to deny that black people are dying from Covid-19 at disproportionate rates, he applies “minimization of racism” when comparing black mortality rates with even higher mortality rates among seniors. The move is intended to diminish the suffering of black people and institutional racism’s role as its central cause.

Three points that Keeanga Yahmatta-Taylor makes on racism outlined in *From Black Liberation to #BlackLivesMatter* help frame Cherry's argument. First, she defines institutional racism "as the policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately, mortality of African-Americans" (8). "Most importantly," she argues, "it is the outcome that matters, not the intentions of individuals involved" (8). According to those criteria, disproportionate mortality rates among racial groups for a racially unbiased coronavirus evidence institutional racism.

Second, Yamahtta-Taylor also argues that "Institutional racism remains the best way to understand how black deprivation continues in a country as rich and resource-filled as the United States" (8). Because Cherry and other conservative writers understand (and lament) the explanatory power of institutional racism, they direct substantial effort toward "minimizing" either its existence or effects. Cherry, for example, omits complex explanations for underlying health conditions, such as obesity, that are exacerbated by Covid-19 in the black community. Even more, Sabrina Strings recently argued that the obesity gap between black and white people is smaller than such finger pointing would imply. She writes that while obesity has been touted as the central cause of disparate mortality rates between black and white people, "Researchers have yet to clarify how a 7 percentage-point disparity in obesity prevalence translates to a 240 percent-700 percent disparity in fatalities."

Cherry also acknowledges that air pollution in minority areas contributes to disparate mortality rates among racial groups. However, while researchers have connected

race, housing, and pollution to a number of negative health outcomes (see, especially Bravo), this is not where Cherry spends his time. Instead he argues that air quality in minority areas has been greatly improved, and that rates of dangerous pollutants were higher “in many wealthier white neighborhoods...than in either the Morrissiana/Highbridge or Hunt’s Point areas of the Bronx.” Cherry’s message, regardless of his concluding disclaimer, is that black communities don’t have it so bad.

Cherry’s “Minimization of racism,” like all attempts to deny the existence of institutional racism or to minimize its effects—leaves undesirable outcomes in black communities unexplained (this is Camper and Fechter’s “enthymematic free space” encountered in the previous chapter) thus, setting the stage for “cultural racism” in the service of “abstract liberalism.” By eliminating institutional racism as the central cause of undesirable outcomes, critics are better positioned to defend existing cultural explanations, to posit new ones, or both. After minimizing the effects of environmental causes for the disparate impact of Covid-19, Cherry leverages culturally racist tropes to reposition culpability for black suffering with black people by conflating SNAP recipients with black communities. Cherry also plays on racist stereotypes concerning black intelligence and impulse control when indicating that black people can’t be governmentally incentivized to trade sugary drinks for healthy foods.

What the application of racial frames clearly communicates is that the pretense of civility, couched in a rhetoric of care, does nothing to temper the racism of arguments that victim blame minority communities. The combination of “cultural racism” and “minimization of racism” is central to Cherry’s argument and conservative argument

generally. This doesn't necessitate conservative writers having malice toward black individuals, a truth that can be derived from the third and final point I borrow from Yamahitta-Taylor. She writes that, historically, "the experiences of the vast majority of African Americans confound the central narrative of the United States as a place of unbounded opportunity, freedom, and democracy" (24). She argues that, in response to racial-economic inequities that threaten the central meritocratic narrative, explanations have emerged that appeal to "Black irresponsibility, erroneous social mores, and general bad behavior" (24). She argues that this is not (at least most overtly) about race, but about "rationalizing poverty and inequality in ways that absolve the state and capital of any culpability" (25). She writes, "the framework of Black inferiority politically narrates the necessity of austere budgets while sustaining—ideologically at least—the premise of the 'American dream'" (25).

This last statement is at the heart of Cherry's argument and other conservative responses that deny the existence or diminish the effects of institutional racism. If one is to enthusiastically defend American institutions, beliefs, and identities, then that person must reconcile black experiences with meritocratic narratives, with the American dream. To acknowledge institutional racism is to recognize material barriers to black progress that complicate meritocratic narratives. Truly accepting the existence of institutional racism means acknowledging that the magnitude and complexity of the problems facing people of color require revolutionary social and economic change and expensive policy interventions, neither of which align with conservative principles.

