

Ebony Magazine, the Editorial Left-Wing, and
the Reshaping of Black Power in Post-War
America, 1954-1998

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Abstract

This thesis explores the manner in which *Ebony* magazine, its owner John H. Johnson, and his left-wing editors sought to sell, intervene, advocate, and mainstream Black Power in post-war America. The dominant scholarly works have focused more broadly on the glamour of *Ebony* while overlooking the ways in which this magazine responded, reacted, and often overlapped with Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s. Such an endeavour was quarterbacked by its influential left-wing editors such as Lerone Bennett, David Llorens, and Phyl Garland. Their powerful position in *Ebony* and at the Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) propelled the magazine to act as a vital forum during Black Power and the modern black liberation struggle. By exploring its multifaceted responses to black activism and the modern black freedom movement in America, this thesis offers new insight into *Ebony*'s social standing in the post-war era.

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I also owe a special thanks to all the archivists who assisted me with my project. Special thanks to Kira Jones, who assisted me in retrieving Lerone Bennett Jr. archival materials from Emory University. A special thank you goes to Brittany Newberry, who helped me obtain Hoyt Fuller's archival papers at Atlanta University. I would also like to thank Bridgett Kathryn Pride of the Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture for collecting Allan Morrison's archival documents for me. Sonja N. Woods of Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre, Brenda Nelson-Strauss of Indiana University's Archives of African American Music and Culture, and Leif Anderson of Stanford University's Department of Special Collections are also to be thanked for collecting and sending me the archival papers of A. Peter Bailey, Phyl Garland, and Huey Newton.

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Declaration

I declare that no part of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification at this or any other university.

List of Abbreviations

ASWSU: Associated Students of Washington State University

BPP: Black Panther Party

BSU: Black Student Union

CBC: Centre of Black Education

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality

FDP: Freedom Democratic Party

IBW: Institute of Black World

JPC: Johnson Publishing Company

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NOI: Nation of Islam

NUL: National Urban League

PAC: Pan African Congress

SCLC: Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SFSC: San Francisco State College

SNCC: Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

Introduction

On June 16th 1966, the new chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Stokely Carmichael, began promoting the concept of Black Power. Carmichael and his SNCC followers believed that the Civil Rights Movement did not adequately bring real change for black Americans.¹ For Carmichael and many SNCC activists, Black Power meant racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of black cultural and political institutions.² As opposed to the Civil Rights Movement, which focused on a rigid integrationist and non-violent approach to bring about justice and equality for black Americans, Black Power advocates believed that African Americans should achieve freedom by means of radicalism, unity, self-interest, and self-determination.³

Two months after Carmichael popularised the concept of Black Power, John H. Johnson, the publisher and the owner of *Ebony* magazine and the Johnson Publishing Company (JPC), convened with his editor Lerone Bennett jr., an influential editor and one of the editorial left-wing at his company. The reason for this meeting was that Bennett suggested featuring Black Power advocates in *Ebony*'s September 1966 issue. Influenced by the rise of Black Power, Bennett proposed that *Ebony* magazine should run a story on H. Rap Brown, the black

¹ Charles J. Stewart, 'The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 83.04, (1997), pp.429-446 (p. 434), in <<https://www.tandfonline.com/>> [accessed 12 April 2022]; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 215-216.

² Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.92-93; Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.116-117; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, p.216.

³ Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*, pp. 124-125.

militant who served as a member of SNCC, or Stokely Carmichael. Bennett's suggestion was striking but timely, given that Carmichael and Brown had just split from the mainstream of the Civil Rights leadership to pursue a militant approach in favour of precipitating liberation for black Americans.

Johnson refused immediately, declaring that Carmichael and Brown were harsh critics of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, with which John Johnson had a closer identification. He also added that *Ebony* was a glossy magazine that should not act or appear to be a mouthpiece of such strident or radical figures. Bennett disagreed, and the pair went into an angry tirade on Carmichael and Brown. Nevertheless, despite Johnson's refusal, he eventually yielded to Bennett's wishes and allowed him to print a profile on Carmichael, which appeared, for the first time, in *Ebony's* masthead in September 1966.⁴

Carmichael's appearance, despite Johnson's reluctance, demonstrates how Bennett greatly impacted Johnson's policy and his company, and more specifically, the orientation of his magazine. Indeed, while Johnson often reiterated that he did not represent any Civil Rights or regional movement, including his declaration that, 'We're not the NAACP, we're business', his editors held influential positions at his company as they frequently redirected the focus of the magazine.⁵

In the years leading up to the 1970s, more radical and revolutionary figures appeared in *Ebony*, with several articles and special issues devoted to discussing Black Power, its ideologies, and its advocates. A survey carried out in 1973 by the social scientist and analyst

⁴ Francis Ward (The HistoryMakers A2004.166), interviewed by Larry Crowe, September 17, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 5, Francis Ward remembers a meeting about covering radical political figures at *Ebony* magazine, *Ebony*, Carmichael, September 1966.

⁵ Margena A. Christian, *Empire: The House that John H. Johnson Built, The Life and Legacy of Pioneering Publishing Company* (Chicago: Doc. M.A.C Write, 2018), p.95.

Daniel Yankelovich revealed that black militants were reading the magazine as they made up a sizable portion of *Ebony's* readership.⁶

This thesis unveils *Ebony's* critical and radical side by arguing that the magazine also responded and engaged with Black Power during post-war America. In this thesis, I challenge the existing scholarship, which contended that *Ebony* was a strictly glossy magazine that catered to black fashion, advertising, marketing, and consumerism. In contrast to such arguments, I reveal that *Ebony* was also a serious, critical, and even radical magazine positioning itself at the heart of Black Power and the modern black liberation struggle in Post-war America. *Ebony* engaged with Black Power; it discussed and sometimes advocated its approaches, defended and often endorsed its advocates, conducted interviews with its major advocates, and even invited them to write and articulate their thoughts in its pages.

This thesis, however, does not argue that *Ebony* engaged with Black Power per se, nor does it argue that the magazine was responsible for the rise or the fall of the movement. It argues that the focus on Black Power was almost, if not entirely, managed by, what historian E. James West terms: 'The left-wing editors,' a group of radical editors such as Lerone Bennett Jr., Allan Morrison, A. Peter Bailey, David Llorens, and Phyl Garland who challenged Johnson's moderate policy by forcefully engaging and responding to Black Power in *Ebony* and outside the JPC.

West argues that this left-wing cohort sought to expand the company's coverage of nationalism, Black Power, and the Black Arts movement.⁷ Building upon this context, I add that this cohort formed a radical team at the JPC. Indeed, they wrote, featured, mainstreamed,

⁶ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, June 1980, p. 30.

⁷ E. James West, '*Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987*', (Published Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 2015), https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63038927/FULL_TEXT.PDF, p. 101.

and advocated Black Power and its exponents in *Ebony* while also marching for or speaking up for Black Power outside the company.

The left-wing editors and their powerful position at the JPC could push the magazine to further respond to Black Power during the height of the black struggle in the late 1960s. It was this cohort who pushed Johnson to respond to Black Power, which ultimately helped to make *Ebony* a strong voice during the black struggle committed, not only to reporting the struggle, but also being part of its crusade.

Re-imagining Black Power

It should be argued that there is no universally accepted definition to the term Black Power. The term meant different things to different groups within the movement, as noted by historian Peniel E. Joseph, who declared that Black Power remained in the American imagination as, ‘a series of iconic, yet fleeting images-ranging from gun-toting Black Panthers to black-gloved sprinters at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics [...]’.⁸ Indeed, SNCC and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) perceived Black Power as an attempt to develop local leadership and build local movements through voter education and registration. For the Black Panther Party (BPP), it was a call for a Marxist revolution supported through organized violence while simultaneously promoting survival programs. For Us organisation, it meant a cultural revolution, the belief that black Americans should adopt, recognise, promote, and celebrate African cultural aspects such as dress, names, and language.⁹

⁸ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *The Journal of American History*, 96.3, (2009), (751), in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 7 July 2018].

⁹ For more details on the historiography of Black Power, see Peniel E. Joseph, 'Black Power, a State of the Field', p. 762.

Despite its heterogeneity, most Black Power advocates agreed that Black Power emerged to address the shortcomings of the Civil Rights movement, which focused on a legal approach in bringing about freedom and which targeted a narrow group of black people while neglecting the black masses. Indeed, Black Power activists felt that not enough progress had been made by the mid-1960s despite the victories of the Civil Rights Movement in the courts. They believed that black Americans needed to push for more reformations by addressing the social and economic issues facing black people such educational deprivation and criminal justice policies.¹⁰ For most Black Power activists, Black Power was perceived as an endeavour to equalise opportunities between white and their black counterparts not only at the political level, but also at the social and economic level. In other words, it was an attempt to bring liberation to the black masses, with more emphasis on social reforms such as jobs, education, and housing.¹¹

Though most black Americans remained non-violent and supportive of the ideologies of the Civil Rights activism in the mid and late 1960s, Black Power expanded and involved other organisations such as CORE, which metamorphosed from a Civil Rights organisation into a Black Power party in 1967.¹² Other organisations such as the Black Panther Party had also expanded its chapters throughout the U.S, with thousands of members by late 1969.¹³ Us organisation began to promote and celebrate African culture in different institutions and black colleges, with its leader Maulana Karenga developing Kawaida, a theory or a principle which

¹⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, 'Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era.*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', *Ebony*, September 1966, pp.28-30.

¹² Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p.93-94; Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*, p.125.

¹³ Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power, Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 90.

called black Americans to recognize and celebrate the shared cultural heritage between African and African Americans.¹⁴

The Black Power Movement came to a sharper focus in late 1960s due to the intense activities of the Black Panthers and their advocacy of armed self-defence, which led the FBI to neutralise them under its COINTELPRO program. The program, coupled with internal dissident and financial issues among Black Power organisations, helped to weaken the movement. Indeed, by the mid-1970s, Black Power began to fade away from the social and political spotlight as its major leaders began to quell their tones, go into exile, or were thrown into jails. The movement could be seen to have declined in 1982, with the closure of the BPP's last chapter in New York though some activists were still preaching the ideologies of radicalism and nationalism.¹⁵

However, far from perceiving Black Power as an extreme militant, violent, and self-destructive force, the movement had a positive impact on black Americans. Recent scholars such as Alondra Nelson demonstrates the achievements of Black Power in eradicating racial health disparities. Nelson highlights in her account *Body and Soul* how the Black Panther Party's rank and file also had social programs which aimed at fighting medical discrimination being practised against black Americans. Their health care programs, their free clinics, and

¹⁴ M. Ron Karenga, *Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts, Practice*. (Los Angeles: Kawaida; 1977), pp. 18-19, 40-41; Van William L. Deburg, *New Day in Babylon, The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 172-173.

¹⁵ See for e.g. Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall, Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 2006); Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr, *Black against Empire: the History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2013).

their intensive experiments on sickle-cell anaemia add to our understating that Black Power had a lasting contribution to the black social lives.¹⁶

Moreover, the contribution of Black Power was not only confined to medical endeavours, but also extended to involve cultural and social aspects. Historian William L. Van Deburg, Peniel E. Joseph, and Joyce M. Bell effectively argue for Black Power's lasting impact on Black students, black athletes, and black workers, who harnessed the ideals of militancy, self-awareness, and racial pride that Black Power called for in the mid-1960s.¹⁷ Van Deburg notes,

As a movement in and of culture, Black Power was itself an art form [...] influencing the lives and inspirations of everyday people [...] Black Power motivated Afro-Americans of the sixties and early seventies to redefine themselves [...] it forced a reappraisal of American social and cultural values.¹⁸

More tellingly, Black Power was not only local but also had an expansive vision of social and political change that involved coloured people across the world. Historian Rhonda Y. Williams and Sean Malloy contend how Black Power's international and diasporic dimensions resonated beyond the borders of the U.S. Malcolm X and the Black Panthers had effectively expanded their struggle via international relations with Third World states such as

¹⁶ Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: the Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Peniel E. Joseph, 'Rethinking the Black Power Era', *The Journal of Southern History*, 75.3, (2009), in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 10 July 2018]; Joyce M. Bell, *The Black Power Movement and American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), Van William L. Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*; Fabio Rojas, *From Black power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (California: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁸ William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, p. 308.

Cuba and Algeria. Such efforts were pursued to reflect the struggle of black Americans to gain international solidarity. Indeed, the sojourn of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and his wife Kathleen Cleaver in Africa and their meeting with African leaders and activists was an endeavour to capitalise on their alliance and solidarity.¹⁹

John Johnson, the Johnson Publishing Company, and the Real *Ebony* Magazine

In November 1945, John H. Johnson, a black businessman and the owner of the JPC, founded *Ebony* magazine. His aim behind creating this magazine was to highlight the achievements of black Americans as they were either invisible or stereotyped in the popular white-oriented media. In his magazine, Johnson presented an alternative image of black America, which endorsed the achievements of African American celebrities or businessmen, ‘In a world of despair we wanted to give hope’, recalled Johnson, ‘In a world of negative Black images, we wanted to provide positive Black images.’²⁰ As such, Johnson pursued in his magazine an inspirational policy, ‘We try to motivate those who are coming up in the world’ declared Johnson ‘to show that there are no barriers, no restrictions, that they have as much right to become a professional golfer as to become president of the US.’²¹

In the late 1950s, *Ebony* became the flagship of the JPC as it printed compelling stories on black achievements, carried advertisements on popular products such as tobacco or alcoholic

¹⁹ Ronda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands*; Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2017).

²⁰ John H. Johnson with Lerone Bennett Jr., *Succeeding Against the Odds, the Autobiography of a Great American Businessman* (New York: Amistad Press, 1989), p. 159.

²¹ Jason Chambers, 'Presenting the Black Middle Class, John H. Johnson and *Ebony* Magazine, 1945-1974', in *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to 1970s*, ed. by David Bell and Joanne Hollow (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.61.

beverages, and successfully promoted consumerism, which yielded enormous profits for Johnson.²² Indeed, *Ebony* was making Johnson a millionaire, and his company (the JPC) was one of the major forces in a predominantly white industry. The massive success of *Ebony* led Johnson to receive his first major national award as one of the ten outstanding black young men in 1951.²³

By the early 1960s, *Ebony* became the most popular black glossy magazine in America. Its circulation surpassed over a million monthly units, with a readership of over four million, 12% of which were whites/others.²⁴ By the early 1970s, *Ebony* was circulating no less than 1,300,000 units per month, compared to other popular black magazines such as *The Crisis*, which reached only 111,000 copies in 1969.²⁵ It was also the largest black read magazine, with an annual readership of almost seven million.²⁶ *Ebony* continued its publications and domination of the black publication field at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1987, *Ebony* reached new heights, with a circulation of almost two million units and a readership touching

²² Franklin E. Frazier, *Black bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Place, 1957).

²³ A-Z Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction, Negro American Literature Forum, p. 175; Clovis E. Semmes, 'Foundation in Africana Studies: Revisiting *Negro Digest*, Black World, 1961-1976', *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 25.4, (2001), pp.195-201, (p. 196), in <<https://search.proquest.com>> [accessed 15 December 2018].

²⁴ E. James West, 'Johnson Publishing Company and the Search for a White Audience', *American Journalism*, 39.3, (2022), pp.293-314 (p. 294), in <<https://www.tandfonline.com/>> [accessed 1 January 2023]; However, West argues that this is an estimated figure as surveys cited by John H. Johnson in his magazine have been relatively lower or higher than this figure. See, West, 'Johnson Publishing Company and the Search for a White Audience', p.294.

²⁵ Henry Lee Moon, 'History of the Crisis', *The Crisis*, November 1970, p.385.

²⁶ Korey Bowers Brown 'SOULED OUT: *Ebony Magazine in an Age of Black Power, 1965-1975*', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Howard University, 2010), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/305213858?pq-origsite=gscholar>, p. 6; Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p. 267.

the peak of seven million.²⁷ Due to his successful magazine, Johnson became one of the 500 wealthiest Americans, and the JPC was one of the largest and the most popular publication fields in the U.S.²⁸

While *Ebony* was driven by consumerism, it was also motivated by the emergence of Black Power. Indeed, *Ebony* was not only a glossy magazine but also a critical and radical outlet during the modern black liberation struggle as it had supported the Civil Rights Movement and later engaged with Black Power. Indeed, *Ebony* featured and recruited Black Power activists and occasionally mirrored the Black Power ideologies. Additionally, it welcomed Black Power advocates to express their beliefs on its pages.

This thesis revisits *Ebony*'s social standing by revealing how the magazine understood, engaged with, and responded to Black Power during the post-war era. It will examine the motives which led *Ebony* to directly engage with Black Power, its ideologies, and its adherents. It also attempts to explore the extent to which the magazine reacted to Black Power. The thesis will also seek to scrutinise if its engagement with Black Power changed. If yes, in what ways, and who was behind this coverage.

Literature Review

In his 1957 personal account *Black Bourgeois*, Franklin Frazier provided a scathing critique on *Ebony* as he argued that the magazine served only to promulgate the egos of the black elite. He noted that *Ebony* represented more broadly the black bourgeoisie, such as celebrities or popular black businessmen, and neglected the large black populace. According

²⁷ Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 2nd edn (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), p.142.

²⁸ June O., Patton, 'Remembering John H. Johnson, 1918-2005', *The Journal of African American History*, 90.4, (2005), pp.456-457, in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 3 December 2018]; On the personal and professional life of John Harold Johnson, see John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds* (New York: Amistad Press, 1992).

to Frazier, *Ebony* focused on ‘unrealistic commercial fantasies’ rather than addressing the social issues that faced black America in the post-war era, such as racism, poverty, and unemployment.²⁹

Frazier’s lone critique seemed to discourage a scholarly rethinking of *Ebony* in the 1960s and 1970s as very few scholars provided critical accounts on the magazine, its publisher, or its editorial staff. Nevertheless, journalism scholars such as John Click, Paul Hirsh, Gloria Myers, and A. V. Margavio began to provide basic analysis on its editorial, marketing, and readership contents between 1945 and the early 1970s. Their studies found that *Ebony* sought to meet its readers’ preferences by changing its editorial contents and reflecting the black social changes in American society, such as the rise of black popular culture and the emergence of black identity.³⁰

Michael Leslie has contributed to this field by emphasizing how *Ebony* promoted its advertising sector. In his 1995 study *Slow Fade to?: Advertising in Ebony Magazine*, he argued that *Ebony* had maximised its presentation of a black positive image and black somatic models to reflect the growth of the Black is Beautiful movement of the 1960s.³¹

²⁹ Franklin E. Frazier, *Black bourgeoisie*.

³⁰ John W. Click, 'Comparison of Editorial Content of *Ebony* magazine, 1967 and 1974', *Journalism Quarterly*, 52.4, (1975), pp.716-720, in <<https://journals.sagepub.com>> [accessed 3 December 2018]; Paul M. Hirsch, 'An Analysis of *Ebony*: The Magazine and Its Readers', *Journalism Quarterly*, (1968), pp.261-292 (p. 265), in <<https://journals.sagepub.com>> [accessed 3 December 2018, p. 265, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/107769906804500207>]; Gloria Myers and A.V Margavio, “‘The Black Bourgeoisie and Reference Group Change: A Content Analysis of *Ebony*’, *Qualitative Sociology*, 6, (1983), pp.291-307, in <<https://0-link-springer-com>> [accessed 4 December 2018], <https://0-link-springer-com.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/content/pdf/10.1007%2FBF00986681.pdf>.

³¹ Michael Leslie, 'Slow Fade to?: Advertising in *Ebony* Magazine, 1957–1989', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72.02, (1995), pp.426-435, in <<https://journals.sagepub.com/>> [accessed 3 October 2018].

A recent trend set by other journalism scholars such as Jason Chambers has furthered this scholarship by focusing on Johnson's career within the black consumer market rather than just examining *Ebony's* statistics or content. Chambers looked at Johnson's development of a distinctive commercial power base within the black publishing industry. He argued in his 2008 study that Johnson's early success in the marketing and advertising industries, 'gave Johnson and his workers a level of authority in marketing and advertising to black consumers greater than that of any other black-owned company.'³² Chambers study was a significant addition to this scholarship as it provided a foundation for later scholars to provide a complex understanding on Johnson and his editorial staff in post-war America.

Yet, *Ebony's* social standing in the post-war era suffered from a paucity of scholarly research. In retrospect, conventional scholars such as Paul Hirsch and Tony Atwater sought to address *Ebony's* social standing during the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s. Despite such efforts, they did not specifically discuss the connection between *Ebony* and the black liberation movement but focused only on significant moments in the Civil Rights Movement, such as the March on Washington.³³

Furthermore, the focus on John H. Johnson is limited within this scholarship due to the JPC's archival holdings still being processed (by the Smithsonian National Museum in Washington D.C) and thus, unavailable for researchers. Apart from Johnson's biography (penned by his associate editor Margena A. Christian), few secondary sources offered a critical appraisal of Johnson and his fellow editors concerning the modern black liberation

³² Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p.43.

³³ Atwater, Tony, 'Editorial Policy of *Ebony* before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964', *Journalism Quarterly*, 59.01, (1982), pp.87-91, in <<https://journals.sagepub.com/>> [accessed 10 October 2018]; Paul Hirsch, 'An Analysis of *Ebony*.'

movement.³⁴ Also, the purview of the archival papers of some editorial staff such as A. Peter Bailey, Doris Saunders, and Era Bell Thompson (not processed yet) has hampered researchers to examine their roles at the JPC during the 1960s and 1970s.

Despite these limitations, scholars such as Jason Chambers and Margena A. Christian have been able to appraise Johnson's role within his company and the American publication field by working on the autobiographies and the primary accounts of the editors and journalists with whom he worked closely.³⁵ As such, new scholarly works have contributed to this scholarship.

Chambers focused on how Johnson, along with his magazine *Ebony*, attempted to reach out to the black middle class. In his 2006 essay *Presenting the Black Middle Class, John H. Johnson and Ebony Magazine, 1945-1974*, Chambers notes how Johnson's financial shortage had led him to approach the black middle class via advertising to urge them to participate in the consumer society.³⁶

More scholarly accounts revisit the position of Johnson within the American publication field and show that Johnson was not only a middle-class black supporter. In her recent biography, *Empire: The House that John Johnson Built* (2018), Margena A. Christian illustrates how Johnson intended to reveal the importance and values of black Americans through his magazine. Christian argues that Johnson sought to engage with the black people of different ages and different social classes, 'Mr. Johnson wanted to reach people of all ages', recalls Christian, 'It didn't matter if a person was sitting in the barbershop or chatting it

³⁴ Margena A. Christian, *Empire: The House that John H. Johnson Built, The Life and Legacy of Pioneering Publishing Company* (Chicago: Doc. M.A.C Write, 2018).

³⁵ Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³⁶ Jason Chambers, 'Presenting the Black Middle Class.'

up with girlfriends in a beauty shop.’³⁷ In so doing, Christian reveals that Johnson forged a ground-breaking position within the black print media by attempting to give voice and presence to black America.³⁸

A new wave within this scholarship driven by historians and communication scholars like Korey Bowers Brown, Mia L. Anderson, and James E. West, has begun to examine *Ebony's* political, social, and intellectual status in post-war America. Such endeavours have enabled scholars to place *Ebony* in its historical perspective, demonstrating how its publisher and editors viewed and attempted to address the social, political, and intellectual concerns confronting black America in the 1960s and 1970s.

In his 2020 study, historian E. James West illustrates how *Ebony* intended to undergird the history of black America for a broader audience in the post-war era. With his unprecedented access into Lerone Bennett’s archival papers at Emory University in Atlanta, West has been able to show that the JPC’s senior editor, Lerone Bennett Jr., a Mississippian who joined the JPC in 1953 to serve as an editor for *Ebony*, was almost solely responsible for the popularisation of black history at the JPC and within *Ebony's* pages, turning black history into, ‘a living history’.³⁹

Current scholarship argues that throughout the Black Power Movement, *Ebony* addressed its concerns about black America. Korey Bowers Brown’s thesis, “*Ebony in an Age of Black Power*” (2011), examines *Ebony's* appeal to black social issues during the Black Power Movement by focusing on the burgeoning urban militancy and black political and social issues more broadly. Brown contends that post-war America’s dynamic social upheaval

³⁷ Margena A. Christian, *Empire*.

³⁸ Christian, *Empire*, pp. 69-73.

³⁹ E. James West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr. Popular History in Post War America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020) p.27.

prompted Johnson to rebuild his magazine to reflect black social trends such as socioeconomic status and beauty. Brown demonstrates that such an attempt was made to support and spur the development of black identity within American mainstream society.⁴⁰

Mia L. Anderson adds to this pattern by arguing that *Ebony* was at the forefront of black political growth in the 1970s. Anderson contends in her 2015 article *I Dig You, Chocolate City*, that *Ebony* had increased its focus on black mayors in the 1970s to encourage black representatives to tackle social issues that plagued black America, such as corruption, crime, and unemployment.⁴¹

While the current scholarship has matured with a new wave of scholarly rethinking, the relationship between *Ebony* and Black Power has not been effectively explored. Indeed, although Brown's study details how *Ebony* maintained its reputation during the Black Power Movement by covering social developments in black America, it does not specifically focus on how *Ebony* responded to Black Power.⁴² James E. West presents a nuanced understanding on Lerone Bennett's profile on Stokely Carmichael and his call for Black Power in 1966, but the chronological time span of his study does not venture beyond 1966.⁴³ Sean Britton's *Black Business as Activism*, however, is a welcome addition to this body of literature, but it

⁴⁰ Korey Bowers Brown, 'SOULED OUT: *Ebony Magazine in an Age of Black Power, 1965-1975*', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Howard University, 2010), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/305213858?pq-origsite=gscholar>.

⁴¹ Mia L. Anderson, 'I Dig You, Chocolate City': "Ebony" and "Sepia" Magazines' Coverage of Black Political Progress, 1971-1977', *Journal of African American Studies*, 19.04, (2015), pp.398-409, in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 4 March 2019].

⁴² Korey Bowers Brown, 'SOULED OUT'.

⁴³ James West, 'Power is 100 Years Old: Lerone Bennett Jr., *Ebony* magazine and the Roots of Black Power', *The Sixties, A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, 9.2, (2016), pp.165-188, in <<https://www.tandfonline.com>> [accessed 5 March 2018], <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17541328.2016.1241601?needAccess=true>

focuses mainly on the connection between the JPC and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP).⁴⁴

Research Aims and Significance

This study builds on West's work by arguing that *Ebony* did not only serve as a precursor to Black Power but also engaged directly with Black Power in various ways, such as writings, meetings, correspondence, interviews, and symposia. This study is distinctive as it shows that some editors, such as Bennett went beyond their commitments as editors or historians by metamorphosing into genuine activists and engaging directly with the Civil Rights and the Black Power struggle. Furthermore, West's study relies heavily on Bennett's archival papers, whereas this thesis additionally scrutinises lesser-known characters such as Allan Morrison, David Llorens, Phyl Garland, and A. Peter Bailey, influential editors and contributing journalists who are still neglected within the existing scholarship.

To date, scholarship has tended to centre on *Ebony*'s glamour; but the magazine also had a critical tone, and this study aims to unveil this perspective. *Ebony* called into question the assassination of Dr. King and called for a full re-investigation. It strived to restore the image of the major leaders of Black Power, which was distorted by the white-owned media. Furthermore, it sought to acquit Civil Rights and Black Power activists, who were accused of inciting riots during the rise of Black Power.

In retrospect, scholars of journalism such as Patrick S. Washburn reflect in his account that the modern black print media died out during the Civil Rights movement, and their

⁴⁴ Sean Britton, '*Black Business as Activism: Ebony Magazine and the Civil Rights Movement*', (Published MA thesis, City University of New York, 2018), https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3660&context=gc_etds.

efforts to portray the black struggle were diminished.⁴⁵ By contrast, I argue for the long-standing role of the black print media in foregrounding the black liberation struggle in America.⁴⁶ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many black outlets such as *The Freedom's Journal*, *The North Star*, *The Tribune*, and *The Negro World*, to name a few, were indeed vital outlets during the black liberation struggle. They were giving patronage to the Black activists and always calling for self-confidence, equality, and a complete end to racial discrimination.⁴⁷

During the modern black freedom movement, some popular black-oriented newspapers like *The Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier* proved to be the mouthpieces of the Civil Rights protest. They raised funds for the Civil Rights activists, attacked the racial discrimination being practised against black Americans, and provided their readership with daily and weekly advice on how to eradicate racial discrimination, segregation, and police brutality. They even jeopardised their journalists' lives by sending them into dangerous and risky assignments to protest along with the Civil Rights activists.⁴⁸

If the black-owned newspapers sought to endorse the black liberation struggle, then the black-owned magazines were also at the forefront of the modern black liberation struggle. Some black-owned magazines such as *The Liberator*, *Soulbook*, and *Black Dialogue* proved

⁴⁵ Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Press, Voice of Freedom* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006).

⁴⁶ Ronald E. Wolseley, *The Black Press*; Mia L. Anderson, 'I Dig You, Chocolate City': "Ebony" and "Sepia" Magazines' Coverage of Black Political Progress, 1971–1977', *Journal of African American Studies*, 19.04, (2015), pp.398-409, in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 4 March 2019].

⁴⁷ Carl Senna, *The Black Press and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1993).

