

Faith-Based Resistance: Examining the Impact of Black Power on Church Members and the Image of Christ

Venus Bender

This paper examines the rise of Black Power in the late 1960s and how its activists and their ideologies influenced the ways in which church members changed their perceptions of the Bible and its relation to Black liberation. It argues that Black nationalist imagery shaped the Christology of theologians and their visualization of Jesus as a Black messiah, which reinforced resistance from church members within their own institutions and beyond, as also found in literature and Black Arts. Although Black theology has been considerably shaped by Black Power, the movement has often been regarded as diametrically opposed to the Black Church in the U.S. This paper examines the writings and arts of church members who reinterpreted the Bible through the lens of Black Power and thereby justified their oftentimes radicalized fight for social justice. It seeks to highlight the significance of a redefined image of Christ as a driving force for Black Christian activists and artists likewise.

Left-Wing Critics of Black Power: James Boggs as an Architect and Critic of Black Power in Detroit

Constantin J. Berlin

While historical scholarship has mainly focused on liberal and conservative reactions to the emergence of the Black Power movement, my dissertation seeks to expand the scholarship on critics of Black Power by focusing on left-wing intellectuals and activists, who themselves were part or supporters of the Black freedom struggle. My contribution will serve as an introduction to my dissertation project, titled "*Critics from within the Struggle: Tracing Left-Wing Articulations of Black Power, 1955-1975*," and present James Boggs as an architect and left-wing critic of Black Power. Specifically, I will show how Boggs's revolutionary activism, centered on local and independent Black political action, laid the groundwork for the emergence of Black Power in Detroit; and how his critical analysis from within the movement challenged its national leaders and identified ideological shortcomings of Black Power politics.

The Ebbs and Woes of Industrial Black Power: Historicizing FIGHT and BUILD in Pursuit of Local Black Power Histories

Shanleigh Corrallo

Born out of the urban uprisings of the mid-1960s, Freedom, Integrity, God, Honor, Today (FIGHT) [Rochester] and Build Unity, Independence, Leadership, and Dignity (BUILD) [Buffalo] lived hard and died fast. FIGHT and BUILD were invented as local alternatives to big box civil rights and Black Power organizations like the Black Panthers, the NAACP and the Urban League. Guided by controversial, outsider community organizer Saul Alinsky, yet exclusive to Black Americans from their respective communities, FIGHT and BUILD represent a unique brand of Black Power

that answered demands for smaller, more focused fights against racism and discrimination. They melded Black faith leadership, democratic voting structures and radical Black organizing into unified bodies. The Black Power coalition that they created in the Rustbelt region of the United States left a blueprint for community organizing in Rochester and Buffalo that still endures today. The stories of FIGHT and BUILD further provide a glimpse into the struggles, contradictions, failures and achievements of smaller, local Black resistance movements in the United States. Contextualized within their Rustbelt geography and political culture, we readily see the logic behind approaching Black Power locally. Yet, we also notice that these advantages harbor their own limitations. A closer look into the FIGHTON factory, FIGHT's Black, community-owned industrial experiment in Rochester—which lasted in its pure form from 1968 until the mid-1970s—functions as a case in point. By studying the FIGHTON factory, we can zero in on the adoption and implementation of Black capitalist ideologies and strategies within an overwhelmingly anti-capitalist Black Power framework. By creating their own piece of the pie through FIGHTON, FIGHT simultaneously rejected their own oppression and exclusion, whilst modeling their vision for economic achievement on a white, Rustbelt-specific capitalist structure, all in the name of “true independence” from white paternalism. In doing so, they revealed a natural but non-linear reality of Black Power organizing; they did what worked to provide basic needs for their community, even if this meant breaching and muddying their prescribed ideologies. These incongruities highlight the value of studying local movements and present an opportunity for Black Power scholars to prioritize research on local organizations. They also provide a platform for us to challenge our existing metrics for determining the success and failure of these groups by accepting their ideological complexities and paradoxes. When we view this not as outlying, but as standard, we can more readily theorize new methods for expanding the field, diversifying the archive and enriching our understanding of the Black Power movement.

Towards a Historiography of Decolonial Black Power

Debby Esmeé de Vlugt

Since the emergence of Black Power studies in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars of the movement have shown an interest in the relationship between African American radicals and revolutionary activists in the Global South. Especially since the transnational turn of the late 1990s and early 2000s, many have underscored the importance of cross-border connections and circulations in the rise and eventual expansion of the movement. In various case studies, scholars have underscored the importance of decolonization in Black Power activism outside the United States, especially within the Caribbean. Unfortunately, however, this topic seems to be sidelined within broader Black Power studies, caused in part by the disciplinary divide between American and Caribbean Black Power studies. This paper aims to bridge these divides through a historiographical analysis of “decolonial Black Power,” exploring how scholars have dealt with the topic of decolonization in individual case studies and how that might help us better understand transnational Black Power writ large.