What was true in the 1960s is true at present, and that is that conservative writers do not take issue with *the manner* in which radicals critique the system; they resent that the system (from which they derive material goods and central identities) is being challenged at all. It is as Roberts-Miller argued that “there wasn’t a way for abolitionists to confront slavers that slavers wouldn’t have found to be uncivil” (*Fanatical Schemes* 231), and a similar principle applies to those challenging institutional racism in the present. The only route to continued unqualified promotion of the meritocratic narrative, for example, is to explain away racial disparities, and conservative writers use “abstract liberalism” marked by appeals to personal responsibility to accomplish the task.

In the following section, I further explore the utility of Bonilla-Silva’s frames for observing the racial logic of conservative intellectual argument, and I explore how conservative writers define the word racism when challenging the fact that institutional racism is a substantial impediment to black progress.

CULTURAL RACISM, THE END OF RACISM, AND (RE)DEFINING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

A pattern often repeated in conservative argument can be distilled from the argument above. First, a writer argues that the existence and effect of institutional racism is either fictional or greatly exaggerated. Second, once the writer forwards cultural explanations for black suffering. Third, the language of liberalism, especially appeals to “personal responsibility,” is applied to locate blame for black suffering with black people.

I begin by looking at conservative arguments that minimize racism. Jason L. Riley dedicates the majority of a *WSJ* article lamenting the Kerner Commission’s 1968 report

inaugurating “50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism.” As observed in the previous chapter, the Kerner Commission explored the causes of urban unrest and concluded that American institutions were at the root (“Report of The National Advisory Commission”). Riley, by indicating that the Kerner commission inaugurated a long season of blaming racism, fails to recognize that Lyndon Johnson never accepted the findings of the bipartisan group he commissioned (See, especially, Gillon). One would also have to exercise extraordinary creative powers to trace widespread recognition of institutional racism from 1968 to present. The term “institutional racism,” for example, faded with the sixties and didn’t reemerge until the 1990s (Phillips 173), and the Reagan years alone constitute a substantial hurdle to the claim of the Kerner Commission’s uninterrupted legacy.

Riley assumes the commission's unbroken line of influence, however, and he attempts to get at its source by undermining the report’s central claim (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). Riley argues that “The Kerner report's attempts to blame everybody for the rioting except the rioters strain credulity,” and he creatively frames markers of black progress in the postwar period (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). He foregrounds the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Bills before arguing that “the educational and economic strides blacks made during this period were also unprecedented, and racial disparities were narrowing” (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). As evidence he argues that between the years 1940 and 1970 poverty rates “fell by 40 percentage points among whites and by 57 points among blacks” (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). Additionally, he argues, “White-black gaps in homeownership, life expectancy and white-collar employment also were shrinking

in the postwar era, contrary to the pessimism of the Kerner Commission” (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”).

Note that Riley refuses to use real numbers, which would reveal glaring inequalities in 1968, thus contradicting his picture of progress. The median household wealth, for example, of a black family in 1968 was \$2,467 while it was nearly twenty times that—\$47,655—for a white family (Jones et al.). Additionally, foregrounding the relative economic distance traveled by black people from the Great Depression to the moment of the United States’ greatest prosperity is specious at best. Certainly, at highest tide those traveling up from the bottom are likely to register as slightly more mobile.

Where Riley does use real numbers, it’s hard to square the data with his claims. Riley, for example, argues that “white racial attitudes were shifting. In 1942, national support for school integration stood at 30%; two decades later it would be 62%. By 1963, racial discrimination in public accommodations was already illegal in 30 states, and more than 80% of whites were opposed to restricting job opportunities by race” (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). It, of course, is not difficult to see why many didn’t consider cause for celebration the idea that just more than half of the U.S. could tolerate their child rubbing elbows with a black kid while doing arithmetic.