⁴⁸ See Charles Simmons, *African American Press: A History of News Coverage During National Crises* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2006); see also Stephanie Greco Larson, *Media and Minorities, the Politics of Race in News and Entertainment* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2006).

to be valuable assets of the black struggle as they endorsed an undercurrent of resistance and a complete rejection of the white values.⁴⁹ More tellingly, other black magazines such as the SNCC's *Student Voice*, the BPP's *The Black Panther*, and the Nation of Islam's (NOI) *Mohammed Speaks* were true advocates of the Black Power politics due to their rigorous critical discourse, which aimed at fostering the ethos of the modern black activism in America.⁵⁰

Ebony followed in their footsteps and advocated the black liberation struggle, as Johnson himself admitted,

Not only did we report the struggle but also became part of the struggle. I marched and gave tens of thousands of dollars to different arms in the movement [...] my editors marched and volunteered for difficult and dangerous assignments [...] we sat in with sit-inners, rode the buses with Freedom Riders [...] We were there [...] we were part of the story.⁵¹

Detroit Free Press newspaper admitted that *Ebony*, 'is something more than a magazine [...]'.⁵² Indeed, *Ebony* was a powerful outlet during the black liberation struggle. It proudly stood up for the Civil Rights activists such as Martin Luther King, supporting his cause and often helping him to advance the fight for justice and equality.⁵³ It endorsed other activists such as Medgar Evers and fostered their activism, often giving them a space in its pages to

⁴⁹ Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press*, pp.169-171; Johnson, Abbey Arthur and Johnson, Ronald Maberry, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), p.161.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Bryan Fenderson, 'Journey toward a Black Aesthetic, Hoyt Fuller, the Black Arts Movement, and the Black Intellectual Community', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Massachusetts University, 2011), p. 52.

⁵¹ Johnson, *Succeeding against the Odds*, p.241.

⁵² E.R Shipp, '40 Years of Ebony', *Detroit Free Press*, 11 December 1985, p.1.

⁵³ Catherine Squires, *African American and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 82.

voice and propagate their thoughts and ideologies on the black struggle. With such a cachet, as its executive editor Margena Christian cast it, *Ebony* was, ‘more than a magazine’.⁵⁴

While the existing scholarship offers a nuanced understanding on *Ebony* and its standing in post-war America, it still neglects that *Ebony* engaged with Black Power and the modern black liberation struggle. As journalists such as Bren Staples have argued, *Ebony* went beyond its commitment to mirroring the black happy lives to redefine how African Americans viewed themselves in relationship to arts, business, the Civil Rights movement, and history itself.⁵⁵ Within this context, I add that *Ebony* also sought to redefine Black Power for its audience and within the American print media, mainstreaming its exponents and often introducing Black Power as a political or intellectual movement rather than a violent phenomenon.

In doing so, this thesis will contribute to the contemporary historiographical trend established by media scholars like Charles Simmons and Carl Senna. These researchers examined various popular black media sites as case studies to show how they helped undergird the black liberation movement. Although they have laid significant groundwork, *Ebony* was not adequately mentioned.⁵⁶

My project additionally adds to a new trend set by historian E. James West who encouraged an interdisciplinary approach to Black Power and media by arguing how the black print media, ‘has always been radical’.⁵⁷ Within this context, I argue that *Ebony* was also a

⁵⁴ Margena Christian, *Empire*, p. 82.

⁵⁵ Brent Staples, *The Radical Blackness of Ebony Magazine* (2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/>> [accessed 11 July 2020].

⁵⁶ Charles Simmons, *African American Press*; Carl Senna, *The Black Press and the Struggle for Civil Rights*.

⁵⁷ E. James West. ‘Black Power Print.’ *Radical Americas* 3, 1 (2018): 14, p.2, [accessed 18 November 2021]. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2018.v3.1.014>.

radical magazine as it positioned itself at the forefront of the black print media during the tumultuous years of the black struggle in the 1960s and 1970s.

Similarly, my work also contributes to the developing field of Black Power studies, a subfield instituted by historian Peniel E. Joseph in 2009. Joseph lamented a scholarly dearth on Black Power and called historians to rethink how class, regional, and religious institutions among African Americans could shape Black Power.⁵⁸ Ultimately, this thesis furthers the line of enquiry adopted by historians such as Christopher Tinson, who are seeking to explore how the black print media and the radical activism in post-war America can frame each other by appraising their agendas, milestones, and pivotal figures.⁵⁹

Methodology

This thesis uses the archival papers of *Ebony*'s influential editors who engaged with Black Power, such as Lerone Bennett, Allan Morrison, Phyl Garland, David Llorens, and A. Peter Bailey. These collections are housed at several institutions in the U.S such as Stuart A. Rose library at Emory University, the Schomburg Centre in New York, Archives of African American Music and Culture at Indiana University, and Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre at Howard University. These archival materials were not digitised and so they were accessed by recruiting archivists who collected them remotely under my guidance. They are used in this thesis as a basis to explore the editors' professional, social, and intellectual debates and relationships with Black Power inside and outside the JPC. These editors are selected because they played a crucial role in pushing the magazine to engage and sometimes embrace the ethos of Black Power. Outside the JPC, they pursued a sharp radical tone, metamorphosing

⁵⁸ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *The Journal of American History*, 96.03, (2009), 751-776 (p. 775), in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 7 July 2018].

⁵⁹ Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect: Liberator Magazine and Black Activism in the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

into radical activists and often using the tactics of Black Power to address the social issues which faced black America. Their archival papers offer an important personal narrative and a framework for understanding the relationship between *Ebony*, Black Power, the JPC, the modern black liberation struggle, and the black print media. Johnson, as a publisher and a black businessman, and his editors, who acted as journalists, authors, and activists, will make this thesis a distinct interdisciplinary study, which traverses race and media studies, the social movements, and social and intellectual history.

The History Makers and Ralph J. Bunche Oral Histories Collection on the Civil Rights Movement at Howard University (previously known as the Civil Rights Documentation Project) set out to chronicle the Civil Rights and Black Power era through a series of recorded interviews. As such, they hold hundreds of interview transcriptions conducted with the black elite and other well respected black figures in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement. These organisations capture the voice, thoughts, memories, and re-interpretation of Civil Rights and Black Power activists, black scholars, educators, lawyers, church leaders, and grassroots organisers from the rural South and the urban North. Within this context, these organisations had also conducted interviews with *Ebony*'s editors such as Lerone Bennett, A. Peter Bailey, and David Llorens, and the magazine's publisher John H. Johnson. Their testimonies provide a window into the complex personal narrative on their lives, career, activism, recollections, and more importantly, their connection and thoughts on Black Power, its ideologies, and its activists. These oral sources were collected via a payment to *The History Makers* and Ralph J. Bunche Oral Histories Collection.

This thesis uses digitised white and black print media available on two archival portals: *Newspaper.com* and *Newspaper.Archive.com*. With a monthly payment to these portals, I browsed, accessed, and scrutinised dozens of national and regional newspapers and used and analysed hundreds of clippings, columns, announcements, and obituaries. I scrutinised and

selected major outlets such as *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* along with some regional newspapers and magazines, which printed important stories on *Ebony* and Black Power. These outlets offered significant individual testimonies, editorial statements, and personal opinions on Black Power, *Ebony*, its publisher, his company, and his editors. I accessed online search tools which helped to filter results, but it was nonetheless a time-consuming process.

The individuals that appear in this magazine are compared with their portrayal in other popular black and white-owned outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Time*, *The Black Panther*, and *Life*. This approach is adopted to assess the differences and similarities between *Ebony* and the popular magazines or newspapers in terms of class and appearance. These outlets also contain significant stories on these individuals and *Ebony* itself and reveal the multifarious characteristics of the magazine, its publisher, and its editors. The newspaper clippings have been collected via a payment to the two online portals mentioned above.

This thesis also relies on the close reading of all *Ebony*'s digitised articles such as *Symposiums*, *Special Issues*, *Backstage*, and *Letters to the Editors* published on Black Power, which are available freely on *Ebony* portal on Google. Books. I have examined *Ebony*'s portal and identified and collated over 20 different special issues, articles, and letters published on Black Power between September 1965 and August 1996. Additionally, over 70 photographs and portraits on Black Power were also identified on *Ebony*'s online database. The photographs could be identified as they were featured along with the issues. The photographs are scanned and used as historical sources to understand how *Ebony* perceived Black Power.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six thematic chapters, chronologically spanning from mid 1950s to the late 1990s. The first chapter traces *Ebony*'s early responsiveness to the Civil Rights Movement by showing how such a response directly stimulated *Ebony* to engage with Black Power. Its interest in fostering the Civil Rights activism had appealed to the black militants, black radical magazines, and even its editors themselves, who sought to push *Ebony* to further respond to the rise of Black Power. This chapter argues that *Ebony* sought to mainstream its image to make it look more acceptable to its readership. Such an endeavour was pursued by its left-leaning editor, Lerone Bennett, who transgressed Johnson's moderate policy by forcefully featuring its advocate, Stokely Carmichael, whose image was destroyed by the major white-oriented media. Against such a backdrop, Bennett challenged the national print media by successfully reflecting on *Ebony*'s readership that Carmichael should be seen as a democratic and a moderate figure rather than a violent phenomenon.

The second chapter, "Black Power and the Radical Activism of *Ebony*'s Left-Leaning Editors", delves into Bennett's link with Carmichael as well as the radical activism of his left-leaning peers inside and outside the JPC. This chapter sheds new light on four male characters: Bennett, Allan Morrison, David Llorens, and A. Peter Bailey by focusing on their writings for *Ebony*, their career and relationship with Black Power advocates, and their activities outside the company. The chapter demonstrates that these figures were more than editors, but also social activists and Black Power advocates. They endorsed the ideologies of Black Power in *Ebony*, adopted a powerful influence at the JPC during the height of Black Power, contributed to *Ebony* with critical and insightful articles on the black struggle, and

participated in meetings and forums related to Black Power, the Civil Rights, Pan African Congress, and Black studies movements.⁶⁰

Chapter three singles out the female editor and the Black Power advocate Phyl Garland and her proactive efforts in revitalising the image of Black Power women such as Gloria Richardson, Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, and Angela Davies through the lens of *Ebony*. This chapter challenges the dominant scholarly approach, which perceived *Ebony* as a magazine that catered more broadly to lighter-skinned African American women.⁶¹ By contrast, I argue that Garland and *Ebony* played a key role in acclaiming the black female activism during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement. *Ebony* challenged the FBI and the major white and black outlets, which sought to demonise their image. By contrast, the magazine enthusiastically endorsed their beauty and activism as a means to bolster their popular image. Such an effort was noticeable as many Black Power women, black female activists, and even conventional historians acknowledged *Ebony* for outstanding distinctive efforts.

In the fourth chapter, I demonstrate how the insight of Carmichael's profile, printed by Bennett in 1966, prompted *Ebony* to expand its focus on Black Power between 1967 and 1970. During the national turmoil that plagued America in 1967, *Ebony* intervened by providing a set of social resolutions to head off the Black revolts. This chapter contends that its intervention had paid off, with the popular white and black-oriented media admiring its vital role while Lyndon B. Johnson's administration was inducing its editor Bennett to cooperate with its governmental voices to quell the revolts. However, with the slow progress of the black liberation movement in the late 1960s and *Ebony*'s resentment over the social

⁶⁰ Other editors such as Phyl Garland will be featured in the third chapter. However, it should be noted that there were other editors with radical sentiments such as Alex Poinsett and Charles E. Sanders. Yet, their image and activities inside and outside the JPC were limited and scarcely visible.

⁶¹ Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect*.

issues, which prevailed in Black America, *Ebony* metamorphosed into a radical magazine, embracing Carmichael's approaches of self-help and Black community empowerment and calling its audience to emulate his programs to reform their social conditions.

Chapter five continues to discuss *Ebony's* successful intervention by showing how its concern over the conditions of black Americans and its fear of a violent revolution also reinforced its editors to run a special issue on the black revolution, which culminated in the magazine having featured the Black Panther Party (BPP) as the embodiment of the black revolution. Such a reaction was reinforced by its influential staff, whose powerful position, resignation threats, and increasing inclination toward Black Power forced Johnson to yield to their wishes. Yet, this had a side effect, with many moderate readers cancelling their subscription as they deemed *Ebony* too radical. Relatedly, the BPP's shift into conventional politics in the early 1970s prompted *Ebony* to follow their lead. Its interview with Bobby Seale, co-founder of the BPP, and its profile along with excellent photographs demonstrates the extent to which *Ebony* sought to gravitate its readers towards the Black Panthers' political and intellectual endeavours. The chapter concludes that *Ebony* sought to indoctrinate its readers that the BPP could also be perceived as a moderate, political, and intellectual phenomenon, but it failed in doing so as most of its audience seemed largely unconcerned.

In the last chapter, I argue for *Ebony's* efforts in reviving Black Power after its demise between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This chapter takes as a starting point the apparent cleavages between Bennet's resentment about the slow progress of the black struggle and *Ebony's* celebration of the achievement of the black liberation struggle in the mid and late 1970s. Against such a backdrop, Bennett declared that the black struggle had not yet achieved all its goals. However, during the decline of Black Power in the early 1980s, *Ebony* challenged the major white-owned outlets, which seemed exultant about its fadeaway from the social and political spotlight. By contrast, *Ebony's* concern about the downfall of Black

Power, its organisations, and its proponents prompted the magazine to revive the movement by demonstrating to its audience that Black Power was “a living movement” and still on the case as most of its exponents were still fighting to cultivate and improve black America.

Chapter 1: ‘*We Speak as Witnesses and Participants*’: *Ebony* Magazine, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Shift towards Black Power, 1954-1966

On the question of militancy [...] Ebony was the first national magazine to give extensive coverage to Stokely Carmichael [...]

- The Washington Post, 05 November 1975

In the summer of 1964, Malcolm X, the charismatic Black militant and founder of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), was invited for an interview with *Ebony*'s managing editor Hans J. Massaquoi in New York. The meeting and the subsequent interview extended to three days as Malcolm X used the visit to search and recruit new members for his newly founded organisation. For three consecutive days, Massaquoi and a photographer named Don Charles followed Malcolm X in New York City, ending their journey with a revealing interview with Malcolm X.⁶²

A few months later, Malcolm X appeared in *Ebony* magazine for the first time. The profile printed in September 1964 was very timely as Malcolm X had caught the attention of black Americans following his defection from the Nation of Islam to build his new organisation,

⁶² ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, February 1993, p. 17.

the OAAU. *Ebony* portrayed him as a firebrand as he had split the Black Muslim Movement into two opposing camps, ‘whose bloody encounters have become the order of the day.’⁶³

Malcolm X was aware that *Ebony* had ran a profile on him as he declared that the latter was ‘a very objective story’ published by the magazine.⁶⁴ His declaration demonstrates that Malcolm X was also cognizant of *Ebony*’s role as a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement and its exponents. Indeed, despite initial scepticism from Africans during his visit to the continent at the time, he admitted that his profile printed by *Ebony* helped the magazine to gain a good reputation among African people.⁶⁵

This chapter aims to demonstrate *Ebony*’s close connection with the Civil Rights Movement and the role it played during its key milestones and with its major activists. It argues that *Ebony* was part of the struggle. Indeed, contrary to the major white and black-owned media, which provided limited coverage or seemed unconcerned about the movement, *Ebony* was an integral part of its crusade, taking part in its journeys and supporting its major leaders. Such a cachet earned the applause of the major leaders of the movement like Malcolm X and Dr. King, who worked closely with the magazine in its fight for justice and equality. This enthusiastic engagement caught the attention of the black militants, the radical black outlets, and even the editors, who pushed *Ebony* to respond to Black Power and the rise of the black militancy while recruiting Black Power proponents to work as editors for the magazine. However, this chapter also explores Johnson’s motives to financially profit from Black Power and how this was coupled with Bennett’s intent on restoring Stokely Carmichael’s public image, which was distorted by the major white print media. The chapter

⁶³ Hans J. Massaquoi, ‘The Mystery of Malcolm X’, *Ebony*, September 1964, p.39.

⁶⁴ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, February 1993, p. 17.

⁶⁵ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, p.17.

concludes that *Ebony* eventually engaged with Black Power by running a striking profile on Carmichael.

***Ebony* Magazine, the Modern Black Struggle, and the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1965**

Ebony's early responsiveness to the modern black liberation struggle could be traced to the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of education* case when the U.S Supreme Court ruled school segregation to be unconstitutional. Before that, the separate school system for whites and blacks was unequal, which made black children feel inferior compared to their white counterparts and which, in turn, violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In many respects, the *Brown vs Board of education* was a landmark decision in the history of black Americans as it laid the groundwork for black activists to intensify their fight for liberation. The popular white-owned media paid close attention to this milestone, with *Life* magazine describing the ruling as, 'A historic decision for equality.'⁶⁶

Ebony's publisher and his editors were up to date with the development of the case. When the Court announced the verdict, the Johnson Publishing Company's (JPC)'s editorial staff received a call from their special contact in Washington D.C who declared that the Court had outlawed school segregation. The publisher and his editors went into a flurry of excitement, happiness, and relief.⁶⁷ In the months following the court decision, *Ebony* wrote that the

⁶⁶ 'A Historic Decision for Equality', *Life*, 31 May 1954, pp.11-14.

⁶⁷ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, August 1954, p. 14; E. James West, *A House for the Struggle the Black Press and the Built Environment in Chicago* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2022), p. 124 in, <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>> [accessed 15 June 2022].

decision was, 'one of the greatest periods of progress that Negroes have experienced this century'.⁶⁸

Media scholar Tony Atwater argues that *Ebony's* objective clearly reflected Johnson's philosophy, which advocated raising black consciousness and freedom.⁶⁹ However, by the time Civil Rights activists began to break the prevailing pattern of racial segregation, Johnson thought that the fight for liberation was soon over.⁷⁰ As a result, Johnson was initially slow in reacting to the Civil Rights struggle, and his magazine was less responsive to the events shaping the boundaries of the Civil Rights Movement.⁷¹ However, the fact that the dearth of coverage on the Civil Rights was due to the publisher's intention to mirror only the positive side of black people is not mutually exclusive. Johnson was aware that blacks had become more serious about their status and Civil Rights in America. He also recognised that his magazine had to change its policy to follow the ebbs and flows of the movement.⁷²

The early and mid-1950s saw new developments in the black struggle that made the success of the 1960s Civil Rights possible. Sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks, a black woman who refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, local black people began a bus boycott in the city. The boycott took place from December 5, 1955, to December 20, 1956, and culminated in Montgomery's buses having been integrated. The boycott also

⁶⁸ 'Negro Progress in 1954', *Ebony*, January 1955, p.41.

⁶⁹ Tony Atwater, "'Ebony's' Civil Rights Focus: A Study of Editorial Policy before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.", p. 6, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED189613.pdf>.

⁷⁰ A. James Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it', *Fortune*, January 1968, p.180.

⁷¹ Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it', p.180.

⁷² John and Burrell, Berkeley G. Seder, *Getting It Together: Black Businessmen in America*, First Edition edn ([n.p.]: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 209.

showed the potential for non-violent mass protest in the South and helped Dr. Martin Luther King to emerge as a prominent leader of the Civil Rights Movement.⁷³

The boycott attracted the national white print media. *Time* magazine perceived the boycott as a powerful weapon for southern blacks whereas *Newsweek* argued that King was not only fighting the bus segregation in Montgomery, but also revolting against the white injustice in the South.⁷⁴ Black magazines such as *The Crisis* hailed King by reprinting some of his speeches delivered in Montgomery while printing excellent photographs showing him surrounded by crowd. The magazine argued that King's efforts in desegregating the buses made Montgomery, 'one of the world's most fascinating cities'.⁷⁵

By the time blacks began protesting segregated bus seating in Montgomery, and while the movement was gaining close media attention, Johnson felt that the struggle had begun. As such, he joined the national board of the Urban League in 1958 and began to support the Civil Rights cause, both personally and via his magazine.⁷⁶ Johnson would later march and donate to different arms of the movement, solidifying his declaration that, 'we did not only report the struggle, but became part of the struggle'.⁷⁷

Obviously, the limit in *Ebony's* coverage of the Civil Rights activism was not related to Johnson but was attributed to the lack of militant alternatives, such as direct action and face-to-face confrontation approaches.⁷⁸ The 1950s was only confined to peaceful protests such as

⁷³ Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*, pp.54-58.

⁷⁴ Richard Lentz, *Symbols, the News Magazines, and Martin Luther King* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 26.

⁷⁵ 'Montgomery Story', *The Crisis*, August-September 1956, pp.422-423.

⁷⁶ A. James Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it', p.180.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p.241.

⁷⁸ Paul M. Hirsch, 'An Analysis of *Ebony*: p. 266.

civil disobedience or boycotts. *Ebony* itself observed that the racial progress in 1959 was diminished due to the absence of significant events.⁷⁹

Despite such limits, *Ebony* featured the Civil Rights Movement via 'The Negro Progress', an anonymous annual series of reports which began to appear more frequently following the *Brown vs. Board of education*. 'The Negro Progress' presented a thorough overview of black concerns and the development and the expansion of the Civil Rights Movement in the southern territories. The series would continue to appear in *Ebony* in the 1960s and 1970s, and due to *Ebony*'s increasingly serious tone and its radical editors' influence on the magazine's contents, it would cover significant topics ranging from Civil Rights, education, armed force, ghettos issues, and employment.

The mid to late 1950s saw a new shift in the fight for justice and equality. Blacks began to mobilise in a civil disobedience campaign to desegregate public buses, which became known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Angry at the arrest of Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat on the bus in December 1955, black people in Montgomery led by a new leader named Dr. Martin Luther King launched a mass boycott. The boycott lasted from December 1955 to December 1956 and resulted in the public buses having been desegregated in Montgomery. Historian Robert Jerome Glennon argues that it was the Bus Boycott which, 'signalled the start of the modern Civil Rights movement.'⁸⁰

Other regional and well-known print publications took a while to cover this event. This was probably because the movement was still in its infancy stages or because little was

⁷⁹ 'Negro Progress in 1959', *Ebony*, January 1960, p.86.

⁸⁰ Robert Jerome Glennon, 'The Role of Law in the Civil Rights Movement: The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955- 1957 ', *Law and History Review*, 09.01, (1991), pp.59-112 (p. 59), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 7 June 2021].

known about the boycott or its new leader, except for *Time* magazine, which called the boycott, ‘an attack on the conscience’.⁸¹

Amidst an absence of significant coverage in the mainstream print media, *Ebony* emerged as a unique magazine not only because it reported the boycott but also because it took part in it. When the boycott began in December 1955, a young black activist named Dr. Martin Luther King telephoned his college classmate Robert E. Johnson, who was one of the JPC’s editors, asking him to send someone to record the event. Almost immediately, Johnson (Robert E.) and another editor named Lerone Bennett Jr. quickly took an airplane and flew to Montgomery to participate in the boycott. Within the first days of the Boycott, Johnson and Bennett covered everything, spoke as eyewitnesses, and participated in the event, ‘we were there in the first days of the historic Montgomery Boycott’, said the editors proudly ‘[...] and we speak as witnesses and participants’.⁸²

In the early 1960s, direct action came to the forefront as young black activists sought to implement new tactics to precipitate the black liberation struggle.⁸³ Perhaps the most evident examples were the Sit-ins and the Freedom Riders. The Sit-ins campaign began in February 1960 when four college students sat at a lunchroom in Greensboro in North Carolina to protest lunch counter segregation.⁸⁴ Within a year, the campaign expanded to involve other

⁸¹ 'The South, Attack on the Conscience', *Time*, 18 February 1957, p.17; 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1988, p. 25.

⁸² Margena Christian, *Empire*, pp.91-92, 103-104; 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1988, p.25; 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1990, p. 17.

⁸³ Christopher W. Schmidt, 'Divided by Law: The Sit-ins and the Role of the Courts in the Civil Rights Movement', *Law and History Review*, 33.01, (2015), pp.33-93 (p. 93), in <<https://heinonline.org/>> [accessed 14 June 2021].

⁸⁴ Christopher W. Schmidt, *The Sit-Ins: Protest and Legal Change in the Civil Rights Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 1-2; Iwan Morgan, *From Sit-ins to SNCC: the Student Civil Rights Movement in*

black and white activists who began riding buses in the Southern territories to protest segregated bus terminals. These two campaigns were very strategic as the protestors aimed at steering the attention of the federal government and the media so that they would react to their cause.

As planned, when these protests began to inflame the public feelings, the major print media responded more widely. Historian Leigh Raiford contends that the national newspapers turned their lenses to the sit-in protestors and the Freedom Riders because the latter engendered an act of confrontation, or otherwise violence, which the newspapers perceived as newsworthy and could attract the readers.⁸⁵ Indeed, the popular white-owned media such as *The Baltimore Sun* and the Louisianian newspaper *The Times* anathematised their protest by focusing on their arrests or convictions, whereas *The Miami News* sought to sensationalise the event by printing a large portrait showing a Greyhound bus burning, with a headline that read, 'One picture tells the story of the Freedom Riders [...]'.⁸⁶ These outlets printed such stories along with pictures to instil in their readers the idea that the Freedom Riders were violent, agitators, and firebrands.

When these outlets sought to distort their image, the major black media quickly reacted to restore their public image. *Jet* magazine defended the Freedom Riders by publishing a manifesto that refuted allegations that the Freedom Riders were lawbreakers or rouble-rousers. The magazine noted that what the white media or the race-mongers said were 'the

the 1960s, ed. by Iwan Morgan & Philip Davies (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), p. 1 in, <<https://r4.vlereader.com/>> [accessed 17 June 2021].

⁸⁵ Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: university of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 76.

⁸⁶ 'Mississippi Convicts 17 More Riders', *The Baltimore Sun*, 30 May 1961, p.3; '27 Jailed after Stop in Jackson', *The Times*, 25 May 1961, p.1; Hugh Mulligan, 'Non-Violence, New Dixie Philosophy', *The Miami News*, 16 July 1961, p.3B.

biggest lies about the Freedom Riders.’⁸⁷ *The Crisis* magazine, the mouthpiece of the NAACP, also supported the Riders and asked its audience to join them for a life membership subscription to the NAACP.⁸⁸

Ebony reacted positively to these two major milestones, with its senior editor Bennett hailing the sit-in movement, ‘a call to conscience’. In his article titled, ‘What Sit-downs Means to America’, Bennett admired the sit-ins campaign, arguing that its inception marked the beginning of, ‘a national soul-searching’ for black Americans. In the same vein, he also endorsed the new tactics, which shifted from, “litigation to direct action”.⁸⁹

More tellingly, *Ebony* was also directly involved in the protests. Indeed, many of *Ebony*’s journalists and photographers joined the movement as they sat with the sit-in protestors and rode the buses with the Freedom Riders. Johnson and his editors declared that, ‘*Ebony*’s editors have gone to great lengths [...] donned overalls and work shirts to mingle with sharecroppers in demonstrations in the South and dressed in white-ties-and-tails to cover social events [...].’⁹⁰ *Ebony*’s reporter Larry A. Still remembers his experience on the Freedom Rides and how he joined and accompanied the Riders on a hazardous trip by driving a bus from Montgomery, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi.⁹¹

The Civil Rights protests came as a landmark in 1963 as the major leaders of the movement led their famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where they pledged to force the Civil Rights legislation and fair jobs equality. In August 1963, more than 250,000

⁸⁷ Alex Poinsett, *Jet*, The Biggest Lies about the Freedom Riders, 22 June 1961, pp. 12-14.

⁸⁸ 'Were you Aboard the "Freedom Bus?"', *The Crisis*, October 1961, p.496.

⁸⁹ Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘What Sit-downs Means to America’, *Ebony*, June 1960, Oct 1960, pp. 35-40.

⁹⁰ Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p.241; ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, June 1966, p.24.

⁹¹ Larry A. Still, ‘A Bus Ride through Mississippi’, *Ebony*, August 1961, pp.21-28.

black and white demonstrators gathered at the Lincoln Monument to peacefully protest and draw attention to the ongoing job inequities and economic discrimination practised against black Americans, which culminated with Dr. King delivering his famous, 'I have a Dream' speech.⁹²

As the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum, American mainstream media coverage increased steadily at this point. Popular and more prominent circulation outlets such as *Time* and *Newsweek* were devoting considerable coverage to the movement.⁹³ The popular white-owned media such as *The New York Times* applauded the march, declaring that the latter embodied 'the American tradition of peaceable assembly and petition for a redress of grievances'.⁹⁴ Others such as *Wisconsin State Journal* drew a lukewarm response to the march by providing two contradictory columnists' opinions. The first one hailed the march as 'an impressive day', whereas the second labelled it as a backward revolution that forged an image of a government unable, 'to legislate equal rights for its citizens [...]'.⁹⁵

However, the black-owned newspapers admired the march. *Chicago Tribune* printed on its front cover a statement that supported the march, illustrating that the latter demonstrated a high level of careful organization and discipline where the protestors showed no disorder or

⁹² Murray Kempton, 'The March on Washington ', *New Republic*, 244.14, (2013), pp.10-11 (p. 10), in <<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/mmu.idm.oclc.org/>> [accessed 2 June 2021]; Leonard Freed, *this is the Day: The March on Washington* () <<https://www.magnumphotos.com/>> [accessed 3 June 2021].

⁹³ Julian Bond, 'The Media and the Movement: Looking back from the Southern Front', in *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. by Brian Ward (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 31-32; see also Stephanie Greco Larson, *Media and Minorities, the Politics of Race in News and Entertainment* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2006).

⁹⁴ 'March on Washington', *The New York Times*, 25 August 1963, p.E12.