Black/Gay/Power/Liberation – Electoral Politics as Common Ground

Gloria Fears-Heinzel

The late 1960s were characterized by civil unrest and the formation of several radical social movements to address the most pertinent issues of their supporters. In recent years, the Black Power movement, as well as the Gay Rights/Liberation movements, have received increased scholarly attention, with a particular focus on issues of gender. However, there is next to no extensive research available on co-operational efforts across organizations involved in these movements and their respective members. Yet the evidence suggests that members of either movement were able to set their differences aside and co-operate when their goals aligned. An early case study of the Black Panther Party's involvement in the 1973 mayoral and council races in Oakland, California in 1973 and their attempts at rallying gay voters with the support of the (then) newly formed Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club, will serve as a short introduction to this dissertation project.

Moving the Movement Forward: Black Power and the Demand for Radical Change in Arkansas

Maurice Gipson

“Moving the Movement Forward” explores how Black Power was used as praxis and strategy in rural Arkansas university towns. The paper also seeks to disrupt the narrative that Black Power as an organizing philosophy was only concentrated in urban cities and larger states. By 1968, public predominately white institutions in Arkansas were contending with an influx of Black students due to the gains of the civil rights movement. Even though many of the universities had been integrated years and even decades earlier, they were still ill-equipped for the number of Black students that would enroll and descend upon the towns during this period. Newly arrived Black students on these campuses discovered that racism and other inequalities were pervasive, and they asked themselves, “How can I thrive here?” Instead of relying solely on some of the proven tactics of the earlier civil rights movement such as litigation and legislation, many Black students embraced Black Power strategy to change the campus environment. This paper will look at the formation of three Black Power organizations formed in Arkansas on college campuses during the 1960s.

Jesus and John Shaft: How Tom Skinner Created and Spread the Black Power Gospel

Tejai Beulah Howard

Few scholars have responded to Peniel Joseph's 2009 call for more scholarship on the intersection of Black Power and the Black Church. This gap in the historiography is due to many scholars believing that Black Power was de-Christianized. Further, there is a limited understanding of the diversity of Black Christianity in the U.S. and throughout the Diaspora. While Black Power leaders and theorists rejected Christianity as the “white man's religion,” Pimblott (2017) and Cressler (2021) have demonstrated that Black Christians actively engaged Black Power as organizers and allies. Whereas

Cressler examines the activism of Black Catholics, this paper considers how Tom Skinner (1992-1994), a leading Black evangelical Christian preacher, employed the cultural and political ideas of Black Power in his sermons, speeches, writing, and organizing to present Jesus Christ as a cool, revolutionary urban superhero— like John Shaft—who could save America from the sins of racism, poverty, and militarism.

Black Power, Education, and Radical Social Transformation

Viola Huang

Education has been a crucial topic in Black Power thought and activism. However, instead of being concerned with ‘quality’ education for individual students, Black Power advocated for radical change both of and through education. This paper focuses on schools outside the public school system that pursued Black Power ideas without being initiated by high-profile Black Power activists or organizations, but by grassroots community members and parents. While these schools explicitly centered on African American history and what would come to be known as Black Studies, these subjects and approaches were not merely ends in themselves or abstract concepts but rooted in the experiences of the local community and tools for understanding subordination and for advocating social change – beyond the field of education. Students at these schools learned to think critically about society and oppression, how to organize to fight injustice, and to show solidarity with other oppressed people – values that were the core of Black Power ideology. These local schools thus illustrate that education was a crucial site both of and for social justice activism within the Black Power Movement.

A History of the Hub: The Panthers’ Oakland Community Learning Center as a Black Tradition

Robert P. Johnson

30 years ago, education historian, Vanessa Siddle Walker argued “the community-school relationship is a two-way process, that involvement should not be defined simply as how to bring the parents into the school, but also how the school can be ‘in’ the community.” She was referring to a Jim Crow era Black school that operated from 1933 to 1969. In 1973, as a part of its schooling project, the Black Panther Party created the Oakland Community Learning Center (OCLC). This center extended the educational aims of its primary and elementary school—the Oakland Community School—to members of the broader Oakland community. This paper argues that by offering meals, dance courses, teen leadership training, martial arts, and more, the OCLC became both a locus for many Panther survival programs and the extension of a longstanding Black tradition: utilizing educational spaces as hubs of Black holistic communal care.