With institutional racism “sufficiently” countered, Riley quickly completes moves two and three by forwarding culturally racist explanations for urban unrest, and blaming black people for their own suffering: “We can’t hope to address effectively the social pathology on display in so many black ghettos by playing down the role of culture and personal responsibility so as to keep the focus on white racism” (“50 Years of Blaming

Everything on Racism”). “What blacks were doing on their own to develop human capital and to narrow racial gaps in the first half of the 20th century,” he argues, “has a far better record of success than any government program” (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”). The racist implication being that racial disparities trace, not to environmental factors, but to collective black failure. For Riley, an ethic of personal responsibility in the black community has given way to a culture of poverty enabled by government programs. Cultural damage—not institutional racism—prevents black people from competing in free and open markets.

Conservative writers repeat these three moves ad infinitum. Heather Mac Donald in *City Journal*, for example, accomplishes all three in a single sentence:

Anti-racism—preferably of a performative nature—is now the national religion of white elites, who would rather blame themselves (and the deplorables) for nonexistent racism than speak honestly about the behavioral problems and academic skills gaps that lead to ongoing socioeconomic disparities.

In the wake of the Jussie Smollett fiasco, Mac Donald argues that institutional racism doesn’t exist because Smollett’s very strange case was manufactured. Mac Donald augments that argument by associating claims to racism with “elites”—a vague yet powerful term within conservative argument. She then moves to stereotypes and the deficit model concerning black youth to explain, well, pretty much everything. According to Mac Donald, racism is a myth, and all “ongoing socioeconomic disparity” results from the behavioral problems and academic failings of black children.

Harry Stein, again for *City Journal*, is even less nuanced in his “minimization of racism”: “What they see is what has long been true: that the charge of racism is invariably

a crock; indeed, that more than simply an expression of (often contrived) moral outrage.” On the other end of the politeness spectrum (though not the racism one) Peter C. Meyers writing for *The Heritage Foundation* demonstrates that Bonilla-Silva’s fourth frame, “naturalization of racism,” operates in seemingly polite denials. When making “The Case for Color-Blindness,” Myers writes that “Disparities among groups are inevitable, for general and specific reasons.” “The general reason explained by Thomas Sowell,” he argues, “is that disparities in socioeconomic outcomes would frequently appear, by the mere operation of the law of averages, even among groups who received entirely equal, nondiscriminatory treatment and derived their memberships from purely random samplings of the larger societal populations.” Got it. It’s math. It’s just that mathematical variation happens to put black folks on the bottom—every time.

Myers, still using Sowell, writes that “All the more variance is predictable among real-world groups, whose memberships are not derived randomly and are thus likely to differ from one another in significant, socioeconomical ways.” What are those ways? “Suppose, for instance,” he argues,

there are two groups whose memberships differed from one another in variables including members’ average ages, regions of residence, degrees and kinds of emphasis placed on education, occupational choices, preferred modes of entertainment, habits of saving and spending, attitudes and practices concerning marriage and family formation, and a host of others.

Suppose. Myers, like Cherry, says a lot without saying it. Myers’ collection of hypothetical distinctions just happens to mirror the collection of stereotypes about urban black communities found in less polite rhetoric. Clearly, his audience will read him as referencing black communities even as he trades “listens to rap music” for “[differing in] modes of

entertainment.” Myers asks, “Would not such differences inevitably result in disparities in socioeconomic outcomes between the two groups?”

STRATEGICALLY MISUNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

A lot of conservative arguments, seemingly, misunderstand what institutional racism is and does. Whether any particular argument betrays ignorance or stratagem is unknowable; however, conservative racial rhetoric exploits audience ignorance or obstinance concerning the meaning of institutional racism. Jason Riley, in a separate *WSJ* article argues that “When liberals call for more honest conversations about race in the U.S., what they have in mind are discussions very narrowly focused on certain premises that fellow liberals have accepted and don’t want questioned” (“Ta-Nehisi Coates vs. Cornel West”).