⁹⁵ Marquis Childs & David Lawrence, 'The March: Triumph or Failure?', *Wisconsin State Journal*, 30 August 1963, p.12.

chaos.⁹⁶ *The Crisis* magazine, however, deliberately relied on a white participant's testimony who admitted that, 'it was glorious [...] the ultimate triumph of the fight for freedom seems as inevitable as was the March itself'.⁹⁷

At the JPC, *Ebony's* publisher, editors, reporters, and photographers saw no hesitation in joining the march. On the day of the demonstration, Johnson closed all his offices in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles and led a contingent of some 100 editors, photographers, and observers to walk side by side with the demonstrators in Washington D.C.⁹⁸ Following the march, Bennett printed an explosive feature on the march in *Ebony*, describing it, 'the beginning of something [...]'. He wrote, 'it came like a force of nature, a whirlwind, like a storm, like a flood'.⁹⁹ Even later in his life, Bennett still remembered his piece as, 'an attempt to capture [...] the joy of a great triumph'.¹⁰⁰

Ebony's readers also aligned themselves with the magazine's support of the march, which meant that their reception of stories on the heyday of the Civil Rights struggle through the medium of *Ebony* had instilled in them a sense of black consciousness. J.B Jones asserted that after watching the March on Washington on T.V and reading *Ebony's* article, 'my apathy has become pride'.¹⁰¹ Likewise, Bernard Q. Ashcraft and Lamont C. Strong, two black

⁹⁶ Willard Edwards, 'Castigate President, Congress for Delays', *Chicago Tribune*, 29 August 1963, p.1.

⁹⁷ Deborah B. Zobel, 'Monument to Freedom' *The Crisis*, January 1964, pp.15-16.

⁹⁸ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1988, p. 25; Tony Atwater, "'Ebony's' Civil Rights Focus: A Study of Editorial Policy before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.", p.9.

⁹⁹ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Biggest Protest March', *Ebony*, November 1963, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Lerone Bennett, *Prominent Ebony Journalist and Author, Passes* (2018) <<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/>> [accessed 29 May 2020].

¹⁰¹ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, January 1964, p. 12.

soldiers who were deployed to Thailand, admired the article and insisted that anyone who read it would, ‘wake up and start to fight to ensure justice and freedom for all’.¹⁰²

It would seem as if the March on Washington had pushed for more reformations at the political level, with the new Civil Rights law (that John Kennedy’s administration promised to pass) being signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in July 1964. The latter prohibited discrimination and segregation in all education, public facilities, jobs, and housing. A year later, the Voting Rights Act was signed, which secured black Americans the right to vote. The Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Acts could be seen as the most far-reaching pieces of the Civil Rights legislation in the history of black Americans, which in turn pushed black Americans to challenge further racial discrimination in education, sports, and the workplace. When the Voting Rights Act was signed in August 1965, *Ebony* felt that the Civil Rights Movement had gained momentum in the modern black struggle as it had admitted in its subsequent issue that, ‘the civil rights movement has articulated not only the voice of the Negro for equal rights, but also of every segment of our society [...]’.¹⁰³

By the mid-1960s, *Ebony* began to sound increasingly serious about the struggle for justice and equality. Light-skinned advertisements and photos were replaced by dark-skinned photos, the word “Negro” was replaced by the word “Black”, and there was more discussion about the militant and the radical stand of the Civil Rights movement.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the clearest example was its distinctive feature of the SNCC, a Civil Rights organisation that was growing weary of the non-violent and integrationist philosophy in early 1966 and advocating

¹⁰² ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, March 1964, p.18.

¹⁰³ Francis Keppel, ‘Civil Rights and Education’, *Ebony*, September 1965, p. 111.

¹⁰⁴ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.* p. 57; Paul Hirsch, *An Analysis of Ebony: The Magazine and its Readers*, p. 266; Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, p.16; see for example, Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘SNCC: Rebels with a Cause’, *Ebony*, July 1965, pp.146-153; ‘The White Problem in America’, *Ebony*, August 1965.

more broadly radical approaches in favour of precipitating liberation. *Ebony's* article printed in July 1965 spoke positively about the organisation, describing it as the most radical and the most controversial Civil Rights organisation.¹⁰⁵

However, beyond its engagement with the major Civil Rights milestones or its organisations, *Ebony* also had a strong connection with popular leaders and activists such as Dr. King. The latter received favourable coverage from popular white-owned media. *The New York Times* newspaper described King as, 'the cadence of Bible', in reference to his, 'I have a dream' speech.¹⁰⁶ *Time* magazine, however, admired King's non-violent approach of fighting for justice and equality. When Dr. King led the March on Washington in 1963, the magazine selected him as, "the Man of the Year", admitting that Dr. King did indeed stir in his people, 'a Christian forbearance that nourishes hope and smothers injustice'.¹⁰⁷

At the JPC, *Ebony* endorsed King's philosophy. Media scholar Tony Atwater contends that the magazine was with Dr. King early on. Indeed, the magazine highlighted his activities more than any major newspaper and magazine in the U.S. It ran features on him and even published statements written by him, including his August 1963 "A letter from Birmingham Jail", an essay on his philosophical, ethical, and tactical virtues of nonviolent direct action.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, *Ebony* went beyond its commitment to just documenting his life or backing up his activism. In fact, the magazine was an integral part of his crusade. Its editors visited King in his house, marched with him in Birmingham and Selma, and supported his philosophy of integration and non-violence. Moreover, it invited and conferred with him at the company

¹⁰⁵ E. James West, '*Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*', p.57.

¹⁰⁶ James Reston, "I Have a Dream ...", *The New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p.1.

¹⁰⁷ 'Man of the Year', *Time*, 3 January 1964, p.14.

¹⁰⁸ Tony Atwater, *Editorial Policy of Ebony before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, p.88.

and even travelled with him to Norway in December 1964 when he was awarded the Noble Peace Prize. *Ebony* declared that, 'we were with King in the beginning and the ending.'¹⁰⁹

This relationship had become more vital. A few months after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and in an unprecedented attempt no other major newspaper and magazine could claim, the magazine offered Dr. King an opportunity to become one of its staff members.¹¹⁰ Dr. King enthusiastically accepted the offer, and between October 1957 and September 1958, Dr. King was editing a monthly column entitled, 'Advice for Living'. The latter was a space where he was drafting responses to a range of queries sent by *Ebony's* readers who inquired about topics related to religion, marital infidelity, sexuality, and race relations. The column had a short life span, following a failed murder attempt on King's life by a mentally unstable black woman'.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, *Ebony* would continue supporting Dr. King and endorse his activism in many approaches, backing up his cause and cementing its relationship with him (and later with his wife).

John H. Johnson also endorsed Dr. King, declaring that he would always stand up for his cause.¹¹² In an exclusive interview conducted by *Ebony's* editors with Johnson, the latter admired Dr. King, noting that among all the black leaders, Dr. King had impressed him the most [...] I don't even think about that', declared Johnson, 'He was unselfish, he was unyielding, and he had eternal faith'.¹¹³ These sentiments were also shared by *Ebony's* editors. The left-wing editors such as Bennett and Morrison supported Dr. King, casting him

¹⁰⁹ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1988, p. 25; Tony Atwater, "'Ebony's" Civil Rights Focus: A Study of Editorial Policy before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.', pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁰ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1966, p. 21.

¹¹¹ James West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.*, p.115

¹¹² Catherine Squires, *African American and the Media*, p. 82.

¹¹³ 'Ebony Interview with John H. Johnson', *Ebony*, November 1985, p.58.

as one of, ‘the greatest leaders produced in the United States of America’. King in turn applauded *Ebony*’s editors. In one of his letters, he revealed his admiration for one of Morrison’s articles on A. Philip Randolph, describing the article as truly, ‘magnificent.’¹¹⁴

Ebony’s responsiveness to the Civil Rights Movement, its milestones, and its major leaders was impressive. In the meantime, a new generation of activists within the movement such as Stokely Carmichael, Willie Ricks, and Julius Lester became very frustrated with the lack of progress for black Americans in the rural south and urban north and demanded more militant actions and radical changes to precipitate liberation. Their visions and ambitions prompted them to break away from the mainstream of the Civil Rights Movement to adopt a more radical and militant approach to achieve freedom.

These new black radicals and militants were also dissatisfied with *Ebony* despite its overwhelming reaction to the Civil Rights Movement. In early 1965, they began to condemn *Ebony*, demanding that the magazine should increase its focus on the black liberation struggle to involve other radical and militant figures. With the rise of the black militants and the increasing shift of *Ebony*’s established editors (such as Bennett and Morrison) to the left, Johnson was in a critical moment that would prompt his magazine to metamorphose, from an optimistic account into a radical magazine.

‘Ebony Could do More!’

Although *Ebony*’s publisher and editors enthusiastically engaged and advocated the Civil Rights movement and its major leaders, some black editors, militants, sociologists, and even black-owned outlets vociferously declared that this was not enough. They claimed that *Ebony* could do more to reflect the radical and the militant side of the black struggle. As such, they

¹¹⁴ Stars and Stripes, *Allan Morrison*.

sought to push the magazine to cover all aspects of the struggle, regardless of the methods implemented.

Early critical comments on *Ebony*'s reaction to the black struggle came from radical black journal *Soulbook*, which described Johnson as, 'a bourgeoisie mercenary.' In its 1964 winter issue, the journal accused Johnson of being a contributor to U.S imperialism which was attempting to gain an economic foothold in Africa.¹¹⁵ *Soulbook* kept its fierce denouncement of Johnson and *Ebony*. In the summer of 1966, *Soulbook* called into question if black businessmen such as Johnson could be regarded as leaders of the black freedom movement, declaring that his struggle was only for his narrow group of, 'respectable blacks'.¹¹⁶ The black radical magazine *The Liberator* also followed suit. In October 1965, the magazine lashed out at *Ebony*, mocking that the latter should not be seen as a black magazine because it focused on celebrities and black positive life while neglecting, 'the other 30 million black captives in America'.¹¹⁷

At the JPC, *Ebony*'s readers also delved into heated debates around the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power. In fact, the readership grew increasingly militant and highly attuned to the Civil Rights struggle as they became self-assured and more critical in their comments.¹¹⁸ Although the magazine began to feature dark-skinned and Afro natural hairstyle photos on its covers, the readers demanded that *Ebony* should also engage with the rising wave of black consciousness and black empowerment.

¹¹⁵ Ernie Allen, 'Black Nationalism on the Right', *Soulbook*, 1.1, (Winter 1964), pp.1-76 (p. 12), in <<http://www.freedomarchives.org/>> [accessed 18 August 2020].

¹¹⁶ Harry Haywood, 'Is the Black Bourgeoisie the Leader of the Black Liberation Movement?', *Soulbook*, 2.1, (Summer 1966), 1-81 (p. 71-72), in <<http://www.freedomarchives.org/>> [accessed 18 August 2020].

¹¹⁷ Eddie Ellis, 'Is *Ebony* a Negro Magazine', *Liberator*, Oct 1965, pp.4-5.

¹¹⁸ Hirsch, 'An Analysis of *Ebony*', p. 264.

The readership exerted a powerful impact that compelled Johnson to respond to their wishes. When *Ebony* published an article on the Deacons for Defence and Justice, a militant organisation that vowed to protect the Civil Right activists in the South through armed-self-defence, some readers such as Alan Gartner and L.Y Lemon felt that *Ebony*'s article was 'insightful' as it compared, discussed, and debated the contradiction and the discrepancy between the Civil Rights organisations and their tactics in achieving the black liberation.¹¹⁹

Outside the JPC, the black militants themselves also vented at *Ebony* and its overemphasis on black fashion and successful celebrities. Media scholar Roland Wolseley contends that *Ebony*'s aim of holding up the white middle-class standards had created, 'a disfavour of the militant blacks of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.'¹²⁰ Indeed, in 1965, Larry Neal, a famous black militant and a poet, labelled *Ebony* as, 'an imitation of both *Life* and *Essence*'. He declared that the magazine was moving in the wrong path, 'straight into the pockets of white businessmen'. In one of his statements, Neal declared that, 'we must support existing firms like Johnson publications, force them to publish meaningful work by deluging them with the best that we have'.¹²¹

More tellingly, the young black militants and members of the SNCC also began showing a strong disapproval of Johnson's orientation. They often charged him for being 'an editorial Uncle Tom' as he identified himself with white politicians such as President Lyndon B. Johnson.¹²² Indeed, many of them dubbed *Ebony* a smugly middle-class magazine, noting

¹¹⁹ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, November 1965, p.13.

¹²⁰ Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, p.321.

¹²¹ Abbey Arthur Johnson & Ronald Maberry Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), p. 167.

¹²² 'Ebony Changes Style', *Emporia Gazette*, 26 March 1968, p.4.

that its inspirational motives could and would not solve the social issues impinging upon black Americans such as poverty, joblessness, and homelessness.¹²³ Even major leaders such as Julius Lester, the field secretary of the SNCC, cast *Ebony* as ‘disgusting’ because of its, ‘long-standing black bourgeois standard’.¹²⁴

Historians Christopher Tinson and Korey Brown argue that *Ebony* avoided discussion on the black militants because their rhetoric and position were too controversial.¹²⁵ Regardless of such arguments, it seemed that *Ebony*’s engagement with the rise of Black Power and black militancy was inevitable by the end of 1965 not only because of the black militants’ demands but because black militants themselves became editors for *Ebony*. Indeed, in the summer of 1965, three Black Power advocates were recruited to work as assistant editors along with the editorial staff at the JPC. With the addition of these Black Power advocates, *Ebony*’s editorial left-wing had become rigid and more controlled, which meant that Johnson was forced to adjust his magazine to cover serious issues in politics, education, Civil Rights activism, and the black militancy.¹²⁶

Black Power at the JPC

The year 1965 was indeed a year of change, as well as a year of decisive recruitments, with Johnson reluctantly approving three Black Power journalists as assistant editors for his periodicals: David Llorens, A. Peter Bailey, and Phyl Garland. From Johnson’s standpoint, these were ‘critical hires’ although they were working class and educated figures, which

¹²³ 'Magazines, Color Success Black', *Time*, 2 August 1968; Wolseley, *The Black Press*, p.321.

¹²⁴ 'Ebony', *Florida Today*, 01 December 1968, p.4E.

¹²⁵ Christopher M. Tinson, 'Held in Trust by History: Lerone Bennett Jr., Intellectual Activism, and the Historical Profession', *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 12.07, (2018), pp.175-191 (p. 183), in <<https://jpanafrican.org/>> [accessed 21 June 2021]; Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, pp. 93-94.

¹²⁶ Magazines: Color Success Black, *Time*, August 02, 1968, p. 32; Catherine Squires, *African American and the Media*, pp.81-82.

should meet Johnson's policy on recruiting staff at his company. Yet, his main concern was that these figures were Black Power exponents, with whom Johnson did not, and would not, have identification. In fact, he was concerned that the addition of these journalists would further (and inevitably) alter the characteristics of his magazines.¹²⁷ However, for Bennett, Fuller, and Morrison, these were the best selection to further reflect and endorse the black liberation struggle via the pages of the JPC's periodicals.

Garland was an influential editor at the JPC. Born in October 1935 in Pittsburgh, she graduated from Northwestern University in 1957 with a degree in journalism, after which she joined *The Pittsburgh Courier* to serve as a report and an editor. In 1965, she joined *Ebony* magazine to serve as its assistant editor, after which she was made *Ebony's* New York editor in 1969.¹²⁸

Historian Jonathan Brian Fenderson argues that Garland embodied, 'the ascending cultural criticism of Black Power, not civil rights, or the typical JPC narrative'.¹²⁹ However, Garland was an apparent left-wing peer at the company as she often aligned herself with the militant and radical orientations of Black Power. In one of her statements, Garland explicitly favoured the militant tactics over the integrationist approach, declaring that, 'It's necessary to get out in the street and threaten to burn the whole thing down once in a while' adding 'it's more effective than a quiet voice'.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Jonathan Brian Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement: Hoyt Fuller and the Cultural Politics of the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), p. 40 in, <ProQuest Ebook Central> [accessed 14 February 2021].

¹²⁸ Curriculum Vitae, box 3, folder 35, Phyl Garland Collection, SC 111, Archives of African American Music and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington.

¹²⁹ Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement*, p. 40.

¹³⁰ Janet Chusmir, 'No Black Free Until All Free', *The Miami Herald*, 27 July 1971, p.41.

Likewise, Llorens was an aspiring writer, journalist, and Black Power activist. Born in Chicago in 1939, Llorens joined the SNCC in 1964 to serve as a volunteering organiser. While a member of SNCC, he spent four months in Mississippi directing its voter registration project.¹³¹ In early 1965, Llorens left the organisation to join the Chicago-based black periodical *Woodlawn Booster* to serve as its managing editor. At the newspaper's headquarters, Llorens wrote articles and editorial columns, which focused on the Chicago Civil Rights Movement.¹³²

When Black Power resonated in the mid-1965, Llorens began to align himself to its tenets. In fact, Llorens adopted its militant tactics while likening himself to popular black radical and militant figures such as Leroi Jones, Huey Newton (the co-founder of the BPP), and Lerone Bennett Jr.¹³³ In a speech delivered at a fundraising meeting in Selma, Alabama, in April 1965, Llorens debunked the integrationist approach, revealing that black Northerners would reject it because it had limitations in bringing freedom to black people.¹³⁴ Even when Dr. King emphasised the need for integration and non-violence to achieve liberation, Llorens often disagreed with him by showing some reservations towards his philosophy.¹³⁵ In fact, Llorens supported more broadly Malcolm X as he was influenced by his philosophy, reiterating his doctrine that black people should use self-defence if they were harassed or threatened.¹³⁶ Similar to Malcolm X, who publicly accused the U.S government of violating

¹³¹ Editor to Speak at Benefit for Mississippi SNCC, *Woodlawn Booster*, 11 May 1965, n.p.

¹³² See for example, David Llorens, 'Am I Still in Mississippi', *Woodlawn Booster*, 13 January 1965, n.p.; David Llorens, 'Keep Kids Home... Why Not', *Woodlawn Booster*, 8 June 1965, n.p.

¹³³ David Llorens to Hoyt Fuller, 10 October 1969, box 22, folder 4, Hoyt Fuller papers.

¹³⁴ 'Richard Taylor Scott, Says Negro Must Either Rebel or Deny Himself', *Woodlawn Booster*, April 15, 1965, n.p.

¹³⁵ Norman Ross, Bill, and David – Can they Bridge Right Chasm, box 22, folder 4, Fuller papers.

¹³⁶ Norman Ross, Fuller papers; however, there is no concrete evidence if Llorens had met or worked with Malcolm X.

the human rights against black people in the U.S and nationwide, Llorens also charged the U.S government of ‘endless crimes against humankind.’¹³⁷

In July 1965, Llorens left *The Woodlawn Booster* to join the JPC to work as an assistant editor for *Negro Digest*. His arrival at the JPC was no easy task for Johnson, who felt it was difficult to hire someone with, ‘militant sensibilities.’¹³⁸ In reality, Llorens was recruited by Hoyt Fuller, *Negro Digest*’s chief editor, who induced Johnson to approve his recruitment. In fact, Fuller and Llorens had known each other long before Llorens joined the JPC, with Fuller being acquainted with Llorens’s writings for *Negro Digest* long before he joined the magazine.¹³⁹

In *Negro Digest*, Llorens’s work focused on book reviews published by popular black authors such as George Breitman’s *Malcolm X Speaks*. He also wrote about the Civil Rights Movement, with special features and editorial pieces that aimed to raise his audience’s black consciousness.¹⁴⁰ Articles such as ‘The Other Enemy – Complacency’, printed a year before Llorens was recruited for the magazine, challenged *Ebony*’s middle-class audience. They embodied his irritation over the black middle-class, declaring that they were unmindful of the struggle which was yet to be won.¹⁴¹ Hoyt Fuller admitted that Llorens was, ‘an extraordinarily sensitive and talented young man who had come of age in the time of crucial

¹³⁷ Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 180; David Llorens, A commentary on American Culture and the American Personality, July 1971, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

¹³⁸ Brown, *Souled Out*, p.116.

¹³⁹ Jonathan Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁰ Llorens was also a contributor to a special column on the Civil Rights movement titled, ‘On the Civil Rights Front’, published routinely between November 1965 and July 1967.

¹⁴¹ David Llorens, ‘The Other Enemy – Complacency’, *Negro Digest*, March 1964, pp.25-27.

consciousness of black people.’¹⁴² Llorens would later leave *Negro Digest* to join *Ebony* magazine, where he would intensify his discussion on modern black activism, covering topics related to black separatism, the experiences of the black soldiers in the military, and the growing militancy of the Black Power Movement.

A. Peter Bailey was a black nationalist, Black Power advocate, and an associate editor of *Ebony* between 1967 and 1975. Born in 1938 in Columbus, Georgia, Bailey grew up in Tuskegee, Alabama, after which he served in the army in 1965 before leaving it in 1959 to attend Howard University. In this period, Bailey became involved in the Civil Rights Movement as he moved to Harlem in 1962 and began to listen to Malcolm’s speech.¹⁴³

Like Llorens, Bailey was also influenced by Malcolm X’s charisma, philosophy, and rhetoric, admitting that the latter had changed his vision from an integrationist into a militant. Bailey also joined CORE and worked with its members for some time before engaging more broadly with Malcolm X.¹⁴⁴ He also participated in the sit-in movement, picketing, and demonstrations with other students in Washington D.C and at the University of Howard in an effort to desegregate public accommodations.¹⁴⁵

However, Bailey also had some reservations about Dr. King and his tactics of integration and non-violence. Though he admired and respected Dr. King, he admitted that, ‘I had [...] a negative attitude, the non-violence thing [...] allow people to physically and verbally abuse

¹⁴² 'Noted Black Writer, 34, Killed in Auto Mishap', *Jet*, 13 December 1973, p.15.

¹⁴³ A. Peter Bailey (March on Washington 50th Anniversary Oral History Project), interviewed by Kelly Navies, June 26, 2013, DC Public Library, Special Collections, OHP 24 March on Washington Oral History Project, A. Peter Bailey interview.

¹⁴⁴ A. Peter Bailey, interviewed by Robert E. Martin, 4 September 1968, interview RJB 306, transcript, Ralph Johnson Bunche Oral History Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

¹⁴⁵ A. Peter Bailey, interviewed by Robert E. Martin, 4 September 1968,

you [...] I just could not understand it'.¹⁴⁶ When Dr. King led the March on Washington in 1963, Bailey took part but with 'great scepticism', expecting the march would not bring about any fundamental change.¹⁴⁷ His admiration of Malcolm X and his philosophy of self-defence pushed Bailey to approach him in 1964 to work within his newly-founded organisation the OAAU, an institution that aimed to promote self-help, self-defence, unity, and dignity among black Americans (At this time, Malcolm had already split from the NOI to found his own organisation).¹⁴⁸ As soon as the organisation was officially founded, Bailey was offered a position to serve as an editor of its newsletter *OAAU Backlash*.¹⁴⁹

Though he had no journalistic experience, Bailey skilfully discussed issues that Malcolm X dealt with during the last year of his life, such as his attendance at the 1964 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) conference in Cairo, Egypt.¹⁵⁰ The OAAU's *Backlash*, which was appearing on an irregular basis, also provided a deep insight into other issues related to black Americans, such as the rampant racial discrimination practised against them in the U.S and across the world.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ A. Peter Bailey, interviewed by Robert E. Martin.

¹⁴⁷ District of Columbia Public Library | Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Reflections from the March on Washington, online video recording, C. Span, 20 August 2013, < <https://www.c-span.org/video/?314657-1/reflections-march-washington>>, [accessed February 15, 2021].

¹⁴⁸ A. Peter Bailey, 'OAAU in Action', *The Backlash*, 14 September 1964, p.5-6; A. Peter Bailey, Personal Reflections on Malcolm X: A Master Teacher, box 1, folder 9, A. Peter Bailey Papers, A. Peter Bailey collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University Bailey.

¹⁴⁹ A. Peter Bailey, Personal Reflections on Malcolm X: A Master Teacher.

¹⁵⁰ A. Peter Bailey, *The Backlash*, Introduction, box 1, folder 5, Bailey papers; see for e.g.: 'Malcolm X's speech to OAU in Africa', *The Backlash*, 24 August 1964, p.1.

¹⁵¹ There are many issues and articles which dealt with the black problems in the U.S and abroad, see for e.g.: 'We Support Brother Malcolm', *OAAU Backlash*, 23 November 1964, p.2.

On the other hand, Bailey's tone at *The Backlash* was clearly derivative from Malcolm X's militant rhetoric. Bailey exhorted his audience to defend themselves and retaliate against white oppression in a similar tone to Malcolm X, who pushed black Americans to battle for self-defence, self-awareness, self-respect, and self-determination.

In an issue published in August 1964, Bailey and his editorial team quoted Malcolm X's speech, stating that some Civil Rights laws such as school desegregation were, 'nothing but tricks of this Century's leading neo-colonialist power'.¹⁵² They declared that black people should turn into the self-defence tactic 'by whatever means necessary' to retaliate against the oppression and achieve justice and equality in America. Bailey and his editorial team wrote, 'if we must die anyway, we will die fighting back, but we will not die alone, we intend to see that our racist oppressors also get a taste of death'.¹⁵³ Similar to Malcolm X, who was being spied on and infiltrated by the FBI, Bailey also came under surveillance by the FBI in 1965 due to his militant stand and his call for self-defence.¹⁵⁴

After Malcolm X's assassination in February 1965, Bailey travelled to Europe and North Africa but returned quickly, with a vision of becoming an editor for *Ebony*.¹⁵⁵ His intent to join the JPC coincided with Allan Morrison, *Ebony*'s New York editor, having kept an eye on him as Morrison was impressed by his militant stand work ethics. As soon as Bailey arrived from abroad, Morrison offered him a freelance opportunity to write for *Jet* magazine a story cover on a black teacher who was mistakenly accused of molestation by a white pupil. The article impressed Morrison, who quickly offered him an opportunity to work as a mailroom

¹⁵² 'Malcolm X's speech to OAU in Africa', *The Backlash*, 24 August 1964, p.1.

¹⁵³ 'Malcolm X's speech to OAU in Africa', *The Backlash*, pp.1-3.

¹⁵⁴ Excerpt from FBI OAAU files, box 1, folder 9, Bailey papers.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Falsenthal, 'Closed Doors Pushed Author into Activism', *Dailey Press*, 18 March 1990, p.44.

clerk before becoming a full assistance editor of *Ebony*'s New York office within the same year.¹⁵⁶

Morrison's recruitment of Bailey or the previous black militants seemed to have no objection from Johnson, or the latter had no choice considering his established editors' powerful position at the JPC. In fact, it would seem as though Johnson yielded to Morrison's endeavours as the pair did not have any issues following the addition of Bailey into the JPC's editorial cohort. Rather than criticising him for recruiting a black militant, Johnson corresponded with Morrison with a special letter in which he admired Morrison for his loyalty, editorial duties, and his, 'twenty years of service to Johnson Publishing Company'.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, Bailey himself declared that the reason for joining the JPC was to help its editors to reflect the cause of black Americans and their fight for justice and equality, 'I had friends at those publications' said Bailey, 'they were frustrated'.¹⁵⁸ Bailey would later be promoted as an associate editor for *Ebony*, covering topics that focused on specific themes such as the black youth issues in New York and the black soldiers' issues in the U.S armed forces.

With the addition of these young militant journalists, the readership's awareness of the plight of black Americans, and its long-time editors' increasing shift toward the left, *Ebony* was headed into a more critical, tough, and radical orientation. This change would ultimately reinforce *Ebony* to broaden and deepen its discussion of Black Power and the black radical activism in light of the urban rebellion escalation and the rising wave of black pride and consciousness. Yet, if these editors were intent on reflecting the cause of black Americans via

¹⁵⁶ Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, pp. 116-117; Mark Falsenthal, 'Closed Doors Pushed Author into Activism'.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson and Morrison, December 23, 1965, Morrison papers, box 1, folder 1.

¹⁵⁸ Mark Falsenthal, 'Closed Doors Pushed Author into Activism'.

the pages of *Ebony*, then Johnson's engagement with the latter was carried out to achieve a different purpose.

John H. Johnson, the Rise of the Black Militants, and the Scooping and the Selling of Black Power

If the JPC's radical editors were intent on engaging with the rising tide of black militancy and radicalism, then Johnson seemed increasingly reluctant to react to the latter simply because these approaches were incompatible with his vision. In fact, Johnson was identified with the Civil Rights leaders such as Dr. King as the pair shared a moderate vision. Indeed, Johnson was also a moderate and an integrationist figure as he often declared that, 'I don't want to destroy the system, I want to get into it'.¹⁵⁹ He saw Black Power as an anti-white and militant movement while viewing the Civil Rights Movement as a bourgeois movement speaking for the middle class and aiming to integrate the black masses into the American mainstream society.¹⁶⁰ As such, Johnson's approach was likened to the Civil Rights' message, which was, 'open up and let us in'.¹⁶¹

From a contrasting perspective, Johnson was also determined to engage with the black militants and keep abreast of their activities, denying the sentiment that his magazine was not sufficiently militant. He declared that, [...] we are for whatever secures the rights of black

¹⁵⁹ A. James Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it', *Fortune*, January 1968, p.152.