Black Power, Black workers: Revisiting the 1974 Imperial Typewriters strike

Saskia Papadakis

Leicester's Imperial Typewriters strike of 1974 has become something of a footnote in the history of antiracism in Britain, despite its significance in forcing the trade union movement to confront the endemic racism within its ranks. Led by Asian workers who had recently been expelled from Uganda, supported by Black activists and the Indian Workers Association, the dispute over pay and promotions quickly became a dispute with the Transport and General Workers Union, which refused to recognize the strike and collaborated with the factory bosses. In this paper, I draw on my research for the *Grassroots Struggles, Global Visions: British Black Power, 1964-1985* project to consider the importance of Imperial Typewriters for the Black workers' struggle in the UK, the role of Black Power and political Blackness in framing the dispute, and the lessons the strike and its aftermath may hold for antiracist organizing in the present.

Contested Solidarities: Revolutionary Cuba and the Black Power movement

Matti Steinitz

The Cuban Revolution was one of the most important sources of inspiration for the Black Power movement. For revolutionary black (inter)nationalists on the left of the movement, Cuba after 1959 served as an example that socialism was not only capable of defeating the old elites and U.S. imperialism, but also of ending racial discrimination - which was declared abolished in a decree signed by Fidel Castro in 1962. As part of its strategy to promote Third World revolutionary alliances against U.S. hegemony, Cuba positioned itself as a reliable ally of the African American freedom struggle and granted exile to black radicals such as Robert Williams, Eldridge Cleaver, and Assata Shakur. This article addresses the contradictions that emerged between Cuba's foreign policy of international solidarity and the repression and censorship with which the state responded when African American exiles and Black Power-inspired Afro-Cuban activists began to critique the continuities of racism under socialism.

Movement In Black: Black Lesbian Poets and Black Power Politics

SaraEllen Strongman

Black women poets within the Black Arts Movement sometimes echoed the masculinist rhetoric of Black Power in their work and at other times imagined new forms of revolutionary black womanhood in their poetry. Their engagement with gender and sexuality from the lens of black womanhood did not prevent the popular and critical embrace of Sanchez and Giovanni, including the dubbing of Giovanni as the "princess of black poetry." But other black women poets who shared some of Black Power's political and artistic tenets were not celebrated or included in movement events or publications because they failed to adhere to certain expectations of proper revolutionary sexual politics, because they were lesbians. This paper argues that black lesbian poets Audre Lorde and Pat Parker deployed Black Power aesthetics and

politics in their writing and activism while also advocating for a more inclusive, queer radical politics.

Rethinking the 52 Hand Blocks and Mother Dear: Gender Outlaws, Black Power Legacies of Self-Defense, and Urban Change in New York, 1970-1980

Daniela Valdes

This paper examines the discourse and history on Mother Dear, a Black queen known for mastering 52 Blocks, a style of fighting popular in New York state prisons in the late twentieth century. It centers oral histories with Black and Brown trans women who lived during these decades and whose lives intersected with Black Power activists, the radical underground, and other historical spaces of radical Black political agitation. The paper raises new questions about methodology, archival silences and social history and explores gay/trans worldmaking during an era of increased criminalization, grassroots mobilization, and economic change.

Roots of Resistance: African American Women, Black Power, and Armed Resistance

Jasmin A. Young

Millions of Black women experienced the structural racism, sexism, white supremacy, and capitalism that characterized the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. But most of those women did not join revolutionary organizations or actively participate in the Civil Rights Movement. Instead, most women—and most men, for that matter—did their best to navigate the treacherous realities of being Black in America. Why then, did some women seek out revolutionary organizations? What influences shaped their belief that they could be agents of social transformation?

Black people have always resisted white supremacy; and armed resistance has been a particularly acute feature of that resistance. Although Black people advocating and practicing resistance has been a mainstay of the Black experience, it is important to ask why some people practiced armed resistance and others adopted less confrontational methods. What influences shaped their decisions? Were Black men more likely to arm themselves than Black women? I explore these questions by considering the confluence of familial, ideological, political, and personal experiences in the life histories of individual women who took up arms in defense of themselves and their people during the Black Power era. This paper contributes to our understanding of the dynamics that led Black women to advocate and practice armed resistance to white supremacist violence.

I examine Black Power women who practiced armed resistance and those who belonged to revolutionary organizations that advocated armed resistance. The portraits

that follow indicate that class, status, and geographical location are not determinants of whether a woman embraced armed resistance. Examining these women's childhood experiences reveals four factors that lie at the root of their armed resistance: being raised in a family that had a history of activism; being taught to arm themselves; developing a Black nationalist consciousness; and having an intimate experience with white violence. These biographical sketches of armed Black women are exemplary not because they were exceptional but because they are representative of so many unidentified armed Black women.