In the wake of the notorious Ta-Nehesi Coates/Cornel West Twitter battle, Riley sees little difference between the two black intellectuals and faults both for agreeing that “racial discrimination explains economic and social disparities today” (“Ta-Nehisi Coates vs. Cornel West”). “They agree,” he argues, “that black-white gaps in, say, academic achievement, employment, incarceration and homeownership are mostly the product of who’s in charge of teaching, hiring, policing and money lending” (“Ta-Nehisi Coates vs. Cornel West”). Of course, for Riley, Coates and West are irrational and close minded: “Seldom do they and their fellow travelers on the left express any interest in engaging people who challenge such notions, regardless of how much empirical evidence and logic those challengers might bring” (“Ta-Nehisi Coates vs. Cornel West”).

Note that Riley uses the term “racial discrimination” instead of “institutional racism,” which accomplishes two purposes. First, it is technically correct and so resistant to charges of errancy. Certainly, when black intellectuals from the left discuss institutional racism they are concerned that the operations of systems lead to discriminatory outcomes, hence “racial discrimination.” Second, to an uninitiated conservative audience, the language “racial discrimination” communicates aspects of individual racism. That is, Riley’s argument—that those on the left blame disparate outcomes on “racial discrimination”—encourages (or at least allows) conservative readers to incorrectly interpret leftists as blaming undesirable black outcomes on the intentionally discriminatory acts of hateful whites, a phenomenon that certainly still exists, but which lacks at present the explanatory power of “institutional racism.” Such moves frame anti-racists as complaining about manufactured obstacles to avoid dealing with the “real” problem, which, again, just happens to be the moral failures and unproductive attitudes of suffering people.

Conservative writers rarely operationalize agreed upon definitions of “institutional racism.” Riley very narrowly defines the term as white faces in high places (“50 Years of Blaming Everything on Racism”), and Cherry, with whom the current analysis opened, fails to acknowledge (among many other things) connections between race, income, location, and food access. Robert Verbruggen, again for the *National Review*, also struggles with the concept. He argues that those on the left (especially those in the academy) don’t get to redefine words for the community. Verbruggen writes that those on the left seem to have “a deep confusion about how language works.” He argues that prescriptivists within

the academy are trying to impose, not rules about split infinitives, but new definitions of things like racism. “Some academics who study racial matters,” Verbruggen argues, “use the word ‘racism’ to mean not ‘dislike of people on the basis of race,’ which is how most people use it, but rather something like ‘prejudice plus power’ or what is more clearly called ‘institutional’ or ‘systemic’ racism—meaning, conveniently, that members of minority groups by definition cannot be racist.”

First, Verbruggen demonstrates a weak understanding of institutional racism. While at least he acknowledges that power is central to its operation, defining institutional racism as “prejudice plus power” misses that conscious personal prejudice is irrelevant to the existence of institutional racism, whether that prejudice is enacted by those of the dominant group or not. Institutional racism is so dangerous precisely because its operation is not contingent upon the participation of a single mal-intended individual racist. Each person within a system (one that seeks economic success, for example) may feel completely absolved while that system harms or neglects communities of color.

Second, Verbruggen’s outrage at someone who means to communicate the existence of “institutional racism” with the word “racism” demonstrates at the very least his rejection of the hierarchy of terms accompanying Carmichael’s dissociation of racism observed in the previous chapter. For Carmichael institutional racism was the foe of concern, that which justified self-determinative strategies under the banner of “Black Power.” So when academics, which Verbruggen describes as “the woke left,” attempt to privilege institutional racism over individual racism, they simply attempt to continue the work that Carmichael forwarded decades ago.

Verbruggen was right about a lot, though. He writes that “our words’ definitions are ultimately decided by the community of English speakers, not just by academia.”. According to Verbruggen, “A thoughtful descriptivist realizes that strongly established usage patterns should generally be treated as rules by someone who wants to communicate effectively; a thoughtful prescriptivist realizes that the rules emerge from constantly evolving usage patterns.” I think Carmichael got it, and I think academics concerned with race get it. They attempt to change usage patterns important to the goal of communicating (and so battling) the existence and effect of institutional racism. The hope is that understanding and equitable policy follow.