¹⁶⁰ Clarence Lang, 'Between Civil Rights and Black Power in the Gateway City: The Action Committee to Improve Opportunities for Negroes (Action), 1964-75', *Journal of Social History*, 37. 3 (2004), pp.725- 754 (pp. 745-746).

¹⁶¹ Walter Goodman, 'Ebony, Biggest Negro Magazine', p. 409; Tony Atwater, "'Ebony's" Civil Rights Focus: A Study of Editorial Policy before and after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.', p.7.

Americans, short of burning down our cities and killing our people [...].'¹⁶² Journalists such as A. James Reichley noted that Johnson had the wisdom to stay close to the revolution.¹⁶³

His statement adds to the fact that Johnson also responded to his readership, which indicates that his magazine was not moderate by nature but pragmatic and responsive to its readership. As stated before, the rise of Black Power prompted many of *Ebony's* readers to show a strong tendency to read about the heyday and even the ferment of black Power, which pushed Johnson to conciliate with their demands. He himself declared that, 'we were moderate when the Negro population was moderate [...] and we became militant when our readers became more militant.'¹⁶⁴

Despite such declarations, it remains uncertain why and to what degree Johnson was aiming to engage with the militant side of the black struggle. The regional white-owned newspaper *Florida Today* declared that Johnson admitted in the early 1970s to a certain embarrassment over *Ebony's* apparent devotion to consumerism, which perhaps exaggerated the positive aspects of black life.¹⁶⁵ The newspaper's statement held true as Johnson would later admit that, 'I wanted to protest [...] blacks have changed. *Ebony* had to do the same.'¹⁶⁶

Nonetheless, this claim should not be mutually exclusive. Johnson also underscored, on other occasions, that he had no intention for himself or for his magazine to advocate the black liberation struggle or Black Power. Media scholars John N. Ingham and Lynne B. Feldman

¹⁶² Hoyt Fuller Collection, Box 15, folder 20; Walter Morrison, 'Ebony's Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History', *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975, p.19.

¹⁶³ A. James Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it', p. 153.

¹⁶⁴ Reichley, 'How John Johnson Made it'.

¹⁶⁵ 'Ebony', *Florida Today*, p.4E; John N. Ingham & Lynne B., Feldman, *Contemporary American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Greenwood Press, 1990), p.377.

¹⁶⁶ John and Burrell, Berkeley G. Seder, *Getting It Together: Black Businessmen in America*, First Edition edn ([n.p.]: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 209.

contend that Johnson was a mere black businessman, and his aim was to pioneer black consumer market to promote the black advertising and marketing, solidifying his confession that, 'I am a businessman, not a social worker.'¹⁶⁷

Therefore, Johnson's intention was to scoop Black Power by covering key events that no one else covered.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, he himself declared that he would do his best to pioneer the national print media in covering major events, 'Anytime anybody does anything important, we're up there' declared Johnson.¹⁶⁹ His editor John Woodford, who had joined the editorial staff of *Ebony* in 1965 to serve as an associate editor, admitted that Johnson was, 'self-interested.'¹⁷⁰

Probably the clearest evidence that he was seeking to be the pioneer in covering the rise of Black Power could be seen in his reaction to the March against Fear, which was gaining close media attention in June 1966.¹⁷¹ The March against Fear was a solitary walk set off by James Meredith on June 5th, 1966. Meredith, the first African American student to enrol at the University of Mississippi, attempted to defy racism in the South by starting a solo walk from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, in what became known as 'the March against

¹⁶⁷ John N. Ingham & Lynne B. Feldman, *Contemporary American Business Leaders*, p. 377.

¹⁶⁸ Rachel Siegel, 'Johnson Publishing Company, the ex-publisher of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, files for bankruptcy', *The Washington Post*, 10 April 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/04/10/johnson-publishing-company-which-produced-ebony-jet-magazines-files-bankruptcy/>.

¹⁶⁹ Rachel Siegel, 'Johnson Publishing Company.'

¹⁷⁰ John Woodford, 'Messaging the Blackman', in *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*, ed. by Ken Wachsberger, William M. Kunstler, and William M. Kunstler (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), p. 2.

¹⁷¹ David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement, Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1956-1968*, 1st Edition edition edn (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 116.

Fear'.¹⁷² On the second day, Meredith was gunned down by a sniper and had to be hospitalized. In the meantime, members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Dr. Martin Luther King, the SNCC led by new leader Stokely Carmichael, and others from CORE and the NAACP vowed to resume his march. They allied to continue the march and to fight the racial discrimination in the Mississippi Delta and across the rural south.

On June 16th, the marchers arrived in Greenwood, South Carolina, and met with local blacks who eagerly supported their march. Nonetheless, they were also met with violent mob attacks and police harassment. Stokely Carmichael, a young black activist who was recently elected as a chairman of SNCC, was arrested due to confronting a police officer but was bailed out six hours later. Upon his release, he quickly returned to Greenwood where he popularised the slogan 'Black Power', angrily addressing his audience that,

This is the twenty-seventh time I've been arrested and I ain't going to jail no more, we've been asking for freedom for six years, and we got nothing, what we gonna start saying now is Black Power.¹⁷³

Therefore, while the march was gaining close media attention as the Civil Rights leaders had hoped, Johnson correctly anticipated that the subsequent events would also catch the black and white media's attention. Consequently, he also decided to scoop them as he showed a great interest in covering Carmichael and his new orientation.

In the meantime, Carmichael was preparing to split from the mainstream of the Civil Rights movement. He felt that the black community needed to reject the integrationist tactics,

¹⁷² Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *'Black Women and Black Power: The Case of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee'*, in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 197.

¹⁷³ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 92; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, pp. 209-210.

noting that the latter would further strengthen white domination and weaken black communities, ‘integration will not resolve the problem of black poverty and dependency’, declared Carmichael ‘It was never meant to [...] it is aimed at enabling a few blacks who “made it” to integrate into white society [...]’.¹⁷⁴ From his outlook, Carmichael believed that for the black liberation to be achieved at full-scale, black Americans should be autonomous and should lead and run their own institutions using self-help, autonomy, self-interest, and self-determination, which he believed were the core tenants of Black Power, ‘black people don’t want to have to look to Tom and Dick and Harry to help them build’ declared Carmichael, ‘Negroes want something that they can own and control’.¹⁷⁵

Carmichael noticed that black people in some southern territories had made a significant proportion of the population. His strategy therefore was to register as many blacks as possible in the electoral voting to subvert the white control and generate more political strength to develop blacks’ own resources and assume complete control of their own lives.¹⁷⁶ During his first years as a member of the SNCC, he focused more broadly on registering as many black voters as possible in Mississippi via militant all-black political organisations such as the Lowndes County Freedom Organisation (LCFO).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Tunde Adeleke, *Africa in Black liberation activism: Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Walter Rodney* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 81-82 in, <<https://www-taylorfrancis-com>> [accessed 20 June 2021]; Charles V. Hamilton & Stokely Carmichael, *Black Power, The Politics of Liberation in America*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

¹⁷⁵ SNCC’ Path, Carmichael Answers, Morrison papers, box 2, folder 14, Allan Malcolm Morrison papers, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power*, pp. 60-62; Tunde Adeleke, *Africa in Black Liberation Activism: Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Walter Rodney* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 82 in, <<https://www-taylorfrancis-com>> [accessed 20 June 2021].

¹⁷⁶ See, Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969).

¹⁷⁷ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting till the Midnight Hour*, pp. 128-129; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p.82.

His charisma, flamboyance, and dedication to bringing about freedom by means of self-help and self-determination attracted Johnson. When Carmichael was on his way in June 1966 to Greenwood to scream Black Power, Johnson immediately dispatched a reporter to track him and report on his activities.¹⁷⁸ A few weeks later, Johnson sent a journalist to his home in Lowndes County in Alabama to conduct an interview with him.¹⁷⁹

Johnson's ambitious aim to compete the national print media to scoop Black Power had in fact paid off. His journalist's interview with Carmichael made *Ebony* one of the first national magazines to give fuller thematic coverage on Carmichael and his call for Black Power. Johnson would later declare that, 'When we began [...] success was equated with big cars, fine homes, mink coats. Now success means something else'.¹⁸⁰

Though it seemed implicit, his statement adds to the fact that he scooped Black Power to profit from it. Independent researchers such as Todd Steven Burroughs contend that Johnson was willing to take a risk in engaging with Black Power if he could financially profit from it, 'any raised fist had ready cash in it'.¹⁸¹ In fact, Johnson saw no risks in engaging with Black Power as long as the latter did not reduce the profit of the corporation, harm his reputation, or otherwise radicalise his company, 'I was selling advertising and making money [...] declared Johnson, 'so it did not interfere with the gross or the growth or development of the

¹⁷⁸ Carla Hall, 'John H. Johnson: From Office Worker to Millionaire Publishing Mogul', *The Washington Post*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle>.

¹⁷⁹ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', p.27; However, the journalist remained unknown and there is no clear evidence if it was Bennett. The magazine never stated who conducted the interview with Carmichael.

¹⁸⁰ Walter Morrison, 'Ebony: A History of U.S. Blacks Since 1945', *The Washington Post*, 5 November 1975, p.5.

¹⁸¹ Todd Steven Burroughs, *The Revolution on Your Momma's Coffee Table: Lerone Bennett and the Schizophrenia of Ebony Magazine, from 1966 to 1976* (2020) <<https://www.blackagenda-report.com/>> [accessed 30 March 2020].

company.’¹⁸² It was due to this reason that he allowed his editors to run controversial stories and sometimes articulate their own thoughts in *Ebony*.

The idea of financially profiting from the struggle seemed to pay off. *Ebony*’s readership increased steadily during the tumultuous years of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement, from 1.05 million units in the late 1960s to 1.27 million in the early 1970s.¹⁸³ In fact, Johnson and his editorial staff were aware that their audience, regardless of their social class and political orientations, were always interested and willing to read about the heyday and even the ferment of the black struggle. As stated before, many black readers, particularly working-class readers were happy to read about the black struggle through the pages of *Ebony*. Johnson and his editors noted that, ‘some black militants accused *Ebony* of being too middleclass, and some middleclass Negroes accused the magazine of being too militant—but they all read it’.¹⁸⁴

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Johnson reiterated the idea that he always sought to profit from the struggle financially. On its 30th anniversary in November 1975, Johnson wrote a statement in *Ebony* where he noted that achievement or financial success for him had also included the struggle itself.¹⁸⁵ More tellingly, in his famous parable ‘Succeeding Against the Odds’, which was published in 1989, Johnson declared that he did help the struggle by donating to different arms in the Civil Rights activism and sometimes sending his journalists

¹⁸² John H. Johnson (The HistoryMakers A2004.231), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, November 11, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 7, story 3, John H. Johnson discusses Lerone Bennett, Jr.’s books and articles for Johnson Publishing; Johnson, p. 156.

¹⁸³ Click, J. William., ‘Comparison of editorial content of *Ebony* magazine, 1967 and 1974’, *Journalism Quarterly*, 52.04, (1975), pp.716-720 (p. 716), in <<https://journals.sagepub.com/>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

¹⁸⁴ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, January 1970, p. 25.

¹⁸⁵ John H. Johnson, ‘Publisher Statement’, *Ebony*, November 1975, p.30.

to march and volunteer during difficult and dangerous assignments.¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, he also admitted in his account that, ‘but I wasn’t trying to make history – I was trying to make money.’¹⁸⁷

Therefore, Johnson was astute in scooping and selling Black Power to his audience. Yet, if the rise of Black Power had propelled him to advertise its major figures and milestones, then his editors, such as Bennett, were unabashed in introducing to their audience ‘the real Stokely Carmichael.’¹⁸⁸ Yet, beyond his portrait of Carmichael, Bennett sought to restore Carmichael’s public image.

***Ebony*, Lerone Bennett Jr., and the Re-invention of Stokely Carmichael**

In September 1966, almost three months after Carmichael popularised the concept of Black Power in Greenwood in South Carolina, Bennett suggested to Johnson printing an article on Carmichael and his call for Black Power. At first, Johnson found it difficult as Carmichael was very critical of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration (with which John Johnson had a closer identification). The pair argued for some time before Johnson yielded to Bennett’s wishes and agreed to run a profile on Carmichael and his new concept.¹⁸⁹

It is worth noting that although Johnson clashed with Bennett over featuring Carmichael, he maintained a strong relationship with Bennett over the years. As he had done with Morrison, Johnson admitted that he ignored Bennett’s self-indulgence over controversial issues and articles that he ran in *Ebony*, ‘I gave him carte blanche’, admitted Johnson. Indeed, Johnson allowed Bennett to run and edit controversial stories, and the pair did not have any

¹⁸⁶ Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p. 241.

¹⁸⁷ Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p. 156.

¹⁸⁸ Todd Steven Burroughs, *The Revolution on Your Momma’s Coffee Table*.

¹⁸⁹ Francis Ward (The HistoryMakers A2004.166), interviewed by Larry Crowe, September 17, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 5, Francis Ward remembers a meeting about covering radical political figures at *Ebony* magazine.

serious objections against the articles printed by Bennett as long as they preserved Johnson's reputation, or for most parts, they drove income to his corporation.¹⁹⁰

However, Bennett's attempt to feature Carmichael and his call for Black Power was no easy task, given that the term Black Power 'was exciting for some, frightening for others, and confusing to many.'¹⁹¹ In many respects, Carmichael's call for Black Power was controversial because it, 'divided the national civil rights coalition, destroyed the SNCC, decimated CORE, produced a range of competing vision, and fanned an already advanced white reaction against black demands [...].'¹⁹²

Historian Joanne Grant contends that by the time Carmichael popularised Black Power in June 1966, the major press pictured him as 'a scary figure.'¹⁹³ Indeed, a deluge of white print media lavished their attention on his call for Black Power. *The Los Angeles Times* described his speech as 'ugly and rabble-rousing' while *The New York Times* accused Carmichael of inciting riots in some of its issues published following his call for Black Power.¹⁹⁴ When Carmichael introduced the concept of Black Power, the major white-owned media had

¹⁹⁰ John H. Johnson (The HistoryMakers A2004.231), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, November 11, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 7, story 3, John H. Johnson discusses Lerone Bennett, Jr.'s books and articles for Johnson Publishing; West, 'Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.', p.74; Todd Steven Burroughs, *The Revolution on Your Momma's Coffee Table*.

¹⁹¹ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, 'Black Women and Black Power', p. 205.

¹⁹² Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*, p. 116; See also, Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹³ Joanne Grant, 'Stokely Carmichael', *The Black Scholar*, 27.3/4, (1997), pp.39-40 (p. 39), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 4 April 2020].

¹⁹⁴ 'Best Arguments against Black Power', *The Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 1966, p.32; See for example, issues on *The New York Times*: , 'Carmichael Held in Riot after Math', *The New York Times*, 9 September 1966, p.1; 'White in Atlanta Held in Slaying: Accused of Killing Negro-- Carmichael Is Indicted', *The New York Times*, 14 September 1966, p.38 ; 'Carmichael Denies in Court That He Began Atlanta Riot', *The New York Times*, 2 October 1966, p.82.

already destroyed his public image while most of the white journalists had already hailed him, as historian Peniel E. Joseph put it, ‘America’s new racial arsonist.’¹⁹⁵

As such, Carmichael and his new concept garnered sensationalist and race-war-mongering reports. Dr. King declared that Carmichael and his new slogan were a sensational story in the lens of the major American media, ‘[...] the press loves the sensational [...]’, declared Dr. King, ‘[...] in every drama there has to be an antagonist and a protagonist, and if the antagonist is not there, the press will find and build one’.¹⁹⁶

The national media also negated his new term, attributing its meaning and aims to anger and bitterness. *Time* magazine called his new slogan ‘the new racism’ while *The Washington Post* described it as, ‘Dangerous Genie’.¹⁹⁷ Even some Civil Rights activists such as Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Bayard Rustin ascribed to Carmichael and his slogan an orientation of extremism.¹⁹⁸ Others such as Dr. King, however, perceived the phrase Black Power as, ‘[...] an unfortunate choice of words’ because it connoted black domination, isolation, and confusion.¹⁹⁹

In fact, Carmichael was aware that the national media would pay close attention to his activities and would also attempt to vilify him and his call for Black Power, ‘Now the cameras and the writers are following me everywhere’ said Carmichael, ‘Suddenly anything I say is news’.²⁰⁰ Even before he popularised Black Power, Carmichael was aware that the

¹⁹⁵ Peniel Joseph, ‘*Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*’, p.151.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Luther King, *Chaos or Community?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), p.32.

¹⁹⁷ , ‘Civil Rights: The New Racism’, *Time*, 01 July 1966, p.11; ‘Editorial Cartoon 1’, *The Washington Post*, 7 July 1966, p.A20.

¹⁹⁸ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, pp.219-220.

¹⁹⁹ King, *Chaos or Community?*, pp. 29-31.

²⁰⁰ Stokely Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution: the Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2005), pp.542-543; David Carter, ‘From We Shall Overcome to We Have

white print media would sensationalise his new manoeuvres. When he was asked in an interview whether he read the media's reports on his election as chairman of SNCC, Carmichael quickly replied that the media was in itself, 'vast distortion of what is happening in SNCC'.²⁰¹ Later in his life, Carmichael would admit that he often neglected what the media was saying or writing about him, 'I can live with that [...], admitted Carmichael, 'I told them the truth, and I thought it was hell [...]'.²⁰²

Popular black oriented media also downplayed Carmichael and his new concept. The moderate and the integrationist magazine *The Crisis* quickly rejected and denounced his call for Black Power. Though radical magazines and newspapers such as *Muhammed Speaks*, *Soulbook*, and *The Movement* championed him and sought to acquit him from inciting riots in the summer of 1966, *The Crisis* continued to reject his new orientation in late 1966. The magazine declared that the cry of Black Power was nebulous and pernicious because it called for separation, revolution, or otherwise violence.²⁰³

Overcome, the Transformation of the US Media Coverage of the Black Freedom Struggle, 1964-1968 in Comparative Perspectives', in *Media and Revolt : Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present*, ed. by Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Erling Sivertsen, and Rolf Werenskjold (New York : Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 190; Stokely, *Ready for Revolution*, p. 532; Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2006), p.146.

²⁰¹ SNCC' Path, Carmichael Answers, Morrison papers, box 2, folder 14.

²⁰² Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, p. 545.

²⁰³ See for example; , 'And Now, "Black Power"', *The Crisis*, June-July 1966, p.299-300; Roy Wilkins, "Whiter "Black Power"?", *The Crisis*, Aug-Sep 1966, p.353-354; , "And now the Harvest", *The Crisis*, Oct, 1966, p.419-420; Minister Farrakhan, 'The 'Kangaroo Court' Trial of Stokely Carmichael', *Muhammed Speaks*, 14 October 1966, p.6; Boob Hamilton, 'Letter to Soulfolk', *Soulbook*, 02.01, (1966), pp.1-84 (p. 3), in <<http://www.freedomarchives.org/>> [accessed 16 June 2021]; Geneva Brown, 'Eye Witnesses to the Atlanta "Riot"', *The Movement*, 2.11, (1966), pp.1-12 (p. 10), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 16 June 2021].

Faced with a sea storm of negative media attacks, Carmichael had to work fast to restore his national profile.²⁰⁴ Carmichael realised that he had to approach the black media to voice his new program and challenge the white media's attacks, as his organisation, the SNCC, was also trying to do.²⁰⁵ Influenced by his flamboyance and his new strategies for achieving liberation, and while Carmichael was attempting to approach the media, Bennett was already printing a profile on him.

In September 1966, Carmichael appeared in *Ebony's* newsstands with a headline that read 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power'. The profile, which emanated from *Ebony* journalist's interview with Carmichael, provided a clear understanding of Carmichael's personal and political life. It also shed light on his efforts at achieving the black liberation movement by reinforcing black self-autonomy, self-help, and self-determination, which he saw as indispensable tactics to achieve Black Power.²⁰⁶ Historian E. James West contends that Bennett's profile sought to relieve scepticism over the potency of Black Power and to oppose its nefarious twisting made by the mainstream media.²⁰⁷ Indeed, the article was run to embody a different purpose. In contrast to the major white oriented outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Daily News*, *The Los Angeles Times*, to name a few, which sought to discredit him, Bennett's sought to re-invent his public image and restore his reputation among the American mainstream media. Within the article, Bennett hailed Carmichael as 'a hip Malcolm X' and sometimes 'a juvenile pied piper'.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2016), p. 135.

²⁰⁵ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, p.543; Brian Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (Gainesville, FL, 2006), p. 288.

²⁰⁶ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power'.

²⁰⁷ West, 'Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.', p.66.

²⁰⁸ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', p.26.

Perhaps the most apparent evidence that Bennett sought to mainstream Carmichael could be seen in the photographs that Bennett provided along the profile. Rather than focusing on his activism at the SNCC or his efforts to popularise Black Power, Bennett focused on Carmichael's personal life. Indeed, he showed him chatting with by-passers, hanging up with the black grass-roots in Harlem, visiting bookstores in Harlem, and dancing and relaxing with his family members in his home.

Such imagery evoked in *Ebony's* readers that Carmichael was, 'a complex, many-faceted young man, tender and gentle with young black people and old black people [...]'.²⁰⁹ Indeed, the readers admired Bennett and Carmichael alike. Historian E. James West contends that *Ebony's* black readers perceived Carmichael as a rash and injurious figure.²¹⁰ In contrast to this approach, other black readers had gravitated towards Carmichael and his call for Black Power. Shortly after publishing his profile, many black readers sent a deluge of letters, which admired Carmichael and applauded *Ebony's* role in clarifying his real aims and his new concept. New York resident John Edwards thanked Bennett, declaring that he could help him to understand the goals of Carmichael and the real meanings of Black Power whereas Illinois reader Lynne L. Fleming admitted that Bennett's profile, '[...] was a good article [...]'.²¹¹ Likewise, Chicago resident Mrs. Carmel T. Goosby endorsed Carmichael and his new programs, adding that for the term Black Power, 'one needed not to be Einstein to understand that.'²¹² Even white readers such as Lev Rosner admired Carmichael, 'God bless Mr. Carmichael and his efforts' said Rosner 'I hope most White liberals will back him up.'²¹³

²⁰⁹ Bennett Jr, 'Stokely Carmichael', p. 26.

²¹⁰ James E. West, '*Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987*', p.113.

²¹¹ 'Letters to the Editors., *Ebony*, Nov 1966, p. 13; 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, December 1966, p. 18

²¹² 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, Nov 1966, pp. 13-14.

²¹³ 'Letters to the Editors', p.13.

Ebony's reaction to Carmichael and Black Power was ground-breaking, for the latter was not featured in any other well-known newspapers and magazines by the time Carmichael unleashed the Black Power slogan. In fact, the white and black glossy magazines did not turn their lenses to Carmichael and Black Power until 1967. Popular black-owned magazines such as *Esquire* did not feature Carmichael until January 1967.²¹⁴ *Life* magazine, however, seemed concerned about the call of Black Power during its rise in the summer of 1966, but it was not until May 1967 when it ran an article on Carmichael and his project in organising black blocs in the South.²¹⁵

Moreover, *Ebony's* attempt to rebrand Carmichael proved to have a major impact on Black Power. The magazine could explain and clarify to millions of black people the meanings and the aims of Black Power, which was ambiguous and enigmatic to them.²¹⁶ It also reshaped the national image of Carmichael by featuring him as a democratic figure rather than, as was introduced by the popular white-owned media, a firebrand or a violent activist.

Perhaps more importantly, Bennett's profile on Carmichael also had an impact on the white-owned media itself. A few years after Bennett's profile, the mainstream print media began to acknowledge *Ebony's* unprecedented engagement with Carmichael and his call for Black Power. The popular white-owned newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *Detroit Free Press* admittedly wrote that *Ebony* was indeed and indisputably, 'the first national magazine to give extensive coverage to Stokely Carmichael [...]'.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Bernard Weinraub, 'The Brilliancy of Black', *Esquire*, 1 January 1967, pp.130-135.

²¹⁵ 'Black Power must be Defined', *Life*, 22 July 1966, p. 4; Gordon Parks, 'Whip of Black Power', *Life*, 19 May 1967, pp.76A-82.

²¹⁶ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*, p.64.

²¹⁷ Walter Morrison, 'Ebony: A History of U.S. Blacks Since 1945', *The Washington Post*, 5 November 1975, p. C5; Walter Morrison, 'Ebony's Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History', *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975, p.19-A.

Conclusion

Ebony's engagement with the rise of Black Power marked a phase of a long-standing response to the modern black liberation struggle. If the March against Fear stimulated a split between the Civil Rights activists and the new black militants and pushed Black Power to its full extent, then it had, too, marked a transitional bridge and helped to alter *Ebony's* orientation.

As stated, *Ebony's* focus on Black Power was inevitable. Black militants, black critics, black-owned outlets, and even its own readers and its editorial staff themselves offered a harsh critique on *Ebony's* orientation, attempting to make it a serious magazine that focused on issues that impacted the black community. This barrage of criticism forced Johnson to restructure his magazine. In one of his interviews granted to *Ebony's* staff in 1985, Johnson declared that *Ebony* had changed because of, 'the changing times and the changing attitudes of our readers'.²¹⁸

However, the arrival of black militants to work as editors at the JPC seemed to be a serious manoeuvre for Johnson, who was concerned that the new staff would ultimately change his magazine into a strictly radical or leftist magazine. Yet, he approved their recruitment and allowed them to print controversial stories only to financially profit and make capital out of them.

Historian Joshua Clark Davies argues that black businesses' goal was not to accumulate wealth but to affirm the core tenets of Black Power.²¹⁹ In contrast to this approach, Johnson proved the opposite by standing out from the crowd. His aim in scooping and covering Black

²¹⁸ 'Interview with John H. Johnson', *Ebony*, November 1985, p. 56.

²¹⁹ Joshua Clark Davies, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods: the Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (New York: Columbia University Press), <<https://www.vlebooks.com/Vleweb/Product/Index/1131822?page=0>> [Accessed date 23 September 2021], p.38.

Power was to advertise it and sell it to his readership. Johnson noticed that the rise of Black Power was such a catalyst and a news story that would yield profit for him. Aware that his readers were interested in reading stories on Black Power and the black struggle, Johnson cautiously captured and made Black Power an instant means of consumerism in his magazine. His efforts in doing so were perceived by his editors themselves such as Margena Christian, who admitted that Johnson, ‘knew business, and he enjoyed making money’.²²⁰

Nonetheless, if Johnson aimed at selling Black Power, then Bennett aimed at mainstreaming Black Power. In his profile on Carmichael, Bennett sought to rehabilitate him and restore his public image, which was downplayed and distorted by the white-owned media. Historian E. James West puts that Carmichael represented, ‘a bad form in the white media.’²²¹ However, Carmichael received an excellent form in *Ebony* as Bennett rebranded him by focusing on his personal life and his social activities rather than his activism. In so doing, *Ebony* played a crucial role in reshaping Black Power by reframing Carmichael as a democratic and peaceful persona rather than a violent phenomenon.

Coincidentally, when Bennett’s profile on Carmichael was out, Carmichael was arrested and jailed on charges of inciting a riot in Atlanta, Georgia. The latter was arrested when he was protesting, along with other local workers of SNCC, against police brutality in the shooting of a suspected black car thief. The demonstration quickly turned into a riot when people engaged in an open rebellion against police, which resulted in the arrest of SNCC’s demonstrators, including Carmichael.²²²

²²⁰ Margena A. Christian, *Empire*, p. xiv.

²²¹ E. James West, 'James Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and "Acceptable" Forms of Black Power Protest', *Black Diaspora Review*, 4.1, (2014), pp.36-75 (p. 60), in <<https://scholarworks.iu.edu>> [accessed 15 March 2019].

²²² Peniel E. Joseph., *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Library of Congress, 2006) pp. 159-160; Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life*, pp.139-142.

Influenced by his philosophy, Bennett, along with Llorens, immediately vowed to back up Carmichael by joining a support rally held in Eberhart Avenue in Chicago.²²³ This endeavour proves that *Ebony*'s editorial left-wing did not only support Black Power at the JPC, but also outside the corporation. But one might wonder to what extent these editors advocated Black Power? Were they genuinely militant or radical? If so, was their radical approach also employed in *Ebony* following Carmichael's profile? Or was it prevented by Johnson, who could be reluctant to additionally feature other Black Power advocates or stories to preserve his reputation among his middle-class audience? If he did so, did he succeed in preserving his policy? Or did his editors again transgress that as they did with Carmichael's profile? In the next chapter, more light will be shed on the left-wing cohort at the JPC and their relationship with Black Power, its advocates, and John Johnson and his company.

²²³ 'Rally to Seek SNICK Funds for St. Dorothy's Church', *Bulletin*, September 15, 1966, n.p.