Instead, commentators denounce in the present, seemingly, without ever having understood institutional racism. George Leef, for example, argues that “For the Left, ‘institutional racism’ is the explanation for just about every inequality they find — and looking for them is an obsession” (“Playing the Race Card”). “Consider,” he argues, “the fact that black football and basketball players in big sports schools have a substantially lower graduation rate than do other student groups. Is that because they aren’t well prepared for anything resembling college level work and have scant interest in reading, thinking, and expressing their thoughts on course material? No—it’s because of racism on campus!” (“Playing the Race Card”).

First, arguing (even when using irony to do so) that black student athletes, as a group, aren’t prepared, even for the *resemblance* of college, is racist, and arguing that they aren’t interested in “reading” or “thinking” is more racist. Second, embedded in his argument that racism is not a central cause, is pretty good evidence that it is. That is, if, in

fact, black student athletes (but not white student athletes) were underprepared for college, that would certainly point to overlapping inequities in social, economic, and educational systems.

In a separate essay, the same author argues, “Instead of focusing on actual ways in which our rules often handicap ‘people of color’ (such as civil asset forfeiture, occupational licensing, and, above all, public education), many academics prefer to rant that it is racism that holds them back” (“The Latest Academic Fad: ‘Color Blind Racism’”). Leef again lists the mechanisms of institutional oppression even while denying (expressing exasperation at) the existence of racism. The issue is not *just* that Leef and Verbruggen and countless others are wrong, it is that they don’t use (or refuse to use) the vocabulary in an accurate and consistent enough manner to participate productively in the conversation. Such misdefinitions are so often repeated, so universal, though, that one gets the impression that participating productively in the conversation is beside the point.

I KNOW YOU ARE, BUT WHAT AM I? CALLING ANTI-RACISTS RACIST

Peter Kirsanow is, ostensibly, “Rooting Out Systemic Racism and White Supremacy.” Really, he is mocking Democratic politicians (including Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, and Pete Buttigieg) for declaring the ubiquity of institutional racism when he is certain that institutional racism doesn’t exist (“Rooting Out Systemic Racism). Donald Trump’s presidency has not led to racism, he argues, because official reports to the EEOC are not as high as they were during the Obama administration, which marked a “twenty-five year high” (“Rooting Out Systemic Racism). That reporting of overtly racist incidents

peaked in response to the election of the first black president might not convince all audiences that racism is in retreat. Regardless, reporting of overt racism is a lousy metric for determining the existence of institutional racism.

“Not to worry,” though, Kirsanow argues, “There’s at least one clear and unequivocal example of systemic racism in America today” (“Rooting Out Systemic Racism). That is “the staggering racial preferences awarded by colleges to black and Hispanic applicants over white and Asian applicants” (“Rooting Out Systemic Racism). “Systemic racism is OK,” according to Kirsanow, “provided it’s approved by progressives, and they’re running the system” (“Rooting Out Systemic Racism). The charge that those attempting anti-racist policies are in fact the racists is ever-present in conservative argument.

I return, for example, to Harry Stein’s piece in *City Journal* where he suggests we “talk about white liberal bigotry,” which is “the bigotry of low expectations” that “cripples and demeans those it supposedly aims to help.” As evidence he offers, “the recent call by the Tucson Unified School District to revamp its disciplinary system to cut down on the suspensions and expulsions of minority students (but not white ones) so that the numbers reveal ‘no ethnic/racial disparities.’” So outrageously racist is the policy attempt to counterbalance implicit racism that Kirsanow has to ask: “Are such conversations possible in contemporary America?” Racial disparity is not the problem; “it’s the fear of having these conversations [about how racism isn’t a problem] that is truly racist.”

In Heather Mac Donalds’ essay, already referenced, she writes that “The current anti-racist frenzy is the product of a poisoned academic culture that has declared war on

Western Civilization and that teaches students, more than anything else, how to hate—to hate the greatest accomplishments of our civilization, to hate America, and to hate one another. Again, it is not racism, but anti-racism that is hateful, and the arbiters of hate are academics, the worst of the “elites.”