Chapter 2: ‘*We Must Understand that Power is Necessary*’, Black Power and the Radical Activism of *Ebony*’s Left- Wing Editors

Black Power...is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support these organizations

Excerpts from Stokely Carmichael’s book *Black Power*, 1969

We believe that it is time for black people to take control of their own experience so they can define and transform American experience

Excerpts from Lerone Bennett’s speech delivered at the Hungry Club Forum, Georgia, 1970

Bennett’s profile on Carmichael and the way he supported him outside the JPC propelled *Ebony* to become a proactive magazine committed to fostering Black Power’s ethos of unity, self-help, and self-interest. However, his young left-wing peers such as Bailey, Llorens, and Garland, also played an essential role in developing a sentiment of race pride and community empowerment at the corporation. Indeed, immediately upon joining the JPC’s editorial staff in the summer of 1965, these editors, ‘started to alter the political tone of JPC’s periodicals while effectively opening Johnson up to the language and temperament of the changing times’.²²⁴ These young editors often challenged Johnson by adopting a critical and tough tone in relation to racism, Black Power, and the black liberation movement. Garland declared that

²²⁴ Jonathan Brian Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement*, p. 47.

even though Johnson sometimes disagreed with their wishes, '[...] in the long run, he usually will do what we want.'²²⁵

The established editors positioned themselves as powerful staff at the JPC, employing a radical tone in *Ebony* and transgressing Johnson's policy on many occasions. Bennett's support of Carmichael, for instance, caused no issues with Johnson or with other employees, and neither was Bennett's position under threat at the JPC. By contrast, Johnson praised his contributions to *Ebony*, describing him as a committed worker and a loyal friend who should work with him, 'for 50 more years [...].'²²⁶ Indeed, Bennett earned Johnson's admiration for his writings and his duties at the JPC, which propelled Bennett to have tenure as a senior editor at the company for more than half a century.

Outside the JPC, these editors proved to be more than editors but also activists. They participated in many formal and informal meetings on Black Power, racial issues, and Black Nationalism. Some of these editors, such as Llorens, earned the respect of the Chicago black-owned media, with *Woodlawn Booster* describing him as, 'a freedom fighter.'²²⁷

This chapter will follow up on Bennett's advocacy of Carmichael and Black Power outside the JPC, and extend to reveal the career, writings, and activism of his editorial left-wing peers such as Allan Morrison, David Llorens, and A. Peter Bailey. This chapter demonstrates that

²²⁵ Janet Chusmir, 'No Black is Free until All Free, 'Ebony Editor Works for Change', *The Miami Herald*, 27 July 1971, p.41.

²²⁶ James E. West, 'A Hero to Be Remembered: *Ebony* Magazine, Critical Memory and the "Real Meaning" of the King Holiday', *Journal of American Studies*, 52.02, (2018), pp.503-527 (p.519), in <<https://booksc.xyz/book>> [accessed 3 January 2020]; Johnson to Bennett, Bennett papers, box 11.

²²⁷ 'Freedom Fighter is Assistant Editor', *Woodlawn Booster*, January 06, 1965, p. 1.

Bennett and his peers acted as a vehicle through which *Ebony* engaged with Black Power.²²⁸ It will also prove that their advocacy of Black Power extended beyond their writings for *Ebony* and involved activities outside the JPC, through their participation in meetings and forums related to Black Power, the Pan African Congress, and the black studies movement. This chapter argues that Bennett acted as a figurehead of the Black Power cohort at the JPC whereas Allan Morrison was not a bona fide Black Power advocate but nevertheless aligned himself with its ethos. Furthermore, the chapter contends that the young editorial left-wing adopted a powerful influence on *Ebony*'s editorial focus during the height of Black Power, contributing to *Ebony* with critical and insightful articles on the black struggle while pursuing a radical and tough tone with their lives outside the JPC.

Lerone Bennett Jr., 'The Bearded Militant'

Historian Jonathan Brian Fenderson argues that Lerone Bennett appeared to be 'the most visible editor in developing the cultural, political, and left-wing at the JPC.'²²⁹ However, it should be noted that Bennett's tone was slightly less radical at the JPC in the years 1966 and 1967 compared to the years 1968-1970, when Bennett adopted a tough tone in addressing specific issues related to black Americans, such as the black revolts. Nevertheless, his tone outside the JPC was remarkably radical. Bennett himself declared that his rhetoric outside the JPC was, 'another completely separate thing' revealing that when he used to step out of the JPC "[...] this is Lerone Bennett speaking, this is not '*Ebony*' speaking."²³⁰

²²⁸ Other editors, such as Phyl Garland, will be featured in the next chapter. However, it should be noted that there were other editors with radical sentiments such as Alex Poinsett and Charles E. Sanders. Yet, their activities inside and outside the JPC was limited and not visible in the same way as Bennett's.

²²⁹ Jonathan Fenderson, '*Building the Black Arts Movement*', p.44.

²³⁰ Lerone Bennett (The HistoryMakers A2002.167), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, August 29, 2002, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 7, Lerone Bennett talks about his writings in relation to his work at '*Ebony*' magazine.

Lerone Bennett Jr. was born in 1928 in Clarksdale, Mississippi. He enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, majoring in economics and political science and editing the college newspaper. After graduation, Bennett joined *Atlanta Daily News* to serve as a reporter and later as its city editor. In 1953, Bennett joined the JPC to serve as an associate editor of *Jet* magazine before becoming senior editor of *Ebony* a year later. Bennett wrote many articles and special features for *Ebony*, which focused on black history.²³¹

Bennett's aim centred more broadly on revealing to *Ebony*'s audience a hidden history of black accomplishments and their excellence. In his *The Negro History* special feature, for instance, he emphasized the diversity of enslaved resistance during the antebellum era, whereas in his *Pioneer in Protest* feature, he showcased the achievements of some black abolitionists such as Benjamin Banneker and Harriet Tubman.²³² Bennett also sought to develop more historiographical and critically incisive perspectives in major publications that he printed in *Ebony* and externally in the early 1960s.²³³

In fact, Bennett should not be perceived as only a bona fide popular historian, as this chapter will demonstrate, but also a social, intellectual, and Black Power activist. While historians E. James West and Christopher Tinson have recently examined Bennett's career and revealed how he emerged as a popular black historian and intellectual in Post-war America, there remains more to be said about Bennett as a writer, an activist, and a Black Power advocate.²³⁴ Indeed, Bennett's metamorphosis from a Civil Rights exponent into a black

²³¹ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennet*, pp. 26-27; 'Library Sets Lecture by Editor of *'Ebony'*', *The Indianapolis News*, 29 January 1983, p.54.

²³² West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*, pp. 34-42.

²³³ See West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*.

²³⁴ West, *Lerone Bennett and Ebony Magazine*; E. James West, *Our Kind of Historian, the Work and Activism of Lerone Bennett Jr.* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022); Christopher M. Tinson, 'Held in Trust by History: Lerone Bennett Jr., Intellectual Activism, and the Historical Profession,' *Africology: The Journal of*

radical in the late 1960s and early 1970s, his support of Stokely Carmichael and his new concept, and his participations in national and international events related to Black Power and the black freedom movement demonstrate his stand and his advocacy of Black Power. This sentiment, in turn, explains how and why *Ebony* engaged with Black Power and endorsed its ideologies during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During his tenure as an editor at the JPC, Bennett penned several articles on the Civil Rights Movement in *Ebony* magazine, which ranged from topics on the sit-in movement to the Civil Rights significant milestones such as the 1963 March on Washington.²³⁵ As stated in chapter one, Bennett's interest in the movement intensified in line with the Civil Right Movement in which he supported its ideologies and aided its activists in propagating their cause via *Ebony*'s pages.

Perhaps the best example could be seen in his role as an intermediary between *Ebony* and his classmate Dr. Martin Luther King. Bennett helped Dr. King to feature an editorial column titled 'Advice for Living', a section where Dr. King was committed to drafting responses to a range of queries sent by *Ebony*'s readers who inquired about topics related to religion, marital infidelity, sexuality, and race relations.²³⁶ The column appeared regularly in 1957 before it ceased existence in 1958 as King cut down on media commitment after he was stabbed by a

Pan African Studies, 12.7, pp.175-191, in <<https://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol12no7/12.7-10-CTinson.pdf>> [accessed 16 September 2021].

²³⁵ See for e.g. Lerone Bennett Jr., 'What Sit-Downs Means to America', *Ebony*, June 1960, pp.35-40; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'SNCC: Rebels with a Cause', *Ebony*, July 1965, pp.146-153; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Biggest Protest March', *Ebony*, November 1963, pp.29-46.

²³⁶ E. James West, '*Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987*', (Published Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 2015),https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63038927/FULL_TEXT.PDF p.40-41; Advice for Living, King/*Ebony* Column, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers, box 2, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; ASALH/50th/NY/LB/Ossie/Rubie, Bennett papers, box 7.

woman who was suffering from a mental health condition.²³⁷ Despite the curtailment of Dr. King's column, Bennett continued to write on Dr. King outside the magazine's pages, with an informative biography that gained high praise among the white-owned outlets, the readers, and the critics.²³⁸

Bennett's writings on the Civil Rights Movement were complemented by activities outside the JPC, with participation in important events related to the Civil Rights struggle, such as the March on Washington in 1963, which he later recorded in a special feature in *Ebony*.²³⁹ The popular African American historian and the Pan-Africanist writer John Henrik Clarke admired Bennett's contribution to the Civil Rights activism. He admitted that he was not only a historian, but also, 'an active participator of the Civil Rights Movement as well as an astute interpreter of it'.²⁴⁰

When the cry of Black Power began to resonate more widely across the U.S following the Meredith March in the summer of 1966, Bennett's interest was piqued by its call for black liberation, which compelled him to align himself with Black Power. This could be seen in his correspondence with black leftist periodical *Freedomways*, in which he thanked the outlet for writing about him and admired its editorial staff for being 'the vanguard role' in the

²³⁷ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.*, p.115.

²³⁸ Leonard Radic, 'Leader and Crusader', *The Age*, 16 July 1966, p.21; Paul Parks, 'Informative Biography of Dr. Martin L. King', *The Boston Globe*, 18 February 1965, p.23; Henry H. Mitchell, Sr., 'Candid Look at Leader in Civil Rights Struggle', *The Fresno Bee The Republican*, 7 February 1965, p.98.

²³⁹ John Henrik Clarke, 'Lerone Bennett: Social Historian', *Freedomways*, 5.4, (1965), pp.455-552 (p. 488), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 8 February 2021]; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Biggest Protest March', *Ebony*, November 1963, pp.29-46.

²⁴⁰ John Henrik Clarke, 'Lerone Bennett: Social Historian', p. 481; James E. West, 'A Hero to Be Remembered: *Ebony Magazine*, p.507; Christopher M. Tinson, 'Held in Trust by History: Lerone Bennett Jr., Intellectual Activism, and the Historical Profession', p.180.

connection between ‘clarification, analysis, and enlightenment’ among black readers.²⁴¹ Moreover, Bennett also took part in official meetings with Black Power organisations such as CORE.²⁴²

Bennett’s interest in the ideology of Black Power prompted him to forego his integrationist approach. Indeed, many of his speeches point to considerable doubt over the viability of the integrationist approach. In a meeting at a Memorial Hall in Kansas City in 1967, Bennett declared that the integrationist method called for by Dr. King could not bring total liberation to black Americans, for he believed that a total liberation meant a profound impact on the social, political, and economic conditions of black America. Bennett revealed that integration meant, ‘changing his color, his hair, or the shape of the nose’, arguing that black Americans should not emulate the whites to be accepted within the American mainstream society, ‘if I have to become almost white or act white to be integrated then I want no part of it,’ declared Bennett.²⁴³

West argues that Bennett was, ‘far more militant than the magazine he edited’.²⁴⁴ Bennett’s metamorphosis into a Black Power exponent stemmed from his frustration regarding the slow progress of the Civil Rights Movement and the way it sought to achieve liberation. Many Black Power activists such as Carmichael and Rap Brown believed that the Civil Rights activists did not address the black masses and did not turn their attention to their social problems such as poverty and unemployment. Similarly, Bennett also believed that the limited approaches of the Civil Rights Movement and the cold-blooded assassination of

²⁴¹ Malcolm or Martin, Bennett papers, batch 4.

²⁴² ‘Black Power Talks’, *The Austin American*, 3 July 1967, p.1.

²⁴³ “Must Free People in U.S”, *The Kansas City Star*, 10 December 1967, p.30.

²⁴⁴ E. James West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.*, p. 134.

Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Dr. King would force many black Americans to rethink their tactics to achieve liberation.

It was probably due to this sentiment that Bennett vocalised a shift to espouse Black Power as he seemed to assert its need in the aftermath of Dr. King's murder. During a luncheon in the Sherman House in Chicago in 1968, Bennett emphasised that because of the pacifist approaches of the movement, Black Power had become, 'the Negro response to American racism.'²⁴⁵ In his meeting at the Memorial Hall in Kansas City, Bennett also referred to the notion that black Americans needed, 'a massive action against the racial barriers', and it was only Black Power that could bring about the latter.²⁴⁶ When the concept of Black Power was misinterpreted and demonised by the white news media, Bennett condemned them for their failure to properly interpret it, describing them as, 'adversaries of black power'.²⁴⁷

Independent researchers such as Todd Steven Burroughs argue that Bennett positioned himself, 'in the thick of the Black Power Movement, literally on the frontlines'.²⁴⁸ More tellingly, it would seem that Bennett more broadly endorsed Carmichael's approaches of unity, self-help, and self-interest, for the Black Power Movement had many organisations and different approaches, each of which sought to achieve liberation. As stated, the revolutionaries, like the Black Panthers, sought to achieve liberation by means of black Nationalism, Socialism, and armed self-defence. The separatists, however, declared that for black people to gain their freedom, they should secede from the U.S government and create an independent black republic in the South whereas the radicals such as Carmichael sought to

²⁴⁵ 'Black Power Called Response to Racism', *Chicago Tribune*, 23 May 1968, p.2.

²⁴⁶ "Must Free People in U.S", *The Kansas City Star*.

²⁴⁷ 'Lerone Bennett Urges Use of 'Black Power'', *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, 28 April 1968, p.6.

²⁴⁸ Todd Steven Burroughs, *The Revolution on Your Momma's Coffee Table*.

achieve freedom through unity, self-help, and black community empowerment. He argued that black people should come together and strive to improve their social lives by means of self-help and self-interest, the idea that black people should focus and achieve only what is beneficial for them.²⁴⁹

As such, Bennett endorsed the latter approach as he also declared that black Americans had to strive to achieve liberation by means of self-help and self-reliance, ‘we must understand that power is nec[essary], said Bennett, ‘don’t waste your time asking people to accept you [...] [groups] act according to their interests [...] your task, is the task of your generation [...]’.²⁵⁰ In one of his interviews, Bennett declared that liberation had not been achieved because black people did not fully control and empower their communities and did not unite to radically transform their own institutions. He noted that,

His [White] mother tongue is power, and that perhaps if we take all that toothpicks of power and put them together and create a whole huge battering ram then the door will open one way or another.²⁵¹

The way in which Bennett addressed Black Power had undoubtedly earned him the respect of Carmichael himself. Indeed, the latter cited Bennett in his *Black Power* monograph, meaning that he was aware of his output and his stand for his cause.²⁵² He also spoke up for Bennett, situating him within the longer trajectory of black radicalism. In one of his speeches delivered in Seattle in 1967, Carmichael urged his audience to appreciate Bennett’s stand in the black political and intellectual struggle, arguing that Black Power and its goals would

²⁴⁹ Carmichael, *Black Power*, pp. 58, 60, 78, 90.

²⁵⁰ Quote Speech, Bennett papers, box 4.

²⁵¹ Reelblack, The Heritage of Slavery (1968) w/ Fannie Lou Hamer & Lerone Bennett, Jr., online video recording, YouTube, 12 December 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1EAY0RDDJQ&list=TLGGBMW0gtRmlcEyMDA2MjAyMQ&t=537s>> [accessed 11 November 2021].

²⁵² West, *Lerone Bennett and Ebony Magazine*, p. 64

only be appreciated by learning from the longer history of black activists and historians. Carmichael declared that, ‘We need to know who our heroes are, our books must have Frederick Douglass [...] they must have Dr. W.E.B Du Bois, they must have Richard Wright [...] they must have Lerone Bennett.’²⁵³

Likewise, Bennett returned the favour to Carmichael, situating himself as a staunch supporter of his call for Black Power and his new tactics. Carmichael’s call for Black Power centred, as stated previously, on the idea that black people had to move away from the integrationist tactics to focus on achieving liberation by means of unity, self-help, and self-determination. From Bennett’s perspective, this approach was moderate, acceptable, and above all, viable. It was no coincidence that he favoured Carmichael over Rap Brown (or understandably over other Black Power advocates) to appear in *Ebony* in a special feature that appeared in September 1966 (as stated in the first chapter).²⁵⁴

Probably the most unmistakable evidence of Bennett’s support of Carmichael and his new programs could be seen in Bennett’s endorsement of Carmichael through public speaking engagements. In a conference in Colorado in April 1968, which was convened a few days after the murder of Dr. King, Bennett lamented the white violence against black people and their leaders. Bennett noted that the assassination of Dr. King had brought the black struggle into a sharper focus and that black people needed to rethink their strategies to achieve liberation. However, he also took the opportunity to back up Carmichael, declaring that he had ignited change and exhibited so much courage that he should earn the respect of white Americans, ‘If white people don’t look at reasonable people like us, then they’ll have to look

²⁵³ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr*, pp. 64-65.

²⁵⁴ Francis Ward (The HistoryMakers A2004.166), interviewed by Larry Crowe, September 17, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 5, Francis Ward remembers a meeting about covering radical political figures at *Ebony* magazine.

at Stokely Carmichael' declared Bennett.²⁵⁵ Bennett also echoed Carmichael's approach of Black Power, which could indicate that Bennett was aware of his publications. In his seminal article 'Power and Racism' published in 1967, Carmichael emphasised that Black Power also meant electing political representatives to speak to the needs of the black masses.²⁵⁶ Likewise, only a few weeks after Carmichael's article was out, Bennett made a similar statement in one of his speeches. He noted that Black Power also implied massed political representation and that the election of a black mayor in Gary Indiana was an outcome of Black Power.²⁵⁷

Moreover, Bennett restated Carmichael's idea of the Civil Rights and Black Power activists forging a coalition with white liberals, labour, church, and other sympathetic organisations to win their political and economic rights. In one of his writings, Carmichael made it clear that a coalition with white institutions or political organisations would not end institutional racism unless this coalition was beneficial to all black Americans.²⁵⁸ In the same vein, Bennett also argued that the black masses would also consider coalescing with white institutions or organisations if the latter were concerned.²⁵⁹

Bennett's advocacy of Black Power prompted him to be invited or participate in many Black Power meetings across the U.S such as the Newark Black Power conference, which was held in the summer of 1967 in Newark, New Jersey. The conference was scheduled to discuss how black people could improve their social conditions to eradicate white oppression levelled against them. Dr. Nathan Wright, the convention chairman, declared that the

²⁵⁵ 'Lerone Bennett Urges the Use of Black Power', *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, p.6.

²⁵⁶ Carmichael, *Power and Racism*, p. 54.

²⁵⁷ "Must Free People in U.S", *The Kansas City Star*.

²⁵⁸ Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power*, pp.70, 90,92-93, 96.

²⁵⁹ Mansion-Task, Many, Bennett papers, box 16.

conference would be convened to develop programs that, ‘do not bring relief to people, but do bring power.’²⁶⁰ The conference was one of the largest gatherings for Black Power leaders, which involved many Civil Rights and Black Power organisations such as the NAACP, The Urban League, SNCC, and CORE. It also saw the participation of pivotal figures and Black Power advocates such as Ron Karenga, Floyd McKissick, Rap Brown, and Lerone Bennett.²⁶¹ Carmichael was also invited but did not attend.²⁶²

Jet magazine declared that the representatives comprised, ‘the Black Power bag’.²⁶³ During the conference, Bennett declared that Black Power should become ‘latent power’ through which black people can be mobilised to implement unified programs in favour of developing their black communities.²⁶⁴ The conference was concluded with a release of an official manifesto that demanded the end of neo-colonialist control of black people worldwide.²⁶⁵ The Florida-based white-owned newspaper *The Tampa Times* wrote that Bennett’s participation in the conference made him, ‘one of the most important theorists and of the school of black liberation.’²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ ‘Black Power Conference Scheduled’, *Lexington Leader*, 20 June 1967, p.15.

²⁶¹ Hoyt Fuller, chief editor of *Negro Digest*, *Ebony*’s twin sister, also took part in this conference, chairing a session on Black Power and the Black professional. See Jonathan Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement: Hoyt Fuller and the Cultural Politics of the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), p. 81 in, <ProQuest Ebook Central> [accessed 14 February 2021].

²⁶² Logan Lockwood, *1967 Newark Black Power Conference* (2017) <<https://blackpower.web.unc.edu/>> [accessed 11 February 2021].

²⁶³ Chester Huggins, ‘What’s Ahead for Blacks in the U.S: Liberation? Extermination?’, *Jet*, 10 August 1967, p.18.

²⁶⁴ Chester Huggins, ‘What’s Ahead for Blacks in the U.S: Liberation? Extermination?’, pp.16-17.

²⁶⁵ Logan Lockwood, *1967 Newark Black Power Conference*.

²⁶⁶ Ellis Cose, ‘Unity is Missing Factor in Black World’, *The Tampa Times*, 25 May 1972, p.12.

The extent to which Bennett participated in this event had fed into important appearances in international forums, which addressed the need for a social, political, and economic upheaval of black people across the world by means of Black Power. Perhaps the most visible event was his involvement in an international conference on the sixth Pan African Congress (PAC), which was held at the University of Dar es Salaam in the United Republic of Tanzania in June 1973.²⁶⁷ Bennett participated in this event as a sponsor of the PAC. He articulated his honour to organise meetings with popular figures such as James Turner, a black activist and the organiser of the Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee, ahead of the congress's gathering.²⁶⁸ In fact, a few months before the summit, several participants and committees corresponded with Bennett, emphasising that his participation would be influential because of his involvement, 'in the just and historic struggles of African peoples to free themselves from the chains of oppression [...]'.²⁶⁹

The Pan African Congress was held for the first time in 1900 in London, which sought to reconceptualise the relationship between black Americans and their African counterparts.²⁷⁰ Immediately after the Second World War, the pivotal African American intellectual and activist W.E.B Dubois convened a series of conferences known as the Pan African Congress. The Pan African Congress held in Manchester in 1945 gave the congress a new vision as it

²⁶⁷ In fact, Bennett was not the first JPC's editor who took part in such events. His colleague, Alex Poinsett, a contributing editor, also took part in this conference in 1970 where he delivered a speech on Mayor Richard Hutcher, see Bennett's papers, Race Relation, box 4.

²⁶⁸ Bennett to Wiltshire; Staff, DPAAC, "Sixth Pan-African Congress Records" (2016). Manuscript Division Finding Aids. 235, Howard University; Sylvia Hill to Bennett, Staff, DPAAC, "Sixth Pan-African Congress Records" (2016). Manuscript Division Finding Aids. 235, Howard University.

²⁶⁹ Keorapetse Kgositsile and Winston Wiltshire to Bennett; Staff, DPAAC, "Sixth Pan-African Congress Records" (2016). Manuscript Division Finding Aids. 235, Howard University.

²⁷⁰ Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 163.

moved away from the African diasporic middle-class intellectuals to involve the African working class as primary agents in the anti-colonial movement.²⁷¹

The sixth PAC summit was convened to foster political and economic self-reliance and to increase unity between blacks in Africa and those who lived in Europe, the Pacific Islands, and North and South America.²⁷² Bringing together more than six hundred participants from over thirty countries, the sixth PAC was a product of its time as it was convened amidst a fierce African diasporic struggle set against Apartheid in South Africa, finance imperialism in the West Indies, and racial discrimination in North America.²⁷³

Historian Ashley Farmer contends that the sixth Pan African Congress bolstered ties between local and international movements and served as a conduit through which, ‘U.S.-based activists articulated their real and imagined identification with Africa and as Africans.’²⁷⁴ Indeed, for many African American activists and intellectuals who wished to participate, this was an opportunity to foster racial unity, promote their solidarity with their African counterparts, and discuss the path to socialism.²⁷⁵

Many participants and governments in Africa and America believed that the congress would be ‘a Black Power gathering’ as many nationalists, leftists, and black militants from the West Indies, Africa, and North America sought to take part in this event. Black female militant Judy Claude declared that the sixth PAC would mark a departure, ‘from civil rights

²⁷¹ La TaSha Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC: Interviews with Sylvia Hill and Judy Claude, Organizers of the Sixth PanAfrican Congress', *The Black Scholar*, 37.4, (2008), pp.39-47 (p. 39), in <<https://www.tandfonline.com/>> [accessed 16 February 2021].

²⁷² '10 Chicago Blacks will attend Pan-African Parley in Tanzania', *Chicago Tribune*, 13 June 1974, p.35.

²⁷³ La TaSha Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC: Interviews with Sylvia Hill and Judy Claude, Organizers of the Sixth PanAfrican Congress', p.41; Lerone Bennett, "Opening Remarks to Sixth Pan African Congress", 6th Pan-African Congress, Bennett papers, box 6.

²⁷⁴ Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, p. 161.

²⁷⁵ Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 232-233.

to Black Nationalism to Pan-Africanism.²⁷⁶ Indeed, the call for the congress itself declared that the summit would be held to support and internationalise Black Power, with an opening remark that read,

The 20th century is a century of Black Power, it has already been marked by two dynamics. First, a unified conception of all people who have been colonized [...] and the most significant members of the Third World are those who strive for power to the people and for Black Power to the Black people.²⁷⁷

African Americans and Black Power advocates also wished to participate. Popular Cultural Nationalists, black female militants such as Haki Madhubuti, Imamu Amiri Baraka (formerly known as Leroi Jones), and Sylvia Hill (founder of the Institute for African Education in St. Paul, Minnesota) expressed their desire to attend the summit.²⁷⁸ Hill and members of the Centre of black Education (CBC) formed the core of PAC steering committee, drafted its guiding documents, and set their journey to travel to different continents to help organise the congress.²⁷⁹

Bennett took part in this convention and agreed to serve as the leader of the U.S delegation (*Black World's* editor Hoyt Fuller also took part in this conference).²⁸⁰ *Negro Digest* magazine proudly announced that Bennett was among, 'men and women whose

²⁷⁶ La TaSha Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC', p. 42.

²⁷⁷ "the Call", 6th Pan-African Congress, Bennett papers, box 6.

²⁷⁸ Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, p. 179; La TaSha Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC', p.39; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Pan Africanism at the Crosroads', *Ebony*, September 1974, pp.148-160.

²⁷⁹ Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 233.

²⁸⁰ Incoming, 6th Pan-African Congress, Bennett papers, box 6; 'The Sixth Pan African Congress: Black Unity: Coming of Age in Dar-es-Salaam', *New Directions*, 1.4, (), pp.1-6 (p. 4), in <<https://core.ac.uk/>> [accessed 11 February 2021].

demonstrated, long-time commitment to the struggle for the liberation of African people has brought them international stature and respect.’²⁸¹

During the summit, Bennett likened the colonial and imperial issues imposed against Africans to the racial discrimination being impinged upon African Americans in the U.S, noting that the black liberation struggle in the U.S was part of various movements set by blacks in Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Similarly, he also noted that black Americans, black Africans, and those in the West Indies must wage a global black struggle to achieve a total liberation, ‘[...] it is the duty of every African community’ declared Bennett ‘to liberate itself wherever it is, by whatever means necessary [...]’.²⁸²

The Sixth Pan-African Congress made pivotal figures from independent African nations and via the diaspora to come together and share their perspectives and prospects of the black liberation via the African diaspora. Nonetheless, the congress was infused with ideological differences, which contributed to deep rifts.²⁸³ This was understandably apparent between the African American delegates, who sought to address race as a primary factor, and African members who rejected them in favour of a working class-based analysis.²⁸⁴

Bennett wrote about the conference in *Ebony* upon his return, with a special feature that appeared in September 1974. Historian Korey Brown argues that his feature on the Congress in *Ebony* was an example of his, ‘Black Power era commentaries.’²⁸⁵ Although Bennett admitted that the summit was infused with contentious debates, he described the gathering as, ‘an event of historic proportions’ which marked an important milestone in the black

²⁸¹ 'International Sponsor', *Negro Digest*, January 1974, p.82.

²⁸² Lerone Bennett, “Opening Remarks to Sixth Pan African Congress”, 6th Pan-African Congress, Bennett papers, box 6.

²⁸³ Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, p. 175; La TaSha Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC', pp. 40-41, 46.

²⁸⁴ Levy, 'Remembering Sixth-PAC', pp. 40-41, 44.

²⁸⁵ Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, p. 106.

liberation struggle for Africans and African Americans.²⁸⁶ *Ebony*'s audience were happy with Bennett's article, with some readers expressing their gratitude to Bennett for addressing the sixth PAC in *Ebony*'s pages.²⁸⁷

Bennett was a vitally important social, intellectual, Civil Rights and Black Power activist as he had his finger on the pulse of important events in the black community and outside of it. *Colorado Springs* hailed Bennett as 'a bearded militant' for his impact on the Black Power Movement and how he approached, endorsed, and interpreted Black Power.²⁸⁸ Bennett would continue to speak up for Black Power and address its philosophy. In an article written in 1985 which focused on the 1960s black liberation struggle, Bennett referred to Black Power as, 'Black America's finest hour' which reformed black America's social, political, and cultural life. He wrote,

For the Black Revolution or the Black rebellion or the Black Freedom movement or the Movement – call it what you want - was a national phenomenon that transformed the student movement, the church, the women's movement, and other segments of American society [...] a rebirth of the Black soul, a re-invention of Black identity, and a challenge to White identity.²⁸⁹

Bennett's support of Black Power outside of *Ebony*'s pages demonstrates his long-standing approach to its programs. The popular black poet Haki Madhubuti declared that

²⁸⁶ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Pan Africanism at the Crossroads', *Ebony*, September 1974, p.148.

²⁸⁷ Letter to the editors, *Ebony*, December 1974, p. 14.

²⁸⁸ 'Lerone Bennett Urges the Use of Black Power', *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, p.6.

²⁸⁹ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'Introduction', in *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade 1963-1973*, ed. by Mary Schmidt Campbell, 1st edn. (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1985), pp. 9-10.

among the JPC's editors, Bennett was, 'The most revolutionary writer up there.'²⁹⁰ Indeed, just like other militants who served as editors at other black mainstream magazines such as William Worthy, *Baltimore Afro-American* reporter, Bennett also proved that he was at the heart of the modern black radical movement due to his writings for *Ebony* and his activism outside the magazine. Similarly, his editorial peers at the JPC such as Allan Morrison also proved to be established Black Power advocates.

Allan Morrison: “*the Forthright Intellectual*”

Allan Morrison was *Ebony's* New York editor, a former war reporter, and a correspondent. He wrote extensively about the social issues of the black community in Harlem and New York and the legal success of the Civil Rights Movement. Morrison was also a Black Power advocate as he favoured the teachings of Malcolm X, disagreed with the integrationist approach of Dr. King, wrote about Black Power in *Ebony*, and more importantly, recruited Black Power advocates to work as assistant editors for the magazine. Historian E. James West contends that Morrison was, 'among the more senior staffers who devoted considerable attention to Black Power, urban inequality, and educational bias during the second half of the 1960s.'²⁹¹

Allan Morrison was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, in 1916. He served as an army sergeant and a black reporter during World War II, gaining journalism experience. In 1939, Morrison moved to New York City, where he began, with the companionship of his colleagues George Norford and W. Cummings, compiling a short-lived magazine named

²⁹⁰ Haki Madhubuti (The HistoryMakers A1999.006), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, December 20, 1999, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 8, Haki Madhubuti compares 'Ebony' magazine with his own publishing company.

²⁹¹ West, *Lerone Bennett and Ebony Magazine*, p. 84.

Negro World Digest, a monthly black periodical which sought to feature the best writings by or about black writers and authors.²⁹²

In January 1946, Morrison met Ben Burns, one of *Ebony's* early editors, in Paris, where Burns induced him to join a newly founded magazine named *Negro Digest*. Six months later, Morrison became an editor of *Ebony* (as *Ebony* was becoming increasingly successful) but he soon left the JPC to return to New York, where he edited Harlem's *The People's Voice* newspaper. Several years later, Morrison heard about the JPC opening a bureau in New York. As such, he left *The People's Voice* to become *Ebony's* New York editor and later the editorial bureau chief of the JPC.²⁹³

Morrison was also a Civil Rights activist. When the Supreme Court ruled *Brown vs. Board of Education* unconstitutional, Morrison was the only journalist at the headquarters of the NAACP. The NAACP honoured him for his achievements in journalism as well as in the field of human relations.²⁹⁴ He also maintained good correspondence with Civil Rights leaders such as Dr. King, with letters and telegrams being sent between the pair about participating in meetings and radio series.²⁹⁵ As time went on, Morrison became more interested in Malcolm X's approach of self-defence than Dr. King's philosophy of non-violence, arguing that they were well-intentioned and would not bring full liberation to black Americans.²⁹⁶ Morrison believed that the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement were not

²⁹² STARS AND STRIPES, *Allan Morrison*.

²⁹³ STARS AND STRIPES; Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), p. 97.

²⁹⁴ STARS AND STRIPES.

²⁹⁵ Dr. King to Morrison, box 1, folder 4, Allan Morrison papers. p.45.

²⁹⁶ Gregory Carneiro, *Malcolm X Debate Open Mind Race Relations 1963*, online video recording, YouTube, 19 September 2015, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHPxQsjAp-k&feature=emb_logo>, [accessed February 7, 2021; "Will the Negro Revolution Fail?", Morrison papers, box 3, folder 18, Allan Malcolm Morrison papers, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

enough. He recalled when the Supreme Court ruled school segregation to be unconstitutional, many white Americans threw up new barriers to restrain the progress of the black liberation struggle, 'something more [was] needed' said Morrison.²⁹⁷ The regional Pennsylvanian and the white-oriented newspaper *The Pocono Record* declared that Morrison meant, 'Birmingham sit-ins, Selma Marches, Chicago and Watts riots, and Black Power.'²⁹⁸

His reputation as a war veteran, a Civil Rights activist, and an editor for a leading black magazine led him to appear in many programs on racial problems and the black freedom movement. In June 1963, Morrison took part in a televised debate on race relations in America and the future of black Americans. The debate featured James Farmer, national director of CORE, Malcolm X, Wyatt Tee Walker, chief staff of SCLC and executive assistant of Dr. King. Morrison was also invited to join the debate because he was seen as an exemplary leader, 'who came to the human rights struggles of the black community [...].'²⁹⁹

The meeting saw contentious debates on whether to pursue pragmatic reforms inside of the system or to seek a radical change outside of it. Malcolm X opposed the former, arguing that it would be irrelevant to the nationalistic perspectives of the Nation of Islam (NOI) to integrate within the mainstream of American society. He suggested that black people should come together to address the issue of racism and inequality by means of Nationalism and self-defence. By contrast, Walker insisted that non-violence and the move into the

²⁹⁷ Gil Murray, 'Ebony Neutral in Rights Fight; its 'White Problem'', *The Pocono Record*, 30 December 1966, p.9.

²⁹⁸ Gil Murray, 'Ebony Neutral in Rights Fight.'

²⁹⁹ Gregory Carneiro, *Malcolm X Debate Open Mind Race Relations 1963*, online video recording; *Malcolm X, Wyatt Tee Walker, Allan Morrison, and James Farmer Debate the Civil Rights Movement* (2020) <<https://angelolopez.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 8 February 2021].

mainstream of American life were the only paths towards freedom, while Farmer argued that equality had to be achieved by means of economic reforms.³⁰⁰

While the Civil Rights leaders drew an analogy between moderation and radicalism, Morrison seemed to be a harbinger of Black Power as he warned of a bitter confrontation between blacks and whites in light of mounting black-white tension and a rising wave of militancy amongst black Americans. Morrison warned that “the White power structure” and its endeavours to restrain the struggle would force black Americans to search for alternative forms of activism, instead of non-violence. Morrison echoed Malcolm X’s view regarding self-defence, noting that black people had the right to protect themselves, ‘this does not mean that the Negro is by nature violent [...] declared Morrison, ‘but it may be necessary to defend his birth right [...] to protect his life, to protect his family, and to protect his status [...]’.³⁰¹

Morrison often referred to the rise of Black Power as the black revolution, arguing that there was a political and social revolution in America instigated by dramatic events and heroic efforts of Civil Rights leaders and the grassroots of black America. Morrison affirmed that the black revolution would bring some changes to America, ‘the current Negro revolution is a massive to change the face, the character of spirit, the morays, and the entire moral outlook of the United States’, said Morrison.³⁰²

Morrison’s rhetoric reflected his growing concern over the status of black Americans, as noted by *The Pocono Record*, which wrote that Morrison was often frustrated over the slow progress of the black liberation struggle during the rise of Black Power in 1966. Morrison also believed that blacks should be angry if they wanted to achieve full equality in America, bemoaning that, ‘[...] things are going very slowly [...] things are getting worse, not

³⁰⁰ Gregory Carneiro, *Malcolm X Debate Open Mind Race Relations 1963*, online video recording.

³⁰¹ Carneiro, *Malcolm X Debate*.

³⁰² “Will the Negro Revolution Fail?”, Morrison papers, box 3, folder 18.

better.’³⁰³ His frustration over the slow progress of the black liberation and the social conditions impacting black Americans pushed him to employ a radical tone in *Ebony* while taking part in seminal programs such as the 1967 seminars on the ghetto problems.³⁰⁴

In August 1965, *Ebony* published ‘The White Problem in America’, a special issue printed to address the ongoing failure of white institutions to deal with the nation’s racial issues. In the special issue, Morrison contributed with an article which lamented the U.S institutions for their treatment of the racial issues, reiterating Johnson’s statement that the racial problem in America was merely, ‘a white problem.’³⁰⁵ Morrison insisted that all exponents of the black struggle must face what he often termed, ‘the White Power Structure’. He noted that black Americans must come together to seize more opportunities in its political, economic, and military institutions, which can help them to have a major role in the national decision-making.³⁰⁶

In many respects, Morrison's article is compared to Carmichael's appeal for black Americans to unite to obtain power in the political and economic spheres. Just as Black Power began reverberating across the nation, many black critics, black journalists, and black writers began to turn their attention to it. As stated in chapter one, local, regional, and national newspapers, magazines, and left-wing outlets began to question the real goals of the new Black Power activists such as Carmichael, Rap Brown, and James Forman. In fact, these activists split from the mainstream of the Civil Rights Movement to adopt a more militant and radical orientation in favour of complete liberation for black America, believing that the

³⁰³ “Will the Negro Revolution Fail?”, Morrison papers, box 3, folder 18.

³⁰⁴ Jerome Liblit to Morrison, box 3, folder 6, Allan Malcolm Morrison papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

³⁰⁵ John Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p. 287.

³⁰⁶ Allan Morrison, 'The White Power Structure', *Ebony*, August 1965, pp.141-146.

Civil Rights activism had reached an impasse. As such, Black Power activists such as Carmichael and many black militants and SNCC's members declared that Black Power was 'the key' to achieve dignity, pride, and black brotherhood.³⁰⁷

Morrison received an influx of letters from lay individuals and journalists to write articles on Black Power in *Ebony*. One month after Carmichael popularised the concept of Black Power in June 1966 in Greenwood, South Carolina, Nathan Wright Jr., the executive director of the Department of Urban Work (DUW), reached out to Morrison with a letter and an enclosed article on Black Power. In his letter, Wright asked Morrison to revise and publish his article in *Ebony*, emphasising that the article would be valuable for publication in *Ebony* because of "the timely nature" of the rise of Black Power.³⁰⁸

The bulk of his article, titled, 'Black Power: Are Negroes Ready, Willing, and Able?' discussed the feasibility of the use of Black Power. Wright warned that black Americans' frustration regarding the ongoing cycle of racial discrimination and their dismay over their social and economic conditions would force them to embrace Black Power as a form of ethnocentrism.³⁰⁹ Wright noted that the programs and orientations of the young black militants would deploy new tactics for black people to adopt, such as self-interest and radicalism.³¹⁰

Wright's article seemed to be rejected by Morrison or by Johnson as it failed to materialise in *Ebony* in the months leading up to Carmichael's profile. Nonetheless, black writers such as Hamilton Fish and other anonymous journalists continued writing to Morrison, often requesting him to write on the topic of Black Power or to reprint articles (published by other

³⁰⁷ Pete Hamill, 'Black Power on the March', *New York Post*, 9 June 1966, p.3.

³⁰⁸ Nathan Wright Jr., Morrison, box 2 folder 14, Morrison papers.

³⁰⁹ Nathan Wright Jr., Morrison, box 2 folder 14, Morrison papers.

³¹⁰ Nathan Wright Jr., Morrison.

white and black-owned outlets), which discussed the emergence of Black Power or the development of SNCC.³¹¹ This correspondence proves that *Ebony* could act as a forum to propagate the message of Black Power and the rise of radical activism among its audience. Similarly, it also underscores that these journalists were aware of Morrison as an influential writer and a contributor to the black freedom movement. His long-time colleague Burns admitted that Morrison was, ‘a dependable and forthright intellectual who showed great acuity in the many articles he later wrote.’³¹²

Morrison probably did not revise or respond to the journalists because he was focusing on writing a book when he asked Johnson for a leave of absence from the JPC.³¹³ Yet, Morrison continued to contribute to *Ebony* with original articles on Black Power, such as the one published in August 1967 on the impact of Black Power on the black arts. In his article, Morrison argued that the rise of the Black Power philosophy instilled strong feelings among black artists and young black writers such as Donald Graham, Charles L. Anderson, and Don L. Lee, for its radical orientations and its embittered tone propelled them to employ themes of power, anger, and impatience in their poems, novels, and essays.³¹⁴

While he was working on his book in the spring of 1968, Morrison suddenly suffered from extremely high blood pressure and passed away at the age of 52.³¹⁵ Johnson and his editorial staff lost one of the long-time editors at the JPC, someone who devoted his time and his efforts to disseminate the message of the black struggle not only in the U.S, but also across the world.

³¹¹ Hamilton Fish to Morrison, box 2, folder 13, Morrison papers; Anonymous writer to Morrison, box 2 folder 14, Morrison papers.

³¹² STARS AND STRIPES.

³¹³ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, December 1967, p. 22.

³¹⁴ Allan Morrison, ‘A New Surge in the Arts’, *Ebony*, August 1967, pp.134-140.

³¹⁵ ‘Allan Morrison, 51, *Ebony* Editor Here’, *The New York Times*, 24 May 1968, p.47; STARS AND STRIPES.

His former colleague Ben Burns admitted that Morrison was, ‘one of the most gifted and conscientious black journalists I have known [...]’.³¹⁶ Indeed, Morrison’s reputation as a leading editor and journalist had led him to earn many awards and appreciation from different regional institutions and associations for his, ‘long support to the cause of Civil Rights and human dignity [...]’.³¹⁷ However, if the long-time editors acted as precursors of Black Power in the mid-1965, then the youthful editors such as A. Peter Bailey and David Llorens made the magazine’s editorial position, ‘oriented toward proactively promoting Black Power precepts in the years immediately following 1965.’³¹⁸

Black Power and the Young Radical Editors of *Ebony*

By the time Bailey and Llorens were recruited as editors at the JPC, they began to push *Ebony* towards a more critical outlet. Indeed, during their early years, they played an essential role in shifting the editorial politics of the JPC’s magazines, with Llorens making *Ebony* more in tune with the Civil Rights Movement and the increasingly strident voices of black youth whereas Bailey often adopted critical commentaries on the racial inequities in the magazine.³¹⁹

As discussed in the first chapter, both endorsed Malcolm X and his philosophy of self-defence, but the pair slightly differed in their approach to Black Power. Llorens pursued a more radical and militant approach outside the JPC, participating in several meetings and

³¹⁶ STARS AND STRIPES.

³¹⁷ The New Era Democratic Club to Morrison, Certificate of Appreciation, Morrison papers, box 1, folder 1; The New York Urban League to Morrison, Certificate of Award, Morrison papers, box 1, folder 1.

³¹⁸ Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, p. 116.

³¹⁹ Fenderson, *Building the Black Arts Movement*, p. 47; Brown, *Souled Out*, p. 157.

delivering speeches on Black Power.³²⁰ By contrast, Bailey remained an editor at the JPC until his resignation in 1975, and his activities outside the JPC were scarcely noticeable.³²¹

While he wrote much on the Civil Rights Movement and the black liberation struggle in *Negro Digest*, Llorens also reflected his advocacy on Black Power through more critical publications that appeared in other white and black-owned outlets. The majority reflected his frustration over the social conditions of black Americans as well as the U.S government's mistreatment of its black citizens. In September 1966, Llorens contributed to the Chicago-based and white-owned newspaper *The Sun Times*, where he urged black people to go to the streets to demonstrate. Though he was a skilful writer, Llorens sometimes adopted a strident tone, often calling for mass protests in the streets in favour of full and equal social, political, and economic rights of black people, especially Black Chicagoans.³²²

Journalist Norman Ross admitted that Llorens was 'an embittered figure' as Llorens often seemed dissatisfied with the progress of the black struggle despite the many victories of the Civil Rights Movement at the legal level.³²³ Moreover, Llorens's militancy represented perpetual distress and a deep hatred of the U.S government, describing America as a nation of endless paradoxes as it sought to make democracy across the world while its people, 'in countless ways, screw each other'.³²⁴ It was no coincidence that his speech and his ongoing

³²⁰ *Ebony Magazine Aide to Speak on Black Power*, box 22, folder 04, Hoyt Fuller papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Centre.

³²¹ His activities outside the JPC are still limited due to the purview of his archival papers at Emory University. Bailey was well known in participating in many events and forums across the states where he endorsed and spoke up for Malcolm X.

³²² *Opinion of the People*, box 22, folder 4, Fuller papers; see also, Panelists Tell Group, 'Keep Demonstrating', *Woodlawn Booster*, June 22, 1965, n.p; Richard Taylor Scott, *Says Negro Must Either Rebel or Deny Himself*, *Woodlawn Booster*, April 15, 1965, n.p.

³²³ Norman Ross, Bill and David – Can they Bridge Right Chasm, box 22, folder 4, Fuller papers.

³²⁴ David Llorens, *A Commentary on American and the American Personality*, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

tough tone were denounced by the white-owned media such as *Seattle Times*, which described his speech as, ‘badly distorted and unbalanced’.³²⁵

In 1967, Llorens left *Negro Digest* to join *Ebony* magazine, where he intensified his focus and discussion on modern black activism, covering topics related to black separatism, the experiences of black soldiers in the military, and the growing militancy in the Black Power Movement. However, most of his articles articulated immense distress for the situation of African Americans. *The New York Times* declared that Llorens’s articles in *Ebony* were, ‘reflections of his deep concern over the conditions of black Americans’.³²⁶

In *Ebony*, Llorens also manifested his acclaim for Malcolm X and his philosophy, describing him as, ‘God’s surest prophet to this lost black tribe in America.’³²⁷ In his most radical article he wrote, published in September 1968, Llorens declared that the rise of the Republic of New Africa (RNA) in 1968, a separatist organisation which sought to secede from the U.S government and establish its own nation in the South, was attributable to the ideals of Malcolm X. Llorens asserted that Malcolm’s appeal before the United Nations (UN) regarding America’s violation of the blacks’ rights, his connection and time spent in Africa, in addition to his passion for separatism gave the organisation ‘a spirit’ to promulgate its tactics of independence from the U.S government.³²⁸

Outside the parameters of *Ebony*, Llorens was also the embodiment of Black Power, advocating its tone and using its approaches to fight the deep-rooted racial discrimination confronting black Americans. Like Carmichael, who supported black unity and

³²⁵ Personality Seminar at U.W Criticized, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

³²⁶ 'David Llorens, 34, Writer and Editor', *The New York Times*, 2 December 1973, p.85.

³²⁷ Llorens, ‘Black Separatism in Perspectives, Movement Reflects Failure of Integration’, *Ebony*, September 1968, p.95.

³²⁸ Llorens, ‘Black Separatism in Perspectives’ pp. 90-93.

empowerment, Llorens also advocated mass community control. In one of his speeches in Longview in Washington in November 1969, Llorens declared to his audience that liberation meant more than economic freedom, ‘it means bringing the Black community to the point where it is powerful enough to exercise, “real influence” and where black people have a voice in determining what is done with our resources.’³²⁹

In the fall of 1969, Llorens went on a leave of absence from *Ebony* to join the University of Washington in Seattle to teach black literature (he would later leave the magazine) but remained committed to his editorial duties, with poems and book reviews that appeared routinely in *Negro Digest*.³³⁰ He also maintained regular contact with the JPC’s editorial staff, such as Fuller, often keeping him posted about his activities at the university.³³¹ The reason for leaving *Ebony* remained unknown but could most likely be attributed to his frustration that *Ebony*, (or understandably John H. Johnson) was identified with Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration or that it was not generally inclined towards radicalism or militancy. In one of his speeches in Washington ahead of his new position at the university, Llorens made a reference to *Ebony*, hoping for more change in its direction in the future.³³²

Llorens’s arrival at the university coincided with a massive campaign instigated by both academics and Black Power organisations, such as the Black Student Union (BSU). This body fought racial biases at the university by establishing a black studies program and developing an incentive scheme to incorporate courses on black history, black literature, and

³²⁹ Ted M. Natt, 'Black Editor Speaks Out', *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p. 74.

³³⁰ Ted M. Natt, 'Black Editor Speaks Out', *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p. 74; David Llorens, 'A Portfolio of Poetry', *Black World*, September 1970, p.36; David Llorens, 'Hue and Cry', *Negro Digest*, November 1969, pp.86-87; David Llorens, 'The Omni-Americans', *Black World*, October 1970, pp.52-77.

³³¹ Llorens to Fuller, August 21, 1970, box 22, folder 5; Llorens to Fuller, 11 August 1971, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

³³² Ted Natt, 'Ex-editor of *Ebony* Defends Black Press', *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p.74.

music taught by black teachers and professors.³³³ The BSU intensified its campaign for creating a black studies program at the university in late 1969 and early 1970 by forging a coalition with other black administrators, professors, and even white students.³³⁴

The BSU's efforts paid off. By the end of 1969, the BSU, with a joint aid of the Associated Students of Washington State University (ASWSU), introduced a Black studies curriculum and proposed to hire black professors to teach black courses.³³⁵ The programme garnered greater visibility in February 1970, with the pair implementing black literature classes and supplementing popular books as required readings for the course, such as 'Malcolm X's Autobiography' and Carmichael's book 'Black Power, the Politics of Liberation'.³³⁶

Llorens also played a crucial role in this campaign, fighting racial discrimination against black students and stressing the need for a black faculty not only at the university, but also at other white-predominantly universities and black colleges.³³⁷ In August 1970, Llorens was appointed as a director of the black Studies Committee at the university, a body established in February 1970 by Glenn Terrell, the university's president, to further address future employment and career opportunities for black studies graduates.³³⁸ Llorens harnessed this position to set up a black faculty and develop black studies curriculums at the University (he

³³³ Marc Arsell Robinson, *The Black Power Movement and the Black Student Union (BSU) in Washington State, 1967-1970*, (Published Ph.D. thesis, Washington State University, 2012), <https://research.libraries.wsu.edu/> p. 138.

³³⁴ Marc Arsell Robinson, *The Black Power Movement and the Black Student Union*, p. 136.

³³⁵ Robinson, *The Black Power Movement and the Black Student Union*, p. 146.

³³⁶ Robinson, *The Black Power Movement and the Black Student Union*, p. 156.

³³⁷ David Llorens to George Beckmann, 8 July 1971, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

³³⁸ Robinson, *The Black Power Movement and the Black Student Union*, pp. 157-158.

was officially appointed in September 1970).³³⁹ Moreover, he also sought to enhance the black studies program, with arrangements between the University and the Institute of Black World (IBW), a radical think tank in Atlanta, to involve its experts in evaluating the black studies program at the University.³⁴⁰

His role at the university was significant as he helped to establish a black studies program and support the university to achieve what many departments at other universities could not do at the time.³⁴¹ His contribution was also remarkable as many students and pivotal individuals at the university admired him for his crucial role. Student advisor Lowell A. Ingram declared that Llorens was a talented black speaker at the department while Robert B. Heilman, the chairman of the English department himself wrote to Llorens by informing him that, '[...] glad to have so keen and sensitive a person as you in the role in the department and the university.'³⁴² Even white writers such as Ted M. Natt at *Longview Daily News* newspaper acknowledged his activism and his role at the university, calling his white audience to be grateful for having him.³⁴³

In 1973, Llorens was killed in a tragic car accident in College County, Washington.³⁴⁴ His death came as a thunderbolt to *Ebony's* editors, who mourned for him in *Ebony* following his death, describing him as, 'a talented writer that could not be replaced.'³⁴⁵ To commemorate

³³⁹ Llorens to Fuller, 21 August 1971, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

³⁴⁰ Llorens to Fuller, 21 August 1971.

³⁴¹ Robert B. Heilman, 1 July 1971, box 22, folder 5, Fuller papers.

³⁴² Robert B. Heilman, 1 July 1971, box 22, folder 5; U.W prof Likens America to Nazi Germany, box 22, folder 5.

³⁴³ Ted M. Natt, 'Black Editor Speaks Out', *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p. 74.

³⁴⁴ 'David Llorens, 34, Writer and Editor', *The New York Times*, 2 December 1973, p.85.

³⁴⁵ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, February 1974, p.32.

him, a memorial scholarship fund was established at the University of Washington to aid disadvantaged black students at the department of English.³⁴⁶

Llorens played a vital role as an editor, journalist, activist, and a Black Power intellectual. His editorial peer Garland declared that Llorens was, ‘a very talented and dedicated young man’ whereas the popular black poet Haki R. Madhubuti admitted that when Llorens was establishing his career at the JPC, he served as ‘a major mentor’ to his own development as a popular black poet.³⁴⁷

While Llorens acted as a Black Power intellectual, A. Peter Bailey was often seen as “Malcolm X’s protégé”, describing Malcolm X as a master teacher who, ‘decisively changed our perception of the country and world in which we live in.’³⁴⁸ As such, and similar to Llorens, Bailey also adopted a tough tone inside and outside the magazine, often condemning the U.S government’s treatment of its black citizens and reminding his audience of the value of their liberation struggle. He declared that, ‘This country in its entire history has never given us anything, every bit of our progress was gotten as a result of serious struggle [...]’.³⁴⁹

In 1968, Bailey was promoted as an associate editor for *Ebony*, covering a wide range of topics but focusing more broadly on black arts, the black ghetto problems, and the black soldiers’ issues in the U.S armed forces. Black photojournalist Chester Higgins, Jr. admitted that Bailey was, ‘the most Afrocentric of all the editors’ due to his focus on studies of black

³⁴⁶ ‘Perspectives’, *Black World*, August 1974, pp.69-70.

³⁴⁷ Garland to Bill, July 7 1969, box 3, folder 26, Garland papers, SC 111, Archives of African American Music and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington; Haki R. Madhubuti, *John H. Johnson: Negotiating Breathing Space for Black Voices* (2014) <<https://www.chipublib.org/>> [accessed 11 January 2021].

³⁴⁸ A. Peter Bailey, Personal Reflection on Malcolm X: A Master Teacher, box 1, folder 9, A. Peter Bailey Collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

³⁴⁹ Malcolm X, a Master Teacher, A. Peter Bailey, box 1, folder 9, A. Peter Bailey collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

people of African descent and their shared traditions and values.³⁵⁰ This could be seen in his special articles that he ran for *Ebony*, such as the one published in 1969, which endorsed how black theatre and its revolutionary themes could mirror, foster, and contribute to the black liberation movement in the U.S and across the globe.³⁵¹ Black New York resident Henry L. Wilson declared that Bailey's article sought, 'to take revolution via the stage into the black neighbourhood.'³⁵²

The extent to which Bailey was motivated by the progress and the setbacks of the modern black liberation struggle was evident in his writings in *Ebony*. In June 1970, Bailey published an influential article in which he declared, quoting from Carmichael, that narcotic addiction was, 'a weapon used by oppressors [...] more drugs are flooded into our communities, and they are aimed for our youth, since they are the potential warriors of the Black Movement.' Though Bailey featured some anti-drugs groups and organisations such as Mothers against Drugs and their ambitions in fighting drugs traffickers and rehabilitating young blacks in New York, he nevertheless went on to declare that narcotic addiction was in itself, 'detrimental to the Black Movement.'³⁵³

On the other hand, Bailey's tone in *Ebony* seemed less militant compared to Llorens or to his writings for *The Backlash*. Yet, it also seemed, on other occasions, to liken or endorse Malcolm X's and Carmichael's approaches of self-help and mass community control. In one of his articles published in April 1968, Bailey discussed the New York-based National

³⁵⁰ Chester Higgins, Jr. (The HistoryMakers A2005.205), interviewed by Shawn Wilson, September 2, 2005, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 2, tape 8, story 1, Chester Higgins, Jr. recounts meeting his editor, Orde Coombs.

³⁵¹ A. Peter Bailey, Black Theatre, *Ebony*, August 1969, pp. 127-134.

³⁵² 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, October 1969, p.16.

³⁵³ 'Blacks Declare War on Dope', *Ebony*, June 1970, p. 33.

Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organisation (N.E.G.R.O) and its promising programs, which adopted and promoted funding programs on its own to improve the standard of living of the mass Black New Yorkers. In his article, Bailey endorsed his advocacy of the self-help program, emphasising that the latter was, 'a surer road to freedom.'³⁵⁴

In 1973, Bailey began to shift from discussing the developments or the milestones of the black liberation struggle to focus more broadly on writings on the black arts, black theatre, and the Black Cultural Nationalism, with articles which frequently appeared in the magazine's pages. This shift could probably be pursued because he felt that enough progress had been made ever since. In 1975, his interest in fostering and expanding black culture led him to resign from his position to join the Black Theatre Alliance (BTA), a non-profit organisation founded in June 1969 to develop, promote, and extend new theatre programs and activities across the U.S. (but he remained a contributor to *Ebony*).³⁵⁵ Bailey served as its associate director and the managing editor of its newsletter but was also involved in meetings and programmes where he commemorated and honoured Malcolm X.

These young editors and their influence on *Ebony*'s orientation were clearly visible. They contributed with many articles on issues such as the black social conditions, the black freedom movement, and the black soldiers' cause. It was no coincidence, however, that the death of Llorens and the resignation of Bailey (and later Garland) prompted coverage on Black Power in *Ebony* to dwindle in the early and mid-1970s.

³⁵⁴ Peter Bailey, 'N.E.G.R.O Charts New Path to Freedom', *Ebony*, April 1968, pp.49-56.

³⁵⁵ Program, Fourth Annual Black Theatre Awards, box 1, folder 4, A. Peter Bailey Collection.