Robert Woodson, in the *WSJ*, demonstrates how conservative argument combines Bonilla-Silva’s frames, not only to the end of blaming victims, but also to returning the charge of racism. Woodson simultaneously minimizes racism and leverages cultural racism: “The dominant racial message today,” he argues, “attributes black failure--academic, occupational and even moral—to an all-purpose invisible villain: ‘institutional racism.’ With the table set, he pulls the levers of abstract liberalism to frame anti-racists as themselves racist: “Those who shake their fists and proclaim that white America must change before blacks can achieve anything are embracing a version of white supremacy clothed as protest.”

Anti-racist protestors challenging white supremacy—not those who blame people of color for their own suffering—are, in fact, white supremacists. The strawman at the heart of Woodson’s argument requires a strategic misunderstanding of institutional racism as he purposely conflates the claim to substantial institutional constraints to black progress with the idea that black people are too incapable or damaged to perform. It is difficult to square his seeming disdain for that position, however, when considering that this is the argument that conservatives most often make. One might more readily expect that he would be pleased to have “discovered” that his political opponents agree with him.

Peter C. Myers frames the issue in terms of black inferiority, writing that “A long-standing charge is that race preferences harm targeted beneficiaries by stigmatizing them.” He then quotes Clarence Thomas: “So-called ‘benign’ discrimination...teaches many that because of chronic and apparently immutable handicaps, minorities cannot compete with them without their patronizing indulgence.... These programs stamp minorities with a badge of inferiority.”

The charge of reverse-racism is so attractive because it dismisses difficult opponents and defends the current operation of systems all within a rhetoric of care. That is, the writer’s central concern seems to be the welfare of minority people. Myers’ concern about stigmatization extends even further: “An additional difficulty is that even as they raise doubts among others about beneficiaries’ qualifications, such preferences tend to demoralize beneficiaries themselves by diminishing their incentives for competitive excellence.” This statement might be interpreted as a return to the damage thesis that both undergirds conservative argument and that Woodson faulted after attributing it to those who claimed the existence of institutional racism.

That stigmatization extends, for Myers, beyond racial borders in telling ways: “Still further, such preferences tend to stigmatize non-beneficiaries, whites in particular, by their implication that they are presumptive racists.” For Myers, preferential treatment leaves white people as “possessors of ill-gotten gains, undeserving of whatever successes they may have achieved. The inevitable effect is to exacerbate racial resentment and divisiveness.” One might not guess the extent of the inevitable effect, though. Myers writes that “the present race-preferences regime signifies the endowment of some groups by birth

with claims superior to those of others, in perpetuity.” “In this crucial respect,” he argues, “it does indeed bear the same resemblance as did slavery to the doctrine of divine-right injustice execrated by America’s revolutionary founders. “It is all,” as Lincoln remarked, “the same old serpent.”

So while the return charge of racism foregrounds conservative writers’ concern for black well-being, a rhetoric of care obscures substantial concern for defending systems and so dominant identities. It seems that the concern for black people is at least matched by a concern that one may have to admit that their skin tone has afforded them privileges in life. Conservative charges of racism emerge as an effective tool for dismissing opponents, and for masking intentions.

CIVILITY POLICING AND BLAMING STOKELY CARMICHAEL

Conservatives who deny the existence of institutional racism—and who return the charge of racism upon anti-racists—police the boundaries of acceptable speech in ways not dissimilar to Stokely Carmichael’s detractors in the 1960s. While conservative voices in the age of Trump, generally avoid the word demagoguery, their criticisms follow the formula of their predecessors. That is, they claim that anti-racists dishonestly create or exploit racial division for personal gain.

Even as conservative voices charge their critics with supercilious language policing under the banner of “political correctness” (*NR* has an entire section called “PC Culture”), they attempt their own language policing by denying the existence of institutional racism, charging reverse-racism, and mocking the language of institutional critique. These moves

constitute civility policing in line with Carmichael's critics in 1966 and 1967. In making these moves, conservatives don't attempt to understand and take seriously the arguments of an opposition, and they attempt to leave anti-racists outside of policy deliberation, to frame them as too aberrant to be taken seriously. Mirroring responses to Carmichael in the 1960s, the unheard are silenced. Unjust communities are preserved, and blame is displaced from oppressor to oppressed.

While the dissertation has traced the roots of civility policing as far as Stokely Carmichael (they go much deeper, of course), conservative writer, David Azerrad, writing for *The Heritage Foundation*, does as well. He excoriates "identitarians" or those promoting "identity politics" as the true racists, and he argues that their worldview is rooted in Black Power. "Identitarians," for Azerrad, claim colorblind principles and argue the benefits of race-conscious policy. He argues, "It is rather telling that the only people who would label both a Filipino American and a Chinese American 'Asian' are identitarian ideologues and actual racists." "Identitarians, in effect," he argues, "look at the world through the eyes of a white racist (or misogynist or homophobe)." I won't pause long on the absurdity of claiming that anti-racists would be less interested in correctly identifying a person's country of origin than those espousing colorblind principles. Just within conservative arguments quoted in this conclusion, both Cherry and Kirsanow use the word "Asian."

More interesting than the claim that those promoting "identity politics" are the true racists, is that Azerrad argues that 1960s radicalism generally, but Black Nationalism and Black Power, specifically—especially the words of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael—

were the origin of the accumulating wave of racism that at present roils from the Left. To be clear, neither Malcolm X nor Stokely Carmichael are anywhere near the origin of black nationalism or Black Power, even as they were particularly charismatic and talented purveyors of their rhetoric. Also, an obvious counterpoint is that systems of slavery, convict leasing, and Jim Crow would have been impossible without a solid foundation of racial politics.

Even a passing acquaintance with our history leads one to consider that identity politics in America have long been about white people victimizing black people. “Identity politics,” for Azerrad, however, is about people of color hating white people, and he traces the tradition of reverse-racism to Carmichael’s words recorded in a 1966 SNCC position paper titled “The Basis of Black Power.” He quotes Carmichael as “[calling] on his fellow blacks to “fill [themselves] with hate for all white things” and “to vent the rage they feel about whites.” Problems with Azerrad’s argument include that those are not, in fact, Stokely Carmichael’s words. While the *New York Times* attributed the paper to Carmichael in 1966, Peniel Joseph writes that the story “made good copy, but poor history” (*Stokely* 132). According to Joseph, “The actual authors were hardline militants and dissidents in Atlanta’s Vine City project, publishers of the radical newspaper *Nitty Gritty*” (*Stokely* 132). Joseph writes that Carmichael actually defended white people in the wake of that paper’s release (*Stokely* 132).

Keeping alive the myth that Carmichael was Dr. King’s foil, Azerrad defines Carmichael’s identity politics against what he perceives as King’s colorblind rhetoric of love: “This spirit [Carmichael’s] of wrathful vengeance and hatred is, by contrast, absent

from the nonidentitarian movements working to improve the lot of women and black Americans.” “The civil rights movement, led by Martin Luther King, Jr.,” he argues, “was of course suffused with the Christian language of love. ‘Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that,’ he wrote in his last book criticizing the Black Power movement.”

It takes moxie to frame King’s last book as a colorblind foil to Carmichael’s hateful race consciousness. In *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, King asks, “Why is equality so assiduously avoided? Why does white America delude itself; and how does it rationalize the evil it retains?” (4). He writes, “As the nation passes from opposing extremist behavior to the deeper and more pervasive elements of equality, white America reaffirms its bonds to the status quo” (5). That doesn’t sound like colorblind liberalism; it sounds like identity politics concerned with tackling institutional racism.

To be clear, Azerrad references multiple activists, including Betty Friedan, The Combahee River Collective, and La Raza to trace identity politics to the activism of yesteryear, but it is Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton’s *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* that constitutes the center of his critique. Azerrad (correctly this time) quotes Carmichael and Hamilton as writing that institutional racism is part of “the very nature of this nation’s political and economic system.” He faults *Black Power* for claiming that American politics is racialized and self-interested, a claim that seems noncontroversial considering, for example, that the 1966 Civil Rights Bill guaranteeing (among other things) fair housing couldn’t get the votes to pass. But for Azerrad, Carmichael’s institutional critique is damning evidence of an originary reverse-racism: “On the question of race, the identitarians, in essence, agree with the white

supremacists: America is for whites only.” I needn’t spend time on the obvious distinctions between being a white supremacist and observing the operation of white supremacy. Azerrad claims that Carmichael’s racist rhetoric constituted a “third way” between integration and revolution required for identitarian ideology to perpetuate in less radical times.