Conclusion

In September 1972, the JPC corporation was relocated to another headquarters on Michigan Avenue in Chicago. The new building was more beautiful than the old one, with 11 floors of decorated private offices, work areas, and dining facilities.³⁵⁶ In its offices, the editors were allowed to hang on the walls whatever they preferred, with masks, abstract paintings, and art collections. While many chose paintings of art themes, Bennett chose paintings and collages with modern black liberation themes for his office.³⁵⁷ This selection demonstrates Bennett's long-standing commitment to the black liberation struggle, as was seen by many radical and mainstream white and black-owned magazines and newspapers. Similar to his peers, who pursued a radical and critical tone inside and outside the JPC, Bennett also had a great role in shifting *Ebony* towards a more critical and radical orientation.

This chapter has demonstrated two important points. First, *Ebony's* radical editors proved themselves to be more than editors but also activists as they participated in many social and Black Power forums and gatherings and often fought racism and injustice or delivered hard-hitting speeches outside the corporation. Second, and perhaps more importantly, these editors had a powerful position at the JPC. *Ebony's* publisher John Johnson was well-known for his strictness with his employees. During his tenure at the JPC, he fired several famous figures, including Ben Burns and Hoyt Fuller. Not to mention a slew of other employees who were fired for minor infractions such as tardiness or misbehaviour. Johnson himself admitted to being a harsh employer, justifying his actions by claiming that his policy was to push his staff to work hard to enhance their lives.³⁵⁸ Nonetheless, he tended to dismiss his left-wing editors' self-indulgence in their essays on Black Power and the modern radical activism in *Ebony*.

³⁵⁶ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, September 1972, p. 22; *Ebony Magazine's* New Home, *Ebony*, September 1972, p. 85.

³⁵⁷ *Ebony's* New Home, *Ebony*, p. 91.

³⁵⁸ John N. Ingham & Lynne B., Feldman, *Contemporary American Business Leaders*, pp. 376-377.

In fact, Johnson was astute in approving editors who transcended Carmichael's approaches as they did not advocate violence, but neither did they believe in turning the other cheek. Indeed, *Ebony's* editorial left-wing were all Black Power advocates. However, none of them was extremist or advocated violence as most of them seemed to align themselves with either Malcolm X's or Carmichael's programs, upon which (the programs) were indeed radical at the time but also seemed legitimate, acceptable, and viable. This also implies that there was a limit in *Ebony's* engagement with Black Power.

These young editorial militants and their advocacy and endorsement of Black Power made *Ebony* a proactive outlet committed to fostering Black Power and the modern black struggle. Yet, if these editors exerted a great impact on the JPC's magazines, then female editors such as Phyl Garland also emerged as a serious figure in endorsing, rectifying, and mainstreaming the popular image of black female activists and Black Power women such as Coretta Scott King, Gloria Richardson, and Angela Davis. Garland's contribution to *Ebony* and how she stood up for black female activists and Black Power women in *Ebony* had further prompted the magazine to act as a helm of Black Power, which also propelled the magazine to be targeted not only by the white-owned media but also by the FBI. In the next chapter, we shall discuss how Garland and *Ebony* responded to the black women activists, how they assertively defended and spoke up for their cause, and how they challenged the FBI and the national-oriented print media, which sought to discredit and demonise them.

Chapter 3: ‘They Are to Me Some of the Great Champions’: Ebony, Black Power Women, and the Black Female Activism in the Post-war Era

‘For the black women of my generation, Ebony was a big part of how we received a sense of limitless possibilities. It was a big part of how we got a sense...that we were queens’

Laura B. Randolph

In March 1975, *Ebony* featured a black woman named Charlene Crawford, a newly graduated student from University of Pittsburgh. Crawford contributed to *Ebony* with a strident statement which spoke out against the treatment of black women by their male counterparts. Crawford blamed black men for making black women, ‘the scapegoat of the revolution’ calling its male audience to fight by means of, ‘interpersonal relationship rather than male leadership’. Crawford noted that the idea that only black men can spearhead or achieve liberation was ‘ridiculous’ eloquently addressing her audience that, ‘[...] it’s not just the black man who needs to be free [...] Poverty is poverty, and the only way to eliminate it is to overcome it. It does not matter which sex does the overcoming [...]’.³⁵⁹

Crawford’s statement was a stark example of the black women’s frustration over their male counterparts. However, while *Ebony* gave Crawford a space to freely articulate her

³⁵⁹ Charlene Crawford, The Status of Black Women, Speaking out, *Ebony*, March 1975, p.26.

views, it appeared on other occasions contradictory. In February 1966, *Ebony* published a critical survey, which asked its readers if black women were getting beautiful.³⁶⁰ The survey was associated with pictures showing black women with lighter skin and hair straightened. The survey immediately stormed a wave of anger among its female readers as they felt that *Ebony* had downplayed the natural beauty of black women. They felt as if *Ebony* had asked its audience if black women were getting more beautiful by emulating white women. Some of them had declared that the survey was rather embarrassing and unreasonable.³⁶¹

Ebony's contradictory response concerning black women and their conditions in America was clearly attributed to the apparent discrepancy between Johnson's vision, his editorial left-wing's, and his readers'. Indeed, Johnson's view of black women's beauty as, 'dark-skinned whites' may have pushed *Ebony* to print such surveys.³⁶² Nonetheless, these misjudgements were often staved off as *Ebony's* editorial left-wing always remedied the latter by showing their tenacity to bolster the image and the activism of black women and often appeared assertive in defending their cause. They challenged the white mainstream media and even the FBI, which attempted to vilify popular Black Power women such as Angela Davis, often seeking to revitalise their image and showcase their activism. Such efforts were welcomed and even admired by Civil Rights and Black Power women such as Gloria Richardson, Coretta Scott King, and Davis herself.

Perhaps the most influential editor in endorsing the image of black women's activism and black female militants in *Ebony* was the female editor Phyl Garland, *Ebony's* contributing editor and later professor of Journalism at Columbia University. When *Ebony* decided to run

³⁶⁰ 'Are Negro Girls Getting Prettier?', *Ebony*, February 1966, p.25.

³⁶¹ 'Letters to the editors', April 1966, *Ebony*, pp. 18-20.

³⁶² Jason Chambers, 'Presenting the Black Middle Class', p. 66.

a special issue on black women in August 1966, Garland travelled to the Deep South, spending some time with famed female activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer and doing extensive research on their activism and their efforts at seeking election in government offices.³⁶³

It is worth noting that male editors at the JPC also paid tribute to black female activists. *Ebony*'s senior editor Bennett often endorsed black women and their efforts within the black community. This could be seen in his writings in *Ebony* on the black women, such as his 'The Negro Woman' article, published in September 1963, which championed black women as powerful and assertive black activists in the fight for freedom.³⁶⁴ In a public meeting held in Detroit in 1967, Bennett proudly spoke up for black women, noting that they were key to liberation, 'women should be in the forefront of the struggle', declared Bennett.³⁶⁵

Other editors, such as Charles L. Sanders, *Ebony*'s managing editor, also endorsed popular black female activists and Black Power women. He joined *Ebony* in 1963 to serve as its associate editor, Sanders soon became a prominent editor at the JPC due to his efforts in reporting and endorsing Dr. King's achievements. Sanders followed King during his crusade and had even accompanied him to Sweden in 1964 to cover his Nobel Peace Prize ceremony.³⁶⁶ It was probably due to this connection that Sanders decided to continue his coverage of Dr. King's family in the wake of his assassination. Indeed, Sanders continued reporting on Dr. King's family as he had the privilege to conduct probably the longest

³⁶³ 'Civil Rights and the Press Symposium Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act', , 24 April 2004; https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads2012/05/phyl_garland_transcript.pdf.

³⁶⁴ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'The Negro Woman', September 1963, *Ebony*, p. 86.

³⁶⁵ Jennifer Jarratt, 'Negro Women: Key to Freedom?', *Detroit Free Press*, 10 August 1967, p.1-C.

³⁶⁶ 'Charles L. Sanders, Magazine Editor, 58', *The New York Times*, 10 October 1990, p.B24; 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1990, p. 17.

interview with his widow, Coretta Scott King, in her husband's office in Atlanta.³⁶⁷ Sanders also endorsed the cause of Angela Davis, with an article that gained widespread acclaim among *Ebony*'s readers.³⁶⁸

This chapter explores *Ebony*'s assertiveness in bolstering and rehabilitating the image of Black Power women activists during the Civil Rights and Black Power era. It first situates black women within the longer trajectory of the black freedom struggle in America and shows how they expanded their fight by additionally using the black print media as a platform to fight discrimination, macho, and misogyny. The chapter then singles out *Ebony* and its female editor Phyl Garland and demonstrates how they challenged male chauvinism and popular white misogyny in the media by engendering beauty and activism as a means to revitalise the black women's popular image among its readership and within the American mainstream media. This chapter reveals that *Ebony*'s efforts were remarkable as they prompted many black Power women and black women activists to acclaim the magazine and admire its efforts in introducing black women as vital figures to the modern black activism in America.

Black Women, the Black Liberation Struggle, and the Popular American Print Media

While there were numerous studies on black women and their role in the modern black freedom struggle in America, the existing scholarship still overlooks many unsung black women activists. Scholarly works have focused more broadly on male leaders or activists by providing myriad accounts and biographies on their careers, their struggle, and their efforts in

³⁶⁷ 'Cover', *Ebony*, November 1970, p.4.

³⁶⁸ Charles L. Sanders, 'The Radicalization of Angela Davis', *Ebony*, July 1971; 'Letters to the editors', *Ebony*, October 1971, p.22.

bringing about freedom. Yet, they neglected many hidden black women activists who had long immersed themselves in the struggle.³⁶⁹

Coretta Scott, the widow of Dr. King, declared that many black women, ‘have been the backbone of the whole civil rights movement.’³⁷⁰ Indeed, these black women did not come out of nowhere, but were part of a longer trajectory of black female activism that began with the slavery era. During the Antebellum Era, black female activists such as Harriet Tubman played a crucial role in the fight for freedom. She rescued her parents and hundreds of black people from slavery by escorting them to freedom through a network of safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.³⁷¹ During the Civil War, she fought as a scout for the Union Army, with a rifle on her shoulder.³⁷²

Gender Studies scholar Vivian M. May contends that Tubman was, ‘a lone militant and martyr [...] not someone who worked within long-established networks of communication and resistance.’³⁷³ When she was smuggling enslaved people into the North, she often

³⁶⁹ For instance, Dr. King alone received countless biographies which focused on his career, his philosophy of non-violence and integration, and his personal life. *Let The Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Stephen B. Oates, *What Manner of Man* by Lerone Bennett Jr, and *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King Jr.* by Michael Eric Dyson, to name a few, have all provided detailed and comprehensive accounts on Dr. King. Even less popular black male activists such as Stokely Carmichael has received two detailed, hefty biographies.

³⁷⁰ Jeanne Theoharis, *I am not a symbol, I am an activist!: the untold story of Coretta Scott King* (2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

³⁷¹ Betty Debnam, 'Harriet Tubman', *The Post-Star*, 22 February 1999, p.B2.

³⁷² Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘The Negro Women’, *Ebony*, September 1963, p. 86.

³⁷³ Vivian M. May, 'Under-Theorized and Under-Taught: Re-examining Harriet Tubman’s Place in Women’s Studies', *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 12.02, (2014), pp.28-49 (p. 33), in <<https://www.researchgate.net/>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

threatened to shoot those who tried to go back. Slave owners were afraid of her, prompting them to put out a reward of up to \$40,000 for her capture.³⁷⁴

Likewise, her counterpart Sojourner Truth was also well-known for her activism during the Antebellum and the Civil War era. Truth was a typical example of early black militancy as she defied the segregation policy by filing lawsuits or quarrelling with streetcar conductors who intentionally refused to stop to her or to other black passengers.³⁷⁵ Moreover, she had even petitioned the government to resettle formerly enslaved blacks who had been repatriated to the West.³⁷⁶ In 1851 in Ohio, she delivered her famous 'Ain't I A Woman?' speech in which she bravely condemned the discriminatory practises imposed against black women.³⁷⁷ Her activism caught the attention of President Abraham Lincoln, who invited her to the white House in October 1864 where he commended her abolitionist and equal rights activism.³⁷⁸

This tradition of black female activism had expanded more broadly in the early twentieth century. Black women activists such as Ida Barnett and Mary Bethune served as precursors to the Civil Rights movement. They laid the groundwork for future Civil Rights activism as they organised rallies and demonstrations, lobbied the government for the elimination of some racial problems, and instigated campaigns against lynching, segregation, and racial discrimination.³⁷⁹ Dorothy I. Height, an early black female activist who fought against black

³⁷⁴ 'Freedom Fighter', *The Post-Star*, 22 February 1999, p.B2.

³⁷⁵ Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth, Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 210.

³⁷⁶ *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, ed. by George Stade (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005), p. 31 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 17 August 2021].

³⁷⁷ Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth, Slave, Prophet, Legend*, pp. 166-169.

³⁷⁸ *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, ed. by George Stade, p.11.

³⁷⁹ V. P. Franklin and Bettye Collier-Thomas, 'For the Race in General and Black Women in Particular The Civil Rights Activities of African American Women's Organizations, 1915-50', in *Sisters in the Struggle:*

women's oppression, declared that she served as an antecedent of the Civil Rights Movement as she joined the struggle for black liberation and also for women's liberation long before the 1963 March on Washington '[...] we were intimately involved', recalled Height.³⁸⁰

Other famous black female activists such as Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin were pioneers of the modern black struggle as they challenged the local laws by refusing to give up their seats whilst aboard the bus. In Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1955, Parks ignited an ordeal that would later spark a boycott movement in Montgomery by rejecting the bus driver's order to vacate a row of four seats in the coloured section in favour of a white passenger. Almost a year before, Colvin similarly protested, 'in the same city, in the same bus system, with very tough consequences, hauled off the bus, handcuffed, jailed and nobody really knew about it.'³⁸¹

Charlotta Bass, the black female educator and newspaper publisher-editor, could also be seen as a precursor to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement. She competed for vice president in 1952 and ran voter registration for Los Angeles black residents from her house. The same endeavours that Carmichael would pursue in the mid-1960 or by Bobby Seale in 1973.³⁸²

African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement, ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 22-38.

³⁸⁰ Dorothy I. Height, "'We Wanted the Voice of a Woman to Be Heard' Black Women and the 1963 March on Washington', in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 83-87.

³⁸¹ Margot Adler. *Before Rosa Parks, There Was Claudette Colvin*. (Minnesota Public Radio, 2009).

³⁸² Regina Freer, 'L.A. Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los Ang', *American Quarterly*, 56.3, (2004), pp.607-632 (p. 607), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 17 August 2021].

These black women's activists and many other hidden figures were central to the long fight for racial justice. Yet, as stated above, they received scant attention within the conventional (and understandably the current) scholarship compared to their male counterparts. It was probably due to this scholarly neglect that black women were, as was noted by Angela Y. Davis, the political activist and the veteran of the black freedom struggle, 'totally invisible, invisible in history [...]'.³⁸³

This apparent erasure was further compounded by a stereotypical depiction in the American print media. Most of them, mainly black women's militants, suffered from humiliation and negative images imposed by the popular white-owned media. The white-oriented media often served to misconceptualise, misrepresent, or otherwise misinterpret popular black female activists such as Gloria Richardson and Angela Davis.³⁸⁴

Black women also suffered from sexism and male chauvinism imposed by their male counterparts. While the black struggle was heading into a radical and militant orientation in the mid-1960s, black manhood, black masculinity, and black chauvinism also intensified, which pushed black women away.³⁸⁵ This could be seen in the SNCC, which tended to

³⁸³ Angela Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2012), p. 107 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 2 November 2020].

³⁸⁴ Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 163-164 in , <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 30 September 2020]; Caroline Emmons, 'Respectable Activists: Media Images of Women in the NAACP during the Early Civil Rights Era ', in *Women's Magazines in Print and New Media*, ed. by Noliwe M Rooks, Victoria Pass, and Ayana Weekley (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 46; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*(New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 222 in , <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 31 August 2021]; Mark Lawrence McPhaii, 'Race and Sex in Mack and White: Essence and Ideology in the Spike Lee Discourse', *The Howard Journal of Communication*, 07, (1996), pp.127-138 (p. 127), in <<https://www.academia.edu/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

³⁸⁵ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (: HarperCollins e-Books, 2014), pp. 312-320 in, <<https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 1 October 2020].

exclude women from formal leadership and assign them to office chores, which propelled only a handful of female members to manage to rotate in or out of the executive committee position.³⁸⁶

Some members of the Black Panther Party, such as Eldridge Cleaver distrusted black women, claiming that they allied with white men to fight black men and suggesting that their progress would, ‘undermine black liberation.’³⁸⁷ Coretta Scott herself encountered disrespect practised by black male activists at the SCLC in the wake of her husband’s murder. Condemning them in her writings, Scott asked her audience, ‘was that I appeared to them to be a strong woman, not one to be pushed aside.’³⁸⁸

Nonetheless, black women fought the media misconception and male chauvinism by using popular, regional, and even radical black-owned magazines and newspapers as platforms to counter their attacks and rectify their popular image. In fact, black women had engaged with the press to overturn popular images long before the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. In retrospect, Charlotta Bass began her career in journalism by taking over *California Eagle* newspaper in 1912 following the death of its founder, which made her probably the first black woman to own and operate one of Los Angeles’s first black newspapers.³⁸⁹ During her tenure as a publisher and an editor, Bass used the newspaper to

³⁸⁶ Carson, *In Struggle*, p. 147; Belinda Robnett, 'African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization', *American Journal of Sociology*, 101.06, (1996), 1661-1693 (pp. 1673-1674), in <<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/>> [accessed 17 August 2021].

³⁸⁷ Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 114.

³⁸⁸ Coretta Scott, *My Life, My Love, My Legacy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017), p. 213 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 4 November 2020].

³⁸⁹ Lynn D. Gordon, 'Education and the Professions ', in *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. by Nancy A. Hewitt (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 237, < <https://b-ok.cc/>> [Accessed 16 August 2021; Regina Freer, ' L.A. Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los

voice black Americans' cause and the fight against racial injustices being practised against black women. More often, Bass wrote articles which endorsed black women as, 'valiant soldiers in the fight for right'.³⁹⁰

Hidden black women's activists such as Grace Campbell and Hermina Dumont published articles which sought to eradicate black women's oppression in the 1920s.³⁹¹ Claudia Jones, a theorist and an activist, served as an associate editor for *The Weekly Review*, the Young Communist League's newspaper, running influential articles which addressed black women's concerns. In 1938, only a year after joining the newspaper, Jones became the official editor of the newspaper, pushing the outlet to serve as an organ for her thoughts, essays, and writings on black women and the black liberation struggle.³⁹²

The approach of using the media as a means to draw attention to the racial discrimination being practised against black women or their male counterparts continued to expand during the Civil Rights era. Coretta Scott King wrote dozens of articles for national newspapers (she was not a columnist) where she addressed the entrenched racism or spoke up for her husband's approaches of integration and non-violence.³⁹³ Other black female activists, such

Ang', *American Quarterly*, 56.3, (2004), pp.607-632 (p. 607), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 17 August 2021].

³⁹⁰ See for e.g: C.A.B, 'On the Sidewalk', *California Eagle*, 3 July 1931, p.1; C.A.B, 'On the Sidewalk', *California Eagle*, 4 April 1930, p.1.

³⁹¹ Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p. 5.

³⁹² Claudia Jones, 'Autobiographical History', in *Claudia Jones, Beyond Containment*, ed. by Carole Boyce Davies (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2011), p. 14; Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 75-77; Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, pp. 6-7.

³⁹³ Scott, *My Life*, p. 238; King, *Coretta Scott* () <<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/>> [accessed 5 November 2020].

as Alice Childress, was also well-known for her publications in the media. Childress contributed with articles which appeared in radical black periodicals such as *Freedom* and *Freedomways*, which discussed and addressed the cause of black women and the black liberation struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.³⁹⁴

Black women such as Hazel Garland (mother of Phyl Garland) also aspired to reflect the cause of black women via the print media. Her ambition to do so had led her to become ‘the first black woman to be appointed editor-in-chief in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the largest black owned newspapers which was run by the popular black columnist Evelyn Cunningham.³⁹⁵ At the periodical’s headquarters, Garland often sought to involve black women in media to make them more visible and get credit for their writings.³⁹⁶ Her daughter Phyl Garland, however, followed her mother’s footsteps by contributing to *The Pittsburgh Courier* and later to *Ebony*, committing herself to cover stories related to the black political thrust, the ghettos problems, and the Civil Rights Movement.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist, The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 134, 146-147; Framer, *Remaking Black Power*, pp. 11, 15.

³⁹⁵ 'Women in Journalism', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 13 June 1974, p.11; Pamela E. Walck and Emily Fitzgerald, 'Finding the “Cullud” Angle: Evelyn Cunningham, “The Women,” and Feminism on the Pages of the Pittsburgh Courier', *Journalism History*, 46.4, (2020), pp. 339-357 (p. 339), in <<https://www.tandfonline.com/>> [accessed 24 November 2022].

³⁹⁶ 'Women in Journalism', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

³⁹⁷ Phyl Garland to Mrs. Larry Judy Schmidt, June 26, 1969, box 3, folder 26, Phyl Garland Collection, SC 111, Archives of African American Music and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington; Garland had contributed to *Ebony* with original articles which focused on the Civil Rights Movement, see for example: Phyl Garland, 'Builders of the New South', *Ebony*, August 1966, pp. 27, 37; Phyl Garland, 'I've Been to the Mountaintop', *Ebony*, May 1968, pp.124-142; Phyl Garland, Coretta King, in her Husband’s Footsteps, *Ebony*, September 1968, pp. 154-162; Phyl Garland, 'King: from Montgomery to Memphis', *Ebony*, April 1970, pp.174-182.

During the rise of Black Power, black women also harnessed the black media to propagate their cause. In September 1966, black female activist and singer Abbey Lincoln contributed to *Negro Digest*, *Ebony*'s twin sister, with an influential article titled, 'Who will revere the black woman?' Lincoln vented at her male audience, chastising them for their mistreatment of their female counterparts, 'Play hide and seek as long as you can [...] but your every rejection and abandonment of us is only a sorry testament of how thoroughly and carefully you have been blinded and brainwashed'.³⁹⁸ An anonymous black woman also corresponded with the radical black magazine *Left Face*, attacking black male patriarchy and declaring that the black liberation movement would never be achieved if black women were pushed away. She noted, 'as long as men retreat into their phoney privileges and continue to oppress women, no one will be free'.³⁹⁹

While many black women were reaching out to the black media to voice their cause, others looked to restructure the black media to reflect better the black struggle and the cause of black women. In fact, many black women grew frustrated over glossy magazines such as *Ebony* for their problematic representation of black female beauty, which sometimes contradicted the rising tide of black womanhood and the Black is Beautiful movement. In February 1966, *Ebony* printed a survey which asked its audience if black women were getting more beautiful. The survey included pictures showing black women with light-skinned and hair straightened style.⁴⁰⁰

The survey was quickly condemned by *Ebony*'s audience, who perceived it as a serious journalistic blunder as it displayed apparent misogyny, and one which was, for the most part,

³⁹⁸ Abbey Lincoln, 'Who Will Revere the Black Woman', *Negro Digest*, September 1966, pp.16-20.

³⁹⁹ 'Sisters Unite!', *Left Face*, November 1969, p.10.

⁴⁰⁰ 'Are Negro Girls Getting Prettier?', *Ebony*, February 1966, p.25.

inopportune. Indeed, from its readers' perspectives, 1966 was a time of racial pride and black consciousness, the height of the cultural revolution, and the emergence of black empowerment. Black Americans were getting more militant, the self-defence and self-determination philosophies were expanding substantially, black women were beginning to appreciate their natural dark beauty, and black radicalism and nationalism approaches were the dominant call for many black activists across the States.

The rationale behind conducting such a survey was unknown but could most likely be pursued by Johnson, who sought to reproduce 'white middle-class inspirational vision for African Americans.'⁴⁰¹ In fact, Johnson was at times trying to do anything to keep his magazine's revenues afloat, probably even sacrificing black pride and dark skin beauty. He himself admitted that, 'I sold vitamins, wigs, dresses, and hair-care products. I sold anything that I could sell in order to get enough capital to keep *Ebony* going.'⁴⁰² Historian E. James West adds that *Ebony* featured light skinned black female models in its pages as a strategy to market forms of black female beauty and identity to African Americans and white advertisers.⁴⁰³

Regardless of who conducted the survey, the latter unleashed a wave of anger and frustration among its female readers, who questioned the real reasons behind conducting this survey while accusing Johnson and his magazine for, 'promoting black self-hatred or white standards of beauty.'⁴⁰⁴ Female readers insisted that black women were indeed (and authentically) beautiful and that it was needless for *Ebony* to conduct such a survey. Mrs. Irma Stevens described the survey as 'the most ridiculous article to date' while another reader

⁴⁰¹ Jason Chambers, *Presenting the Black Middle Class*, p. 77.

⁴⁰² Chambers, *Madison Avenue*, p. 42.

⁴⁰³ E. James West, *A House for the Struggle*, p. 96.

⁴⁰⁴ West, *A House for the Struggle*, p. 67.

accused *Ebony* of deliberately featuring, ‘half-white’ girls’ pictures on front-cover instead of black girls, disparagingly asking the magazine, ‘Are you ashamed of the Negro girl?’⁴⁰⁵ California resident Miss. Peggy Glenn appeared disappointed, informing *Ebony* that the survey embarrassed her. She wrote to *Ebony*, with a degree of confidence ‘Come to my high school and I’ll show you some girls to photograph [...]’.⁴⁰⁶ In general, the survey seemed to misjudge the social and cultural climate surrounding the black struggle, or the Black is Beautiful Movement, which in turn made *Ebony*’s black audience very angry at the magazine and its publisher.

The survey also angered black women outside the JPC. Shortly after the survey was published, a group of black women, calling themselves ‘Concerned Black Women’ picketed at the JPC, declaring that *Ebony* belittled black women’s beauty. The women, led by Evelyn Rodgers, an influential journalist, held placards which read, ‘Has *Ebony* murdered the Black women?’ The women chastised *Ebony*, declaring that the magazine was seeking to assimilate black women into the white mainstream life.⁴⁰⁷

It was not only black women that denounced *Ebony*. The black press, such as *The Liberator* magazine, also condemned *Ebony* for such an action, headlining, ‘Is *Ebony* killing Black women?’.⁴⁰⁸ However, in order to avoid further fierce denouncements, *Ebony* quickly announced on its cover the arrival of a feature on Afro hairstyle, admitting that the cover and

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, April 1966, pp. 14, 18.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, April 1966, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁰⁷ Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain’t I a Beauty Queen?: black women, beauty, and the politics of race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 137; Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect: Liberator Magazine and Black Activism in The 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 96 in, <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>> [accessed 14 October 2020].

⁴⁰⁸ Christopher Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, p. 96.

the feature were, 'representative of the growing number of Negro women who are rejecting Caucasian standards of beauty and fashion by wearing their hair in natural styles.'⁴⁰⁹

Almost immediately, *Ebony* ran its article, titled 'The Natural Look', which was printed by Phyl Garland and published in June 1966. The article endorsed the Afro hairstyle, an African look that black women sought to adopt.⁴¹⁰ Garland declared that the article laid real credibility in reference to black women.⁴¹¹ Indeed, the article was admired by black women's readers, with Mrs. Sidney A. Trower venerating the article while Sylvia Byrd calling other female readers to begin appreciating their natural attributes.⁴¹² Even at the JPC, the article had a demonstrable impact on the black female editors themselves, with Garland going natural herself, admitting that the latter had become, 'a symbol of race pride among black women from coast to coast.'⁴¹³

Though Garland's article was, as she put it, 'a big break', it is evident that *Ebony's* focus on the black natural beauty was stimulated, just like its story on Black Power and Carmichael, by both external and internal factors.⁴¹⁴ *Ebony* was sometimes pragmatic in responding to issues related to black Americans and at other times the trailblazer for change in views or perception of the cause of black America. Garland admitted that *Ebony* was sometimes changing its tone or focus to meet the social changes in black America, '*Ebony*

⁴⁰⁹ 'Cover', *Ebony*, June 1966, p.4; Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, p. 97.

⁴¹⁰ Phyl Garland, 'The Natural Look', *Ebony*, June 1966, pp. 134-148.

⁴¹¹ 'As a Role Model, Phyl Garland's a Natural', *Daily News*, 9 February 1988, p.23.

⁴¹² 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, August 1966, pp. 12,14.

⁴¹³ Phyl Garland to Mrs. Larry Judy Schmidt, June 26, 1969, box 3, folder 26, Phyl Garland Collection.

⁴¹⁴ Phyl Garland to Mrs. Larry Judy Schmidt, box 3, folder 26, Phyl Garland Collection.

will go as far the black people will go and will be forced to reckon with their demands', admitted Garland.⁴¹⁵

One of the dominant scholarly misconceptions about *Ebony* is that it was a strictly glossy magazine that catered more broadly to, 'a middle-class clientele and privileged, lighter-skinned African American women'.⁴¹⁶ In contrast to this approach, this chapter will demonstrate that *Ebony* played a crucial role in revitalising black female activism in terms of their roles, beauty, and contribution to the modern black liberation struggle. *Ebony* provided black women's activists such as Ruby Robinson and Angela Davis a platform to voice and promote their struggle for liberation. Moreover, its efforts challenged the major white and black outlets, which sought to vilify them. Such endeavours pushed these activists and others to applaud and appreciate *Ebony*'s efforts.