For Azerrad, Carmichael and Hamilton’s “goal is not to create a just society, either in America or elsewhere, but to fight more effectively for black people “by whatever means necessary.” While it is entirely unclear how fighting for black people and creating a just society are antithetical goals, Azerrad’s rendering of *Black Power* is largely accurate. That is, for Azerrad’s audience Carmichael and Hamilton’s words are understood to condemn the *Black Power* authors, their position, and race conscious rhetoric, which Azerrad traces across time, from Carmichael to the present.

CONCLUSION

In a sense, Azerrad and others that trace current argument on race to Stokely Carmichael are right. The existence of institutional racism is essential to current racial discourse, and Stokely Carmichael is uniquely responsible for the language of institutional critique. Carmichael’s language is a critical piece of what makes possible race conscious rhetoric in the wake of diminishing overt individual racist acts. Race-consciousness, for Azerrad, and others who cling to color-blindness, is a racist, identitarian violation of America’s first principles. “Nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or in the Constitution,” Azerrad argues, “are people classified according to race, ethnicity, sex, or

sexual orientation.” The three-fifths clause, of course, contradicts his assertions, even as Azerrad argues that we fixed that.

For Azerrad, Carmichael and Hamilton’s argument rests on a fatal contradiction. He writes, “One would think that the advocates of Black Power would expect nothing from a country as hopelessly racist as America, and yet they, like the identitarian movements that followed in their wake, in fact expect quite a lot.” This statement gets to the heart of it. For Azerrad, and conservative intellectuals more broadly, one can either hope for a better America or one can recognize the prevalence of institutional racism. From this perspective, recognizing institutional racism equates simply to hating an irredeemable nation. Carmichael and Hamilton, however, overtly state (as recognized by Azerrad) their hope for “a free, open society—not one based on racism and subordination,” but Azerrad dismisses such hopeful claims as conspiratorial: “They may perhaps be strategic overtures to reassure readers, in particular white readers, that Black Power holds out the promise of racial reconciliation.”

Azerrad, like other conservatives, insists on painting those who recognize the existence of institutional racism as hopeless, pessimistic, fatalistic, and racist. It seems that recognizing institutional racism is, in and of itself, uncivil. Sadly, civility policing is the strand that binds together past and present responses to institutional critique. The dissertation has affirmed that civility policing is the mechanism by which those in power dismiss rhetoric that threatens the operation of systems.

The stakes are too high, though, to dismiss, without serious consideration, those who identify material causes for racial disparity. Serious discussions of institutional racism,

its causes, and its effects mark the deliberative path toward redressing gross racial injustice in the U.S. In this sense, recognizing institutional racism is a hopeful act, a necessary step toward realizing the aspirational promises of our founding documents.

The hope of this dissertation is that by better understanding institutional critique in the past, we can more productively frame the discourse that emerged from it. That is, I hope this project stands as an obstacle for those who would argue that anti-racist argument is simply the pessimism and racism of the past rearing its ugly head in the present. Stokely Carmichael in 1966 and 1967 hoped that radical democracy could bring about “true integration,” and the language of institutional critique was a catalyst. If we accept the hopefulness of “institutional racism” and the humanity of the one who coined the phrase, maybe we will be better positioned to continue that mission.

As a final note, and as I conclude the dissertation, protests and rebellions erupt in response to the brutal police killing of George Floyd, another unarmed black man senselessly lost at the hands of those entrusted with protecting our communities. Protests that have spread from Minneapolis across the U.S. and then across the globe remind of the distance yet to travel in recognizing and realizing racial justice. Black Lives Matter, and the words we use to talk about them matter. It is telling that racial discourse in too many ways differs in hue but not substance from that which followed Stokely Carmichael in 1966 and 1967. The heavy lifting is ahead of us.

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