'Builders of a New South', *Ebony*, Black Power, and the Black Female Militants in Post-war America

Historian Megan E. Williams contends that *Ebony* portrayed black women as glamorous working women to inspire others to achieve high-paying and professional occupations.⁴¹⁷ *Ebony* was also a vehicle through which black female activism during the modern black liberation struggle was endorsed and bolstered. *Ebony* featured many articles, special features and special issues on black women activists in Post-war America. It lent space to black women activists and Black Power advocates to articulate their thoughts and defended and aligned itself with them on multiple occasions.

⁴¹⁵ Janet Chusmir, 'No Black Free Until All Free', *The Miami Herald*, 27 July 1971, p.41.

⁴¹⁶ Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, p. 96.

⁴¹⁷ Megan E. Williams, "'Meet the Real Lena Horne": Representations of Lena Horne in "Ebony" Magazine, 1945–1949', *Journal of American Studies*, 43.01, (2009), pp.117-130 (p. 121), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 5 December 2020].

The interaction between race and gender was clear in *Ebony*. In fact, there was a split at the JPC over *Ebony*'s response to black women. Some of them, such as Johnson and his wife Eunice Johnson, covered black beauty, cosmetic production, or black fashion. Johnson dedicated a whole section titled 'entertainment' where he featured and discussed famed and grassroots black women's lifestyle in relation to black fashion, cinema, music, and dance. In fact, Johnson capitalised on black beauty and fashion as he was aware that these appealed to black women. In 1946, he started a beauty company named Beauty Star which advertised hair-care products. This was later developed into a fashion fair named *Ebony* Fashion Fair, a year-round fashion event launched in 1958, which was marketing black women models and was repeated annually for five decades. The fair became a well-recognised event and could raise huge capital for Johnson.⁴¹⁸

Other editors at the JPC such as Phyl Garland endorsed black women's activism. Indeed, though she was a music expert while also featuring a section in *Ebony* about black singers and their latest recordings, Garland also featured and supported black women activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Ruby Doris Smith-Robinson, and Gloria Richardson. She wrote articles about them, researched their activism, and conducted interviews with them.⁴¹⁹ The white owned newspaper in New York *Daily News* declared that her contribution for *Ebony* was, 'largely responsible for changing the face of black female America.'⁴²⁰

As historian Rhonda Williams has argued, black women took on leadership positions during the Black Power Movement, ran community-based programs, contested misogyny,

⁴¹⁸ John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, pp. 184-185, 250-251; Christian, *Empire*, pp. 121-122.

⁴¹⁹ 'Civil Rights and the Press Symposium Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act', 24 April 2004, https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/phyl_garland_transcript.pdf.

⁴²⁰ 'As a Role Model, Phyl Garland's a Natural', *Daily News*, 9 February 1988, p.23.

and challenged male dominance in the fight for liberation.⁴²¹ In retrospect, black women such as Audley Moore and a host of other black women activists adopted the ethos of radicalism and militancy long before the popularisation of the concept itself in 1966 by Stokely Carmichael.⁴²²

Among the popular black women activists who could be perceived as precursors to Black Power was Gloria Richardson, the leader of the Cambridge Movement of 1964. Born in 1922 in Baltimore, Maryland, to a middle-class family, Richardson appeared as a hostile figure to the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement because of her rejection of nonviolence and her advocacy of radicalism and militancy.⁴²³ The shift from integration to militant direct action tactics could be attributed, in many respects, to her frustration at the long-standing ineffective black activism in Cambridge, which made the city one of the most segregated towns in America and one of the highest black unemployment rates.⁴²⁴

Richardson was an antagonistic figure to white Americans. In her manifesto, which appeared in the leftist black magazine *Freedomways* in early 1964, Richardson warned that if white leaders continued to mistreat black people or remained indifferent to their cause, ‘then all of us [...] will have to sacrifice and risk our personal lives and future in a nonviolent battle that could turn into a civil war’.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Rhonda Y. Williams, 'Black Women and Black Power', *OAH Magazine of History*, 22.03, (2008), pp.22-26 (p. 23), in <<https://watermark.silverchair.com/>> [accessed 30 October 2020].

⁴²² Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), pp. 13, 20.

⁴²³ Janet Dewart Bell, *Lightening the Fires of Freedom* (New York: New York Press, 2018), p. 169; *Gloria Richardson* () <<https://snccdigital.org/>> [accessed 8 November 2020].

⁴²⁴ Anita K. Foeman, 'Gloria Richardson: Breaking the Mold', *Journal of Black Studies*, 26.05, (1996), pp.604-615 (p. 606), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

⁴²⁵ Gloria Richardson, 'Focus on Cambridge', *Freedomways*, Winter 1964, p.36.

Historian Belinda Robnett notes that many black women were nominated as leaders but rarely accepted such titles as they preferred to stay behind the scenes.⁴²⁶ By contrast, Richardson positioned herself as a focal leader. In June 1962, Richardson became co-chair of the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC), a branch of the SNCC founded to support the sit-ins movement in Cambridge, Maryland. Richardson played a crucial role in expanding the organisation's goals, going beyond her initial aim of integrating public facilities and voting rights to address social issues such as housing, education, and employment. In 1964, the SNCC and its direct action appealed to Richardson, which prompted her to join the organisation, devoting her efforts to mobilise its members to wage demonstrations and sit-ins campaigns.⁴²⁷ SNCC itself admitted that, 'We can't deal with her; we can't deal without her'.⁴²⁸

Despite her prominent role in the movement, Richardson suffered from black male chauvinism. Some foremost leaders looked to cast her out from the struggle as they believed that her gender behaviour was inappropriate or because they felt she was usurping the male leadership. Her political stance prompted Dr. King to privately call into question her endeavours while the NAACP's branch in Cambridge distanced itself from her. At the local level, several protestors avoided working with her and claimed that her caustic, and sometimes erratic approach, would confuse the local black people. When Richardson was

⁴²⁶ Belinda Robnett, 'African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement', p. 1664.

⁴²⁷ Rhonda Y. Williams, 'Black Women, Urban Politics, and Engendering Black Power', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 82; Spencer, *Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle*, p. 93; Sandra Y Millner, 'Recasting Civil Rights Leadership Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Movement', *Journal of Black Studies*, 26.06, (1996), pp.668-687 (pp. 670-671), in <<https://journals.sagepub.com/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

⁴²⁸ *Gloria Richardson* () <<https://snccdigital.org/>> [accessed 8 November 2020].

speaking at a rally during the Cambridge movement, CORE members were shouting her down, calling her, ‘castrator.’⁴²⁹

Richardson often ignored how black leaders viewed her, ‘I didn’t think of what happened to me as sexist’ recalls Richardson.⁴³⁰ However, Richardson and other female activists also suffered from hate-mongering and sexist reports run by popular white-owned media. *Time* magazine declared that Richardson offered, ‘a strange brand of leadership’ due to her militant approach whereas *The Daily Times*, a white owned newspaper based in Maryland, cast Richardson as ‘a true segregationist’ because Richardson recruited two delinquents as assistants for her Non-Violent Action Committee, which the newspaper believed this would alienate the moderates.⁴³¹ The popular white-owned outlet *The Saturday Evening Post* used a statement provided by a black informant to run a hate-mongering article against her. The article saw her as a race-monger who aimed at starting a fight between whites and blacks.⁴³²

On the other hand, the black-owned magazines and newspapers applauded her activism and efforts in the fight for liberation. The popular black Chicagoan newspaper *Chicago Tribune* admired her bravado in defying the segregating policy in Cambridge despite the threat and the terror made by local whites and the national guard troops, hailing her as,

⁴²⁹ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter the Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (: HarperCollins e-Books, 2014), p. 313 in, <<https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 1 October 2020]; Anita K. Foeman, 'Gloria Richardson: Breaking the Mold', *Journal of Black Studies*, 26.05, (1996), pp.604-615 (pp. 610-612), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

⁴³⁰ Janet Dewart Bell, *Lighting the Fires of Freedom* (New York: The New York Press, 2018), p. 184.

⁴³¹ Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 174 in, <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>> [accessed 5 July 2022]; 'The True Segregationist ', *The Daily Times*, 22 June 1963, p.4; Liston, R. A. Who can we surrender to? *Saturday Evening Post*, 05 October 1963, pp. 78-80.

⁴³² Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 163-164, in , <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

‘a militant leader of the protesting negroes’.⁴³³ Other radical magazines such as *The Liberator* and *Freedomways* profiled her activism and even lent her space to articulate her concerns.⁴³⁴ *The Liberator* featured her on the front page following a community rally she led in November 1963, with a picture featuring her speaking at the podium with a degree of defiance and poise.⁴³⁵

Likewise, *Ebony* was also part of this trajectory, leading with positive news about Richardson.⁴³⁶ When Richardson was leading a demonstration in Cambridge in May 1964, *Ebony* printed an excellent profile on her, which endorsed her central role in the Cambridge Movement and her struggle for social change in the South.⁴³⁷ *Ebony* welcomed her uncompromising militant stance, introducing Richardson as, ‘a tigress in demonstrations’.⁴³⁸ This backdrop was applauded by *Ebony*’s readership, with New York resident Henry J. Fisher admiring her stand while Mississippi resident K.C. Morrison declaring that Richardson was, ‘the type of leadership we need [...]’.⁴³⁹

Though Richardson hailed from a middle-class family, the magazine rarely made references to her middle-class affiliation and instead focused on her leadership in the movement. The magazine used in its article striking nicknames such as “general Richardson” to invoke in its readership the sentiment that Richardson was a valuable figure who deserved

⁴³³ ‘Negroes Defy Troops’, *Chicago Tribune*, 16 July 1963, p.4.

⁴³⁴ Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, pp. 81-82; Gloria Richardson, ‘Focus on Cambridge’, *Freedomways*.

⁴³⁵ Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, pp. 81-82.

⁴³⁶ Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 181 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 10 November 2020].

⁴³⁷ ‘Gloria Richardson, Lady General of the Civil Rights’, *Ebony*, July 1964, pp.23-30.

⁴³⁸ ‘Gloria Richardson, Lady General of the Civil Rights’, p. 23.

⁴³⁹ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, September 1964, p.13.

to act as a movement leader.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, the magazine also used photographs to enhance her image as a movement director. The photographs showed her protesting, convening with governmental voices, and giving instructions to her male and female followers.⁴⁴¹ One photograph showed her meeting with Brigade General George C. Gelston, commander of the guardsmen occupying Cambridge.⁴⁴² The meeting was held in 1963 following a protest led by some local black people in Cambridge where they demanded equal access to public facilities.⁴⁴³ Gelston admitted that Richardson was ‘the only real leader in town.’⁴⁴⁴

However, other photographs were also provided to oppose the negative image that Richardson sustained when local black people resented her or sought to cast her out. In its article, *Ebony* provided an excellent portrait showing local black people in Harlem giving standing applause to Richardson when she appeared on a platform to speak.⁴⁴⁵ Such an effort was admired by conventional scholars, with historian Anita K. Foeman noting that *Ebony* provided these images, ‘[to] challenge the reader to reconcile any inconsistency that might be felt’.⁴⁴⁶

Richardson’s activism and her role in intensifying the black liberation struggle continued to be admired by *Ebony*. In February 1974, the magazine honoured her in a distinctive feature

⁴⁴⁰ ‘Gloria Richardson, Lady General of the Civil Rights’, pp. 23,24, 25, 28.

⁴⁴¹ ‘Gloria Richardson, pp. 24, 26, 30.

⁴⁴² ‘Gloria Richardson, Lady General of the Civil Rights’, p.23.

⁴⁴³ Gloria Richardson, p.23.

⁴⁴⁴ Gloria Richardson, p.23; Charles E. Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), p. 215 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 29 September 2020].

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Gloria Richardson’, p. 28.

⁴⁴⁶ Anita K. Foeman, ‘Gloria Richardson: Breaking the Mold’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 26.05, (1996), pp.604-615 (p. 611), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 30 September 2020].

and portraits which recalled her activism in the mid-1960s and harking back to her struggle for liberation in Maryland.⁴⁴⁷ Its reaction had paid off, with Richardson returning the favour to *Ebony*, thanking the magazine for such an acclaim, ‘My family and friends as well as I were very pleased with the article [...]’ said Richardson, ‘it certainly brought back many memories of the struggle which at a time we had hoped was nearing an end [...]’.⁴⁴⁸

Other black female militants were also offered a space to articulate their thoughts on the black struggle in *Ebony*. Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, a female activist and a black militant, was also featured by *Ebony*. Robinson was SNCC's executive secretary, well known for her participation in the Freedom Rides in 1961 in Birmingham. However, her demonstration in Atlanta within the same year and her outstanding courage in confronting white terror and resistance earned her the respect of the SNCC's branch in Atlanta, which offered her a position to work as its executive secretary. Robinson dedicated her time and efforts to administrating the office, holding meetings in the office, raising funds, and charting campaigns.⁴⁴⁹

Robinson was also a Black Power advocate. When Carmichael (the chief of SNCC) shouted Black Power in Greenwood in June 1966, Robinson attended the rally, raised her fist, and shouted back: ‘Black Power!’⁴⁵⁰ Likewise, when Black Power came to surface, Robinson began to rethink the integrationist approach, often calling into question its efficacy and

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Whatever happens to Gloria Richardson’, *Ebony*, February 1974, p. 138.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘Gloria Richardson’, Letters to the Editors, *Ebony*, May 1974, p.18.

⁴⁴⁹ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, 'Black Women and Black Power, The Case of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee', in *Sisters in the struggle: African American women in the Civil Rights-black Power Movement*, ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 199-203.

⁴⁵⁰ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, 'Black Women and Black Power', pp. 198-211.

pondering the idea of separatism, black consciousness, and self-identity. Carmichael declared that Robinson supported Black Power, '150 percent.'⁴⁵¹

Robinson received wide acclaim from the popular black-owned media compared to Richardson.⁴⁵² In June 1966, and at the time when Carmichael became officially the chief of SNCC, *Negro Digest* ran an editorial article which compared Robinson's bravado with Carmichael's. The article posed a picture of Carmichael next to Robinson's portrait, with a statement that read 'Carmichael and Mrs. Robinson form an aggressive triumvirate that will give SNCC, reportedly, more militant drive.'⁴⁵³ By contrast, the popular white-owned newspapers sometimes overshadowed her role in the movement. *The Washington Post* relied on a statement made by John Lewis, former chair of SNCC, to undermine her activism, informing its audience that Robinson had little influence on SNCC.⁴⁵⁴

Ebony also paid some interest to Robinson, conducting a revealing interview with her, which was held just two months after the rise of Black Power. Historian Cynthia Fleming described her interview with *Ebony* as, 'quite curious'.⁴⁵⁵ Though Robinson admired the black women's role in the movement, declaring that they were uniquely assertive, she went

⁴⁵¹ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, 'Black Women and Black Power', pp.205-206; However, despite sexism and chauvinism being practiced against Black female activists and Black women more generally, a few Black Power activists such as Carmichael admired and paid tribute to them. When his seminal book, titled *Black Power, the Politics of Liberation*, was out in 1967, Carmichael declared that the book was dedicated to, 'all the black mothers who have struggled through the centuries so that this generation could fight for black power'. His statement and many others would prompt us as historians to review and question the issue of sexism during Black Power and the important role of black female activism within the movement.

⁴⁵² This could probably be due to Robinson having worked or accepted to work within the rank and file, which could probably placate the popular Black media. Unlike Richardson, who sought a movement leadership, which fuelled the popular Black media to react sensitively and critically against her.

⁴⁵³ "Put Panther in U.S tank', Adam Urges New SNCC Leader', *Negro Digest*, 2 June 1966, pp.6-7.

⁴⁵⁴ Jack Nelson, 'Lewis Explains SNCC Ouster', *The Washington Post*, 1 August 1966, p.03.

⁴⁵⁵ Cynthia, 'Black Women and Black Power', p. 206.

on to suggest that black leadership should be taken on only by black men, claiming that black women would not soon be needed.⁴⁵⁶ Her shift in her perception of the black struggle could stem from her belief that the latter was a man's job. Yet, since black men were being harassed and victimised, she and her female counterparts had to, 'shoulder the whole burden.'⁴⁵⁷

Regardless of her statement, *Ebony* admired her role in the movement, describing Robinson as 'a tough mother' who was determined to accept the challenge of rebuilding the South.⁴⁵⁸ *Ebony* also recounted her efforts in the SNCC and during the sit-in movement, proudly describing her as a heroic activist who fought for black liberation since adolescence. *Ebony* noted how, 'she made idealistic commitments to herself which she has kept to this day, challenging the system in ways that are sometimes dramatic, but more often mundane [...]'.⁴⁵⁹

Ebony's renewed interest in black women activists and its attempt to popularise and mainstream their image was progressively expanding in its pages. In July 1966, the magazine sought to rectify its social misjudgement to prove to its audience that 'The Natural Look' article was not a one-time deal. As such, it announced the arrival of an entire special issue on black women, declaring that it was, 'another of *Ebony's* definitive probes into a subject of major interest and importance.'⁴⁶⁰ The magazine notified its readers that the issue would be

⁴⁵⁶ Cynthia, 'Black Women and Black Power', p. 206.

⁴⁵⁷ Cynthia, 'Black Women and Black Power', p. 206.

⁴⁵⁸ Phyl Garland, 'Builders of the New South', *Ebony*, August 1966, pp. 30, 36.

⁴⁵⁹ Garland, 'Black Women and Black Power', pp.36-37.

⁴⁶⁰ 'The Negro Woman', *Ebony*, July 1966, p. 9; Christopher Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, p. 97.

published in August 1966, catching their attention by informing them that, ‘you will read many articles in the next months, but you will never forget THE NEGRO WOMAN.’⁴⁶¹

‘The Negro Woman’ special issue was published as scheduled, bringing together the JPC’s male and female editorship to showcase black women’s roles in beauty, politics, medicine, and the arts.⁴⁶² Historian Eddie Chambers notes that the special issue was a typical work of *Ebony*, he added, ‘[...] it depicted a range of women who were proud, resilient and strong, and above all, resonated with humanity.’⁴⁶³ Johnson and his editorial staff were proud of their output, describing the issue ‘a project’ and confidently proclaiming that it was ‘the most exhaustive study ever to appear in a national magazine.’⁴⁶⁴

The special issue was also significant for another reason. It was intended to engender black men to rethink their female counterparts’ role. *Ebony* invited its male readers to read and ponder their thoughts on the contribution of black women.⁴⁶⁵ Shortly before the publication of the special issue, *Ebony* announced that it would discuss black women’s intellectual problems, their social and personal lives, their clash with white women, and their conflict with their black male counterparts.⁴⁶⁶

Garland was a pivotal contributor to the special issue, with a profile on Ruby Robinson and the Founder of the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) Fannie Lou Hamer. Her profile, built up from an intensive, well-researched study of black women in the Deep South, revealed

⁴⁶¹ ‘The Negro Woman’, *Ebony*, p.9

⁴⁶² ‘The Negro Woman’, Special Issue, *Ebony*, August 1966, pp. 27-154.

⁴⁶³ Eddie Chambers, () <<http://www.eddiechambers.com/>> [accessed 11 November 2020]. <http://www.eddiechambers.com/charles-white/ebony-negro-woman/>

⁴⁶⁴ ‘The Negro Woman’, *Ebony*, July 1966, p.09; Backstage, *Ebony*, August 1966, p.23.

⁴⁶⁵ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, July 1966, p. 20.

⁴⁶⁶ ‘The Negro Woman’, *Ebony*, p.9.

their central role in challenging threats and harassment in the Southern territories and how they took dynamic leadership in the struggle.⁴⁶⁷ Garland depicted Hammer and other popular female activists as ‘Builders of a New South’ as their activism was devoted to improving the social and economic conditions of the Southern dwellers by means of protests, demonstrations, and voter registration.⁴⁶⁸

However, Garland stated that black women protested and took on firm leadership in the movement not because they sought to take over male leadership but because black men would not advance the struggle without the help of black women, who would all together form a mutual alliance in favour of liberating their lives.⁴⁶⁹ This sentiment was shared by black female activists themselves, such as Carolyn Rivers who noted that, ‘if Negro men were able to assert themselves fully, they’d be willing to send all women back home.’⁴⁷⁰ *Ebony* backed up Garland’s statement with photographs which showed Hamer marching in the front line with Dr. King during the Meredith March and shouting with a degree of power and confidence.⁴⁷¹

‘The Negro Woman’ demonstrated the extent to which *Ebony* applauded the black women’s role in relation to black liberation. Grace Williams, a female reader and a Philadelphia resident, appreciated *Ebony* for its special issue, declaring that the latter

⁴⁶⁷ Phyl Garland, ‘Builders of a New South’, pp. 27-37; <https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/?civilrightsrecords=phyl-garland>; , ‘Civil Rights and the Press Symposium Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act’, , 24 April 2004; https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/phyl_garland_transcript.pdf

⁴⁶⁸ Phyl Garland, ‘Builders of a New South’; ‘Civil Rights and the Press Symposium Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act’, , 24 April 2004; https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/phyl_garland_transcript.pdf

⁴⁶⁹ Phyl Garland, ‘Builders of A New South’, p.37.

⁴⁷⁰ Garland, ‘Builders of A New South’, p. 37.

⁴⁷¹ Garland, ‘Builders of A New South’, p.29.

reflected directly and accurately the oppression she suffered.⁴⁷² Spence M. Bailey from Los Angeles described the special issue ‘top in journalistic excellence’ while her neighbour, Mrs. H.L. Mickens, thanked Johnson for his efforts in mirroring the black women’s vivid image, ‘I have always felt that the colored female was not as appreciated, understood, or respected as females of other races [...] you have changed my conception [...]’⁴⁷³

Johnson noted that ‘The Negro Woman’ was ‘a highly-praised’ special issue that could even change the women and the realities surrounding them.⁴⁷⁴ His statement was true as the special issue drew public acclaim from some pivotal figures, with New York governor and future vice president of the U.S Nelson A. Rockefeller, admiring the JPC’ staff for their issue. In a special letter sent to the JPC, Rockefeller congratulated *Ebony*, declaring that its issue gave a good insight into the problems which faced black women in America, admitting that *Ebony* was performing, ‘a valuable service to every Negro community in the country [...]’⁴⁷⁵

Despite its wide acclaim, some male readers were resentful of the issue. Texas reader and a newly divorced resident Kennard W. Reed Jr. condemned *Ebony* for its special issue and downplayed the efforts of black women, declaring that liberation should be achieved through the efforts of the male leaders only. Reed told *Ebony* that,

When the Negro woman realizes that real progress will come only when she decides to get in behind her Negro man, and not on top of him, freedom will come in a matter of years and not in hundreds of years.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, October 1966, p. 12.

⁴⁷³ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, October 1966, pp. 12, 18.

⁴⁷⁴ John H. Johnson, publisher statement, *Ebony*, August 1977, p.28.

⁴⁷⁵ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, November 1966, p.17.

⁴⁷⁶ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, October 1966, p. 14.

Despite such a critique, 'The Negro Woman' continued to receive wide acclaim from the readers who applauded the special issue and encouraged *Ebony* to continue its focus on black female activism. Indeed, with its distinctive special issue, *Ebony* looked to pay more attention to moderate female activists such as Coretta Scott King.

'In her Husband's Footstep': Ebony, Coretta Scott, and Black Female activism in the Post-assassination period

While *Ebony* focused on black female militants and sought to rehabilitate their image within the mainstream print media and in relation to its black male and female readers, it also had an eye-catching interest in forging an image of respectability among some popular female Civil Rights activists such as Coretta Scott King.

Coretta Scott was Dr. King's wife, born in Alabama in 1927 and graduated from Lincoln High school to enrol at Antioch College in Ohio, where she majored in education and music. After receiving a scholarship and enrolling at New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, she met her future husband, Martin Luther King. The two were married and moved to Montgomery, Alabama where Dr. King started his career as a pastor and later chief of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) while Mrs. King was an active partner in his Civil Rights works. Indeed, she helped her husband on multiple occasions, marching with him, speaking on his behalf, and even working closely with the SCLC.⁴⁷⁷

Ebony had a long history of supporting the King family, and Martin Luther King himself had worked with the magazine. As stated in chapter one, Dr. King was writing 'Advice for Living', a section which was published regularly between October 1957 and September 1958

⁴⁷⁷ Wermiel, Stephen J., and Robert E. Stein, 'Human Rights Hero-Coretta Scott King.', *Human Rights Journal*, 31.03, (2004), pp.1-26 (p. 25), in <<https://heinonline.org/>> [accessed 15 October 2020].

where Dr. King was committed to answering queries sent by black readers who asked about issues related to religion, sexuality, and race relations.

A few months after the cessation of 'Advice for Living' and Dr. King's decision to cut down on media commitments due to a murder attempt, *Ebony* turned to his wife, with an article which looked to revere her for her commitment to take a stand with her husband despite the threats and the terror they both sustained. In its article titled 'The Woman Behind Martin Luther King', *Ebony* declared that Scott's support of her husband was a stark example of how black women were concerned about the fight for liberation, as they too endured the pain and the threats with their husbands or loved ones for the freedom of black Americans.⁴⁷⁸

After the vicious murder of her husband in April 1968, Scott revealed her intention to continue his struggle, 'I would finish what Martin and the movement had started [...] I vowed that I would carry that dream forward.'⁴⁷⁹ In fact, Scott took part in her husband's struggle shortly before his death, supporting him during his sanitation campaign in Memphis by delivering press conferences on the freedom movement and on black women's issues on multiple occasions, 'I am not a ceremonial symbol' said Scott 'I am an activist [...] I was always there and involved.'⁴⁸⁰ A few months after her husband's murder, Scott also began leading her husband's struggle, opposing the Vietnam War and speaking up against the social issues facing black workers, despite having a family to raise as a now single woman.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ 'The Woman Behind Martin Luther King', *Ebony*, January 1959, pp.33-38.

⁴⁷⁹ Coretta Scott King, *My Life, My Love, My legacy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017), pp. 171,176 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 15 October 2020].

⁴⁸⁰ Jeanne Theoharis, *I am not a symbol, I am an activist': the untold story of Coretta Scott King* (2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

⁴⁸¹ Scot, *My Life*, pp. 181-182.

Perhaps the clearest example of Scott King's dedication to resume her husband's struggle could be seen in her vision to establish the Martin Luther King Jr. centre for Non-violent Social Change in Atlanta in June 1968. Scott declared that the site was founded to transmit and endorse King's fight for social change and to urge the community and economic development in Atlanta and worldwide.⁴⁸²

Scott also encouraged black women to join the movement not only to fight racism but also to challenge male chauvinism practised by men, both white and black. She affirmed that, 'Most thought that women should stay in the shadows; however, I felt that, as women, we had much to contribute'.⁴⁸³ Scott believed that she was not treated seriously during her husband's demonstrations, as journalist Jeanne Theoharis puts it, 'she was too often seen but not heard, admired but not considered [...]'.⁴⁸⁴ Scott declared that black women had to take a leading part in their husband's marches, protests, and demonstrations as long as they shared, 'the bitter experiences, the dangers, and the hardships'.⁴⁸⁵

Her persistence in reflecting on black women's role in social change pushed her to lead and participate in many demonstrations. On 27 April 1968, less than a month after her husband's death, Scott participated in a rally in New York where she called black women to

⁴⁸² Wermiel, Stephen J., and Robert E. Stein, 'Human Rights Hero-Coretta Scott King.', *Human Rights Journal*, 31.03, (2004), pp.1-26 (p. 25), in <<https://heinonline.org/>> [accessed 15 October 2020]; Scott, *My Life*, p. 210.

⁴⁸³ Scott, *My Life*, p. 195.

⁴⁸⁴ Jeanne Theoharis, *I am not a symbol, I am an activist!: the untold story of Coretta Scott King* (2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

⁴⁸⁵ Wermiel, Stephen J., and Robert E. Stein, p. 25; Coretta Scott King, *My Life*, p. 205.

fight for social change.⁴⁸⁶ *The Pittsburgh Press* wrote that Scott was a woman, ‘who wants to be powerful in her own right.’⁴⁸⁷

Her effort as a black female activist gained her wider admiration. In October 1969, Morehouse College in Atlanta honoured her for her perseverance in continuing Dr. King’s struggle and her fight against racism, poverty, and women’s issues. During her honorary convocation, Scott stressed her intent on continuing her husband’s struggle by fighting what her husband called, ‘the triple evils of society: poverty, racism, and war.’⁴⁸⁸ However, Scott also emphasised the use of the non-violent tactics to achieve liberation. She declared that non-violence was still a practical method, magnifying its effectiveness and demonstrating its potency over militant tactics, ‘Non-violence has proved it is still relevant [...] the most powerful weapon of all – non-violent confrontation’.⁴⁸⁹

Her dedication to carrying out the black liberation struggle by means of non-violent methods also gained her wider acclaim within the white mainstream media though Scott admitted that the media was showing mounting opposition to her and her husband.⁴⁹⁰ The media’s antagonism increased, in many ways, due to her husband’s metamorphosis into a radical figure in his final years when he opposed the U.S involvement in the Vietnam War and attempted to unify the Civil Rights leaders and the black militants into one camp.

⁴⁸⁶ Coretta Scott, *My Life*, p. 201.

⁴⁸⁷ Dinah Eng, ‘Coretta Scott Has Become a Force in Her Own Right’, *The Pittsburgh Press*, 4 March 1984, p.52.

⁴⁸⁸ King, Coretta Scott, an Address by Coretta Scott King, Special Convocation, Morehouse College, 1969, Bennett papers, box 2.

⁴⁸⁹ King, Coretta Scott, an Address by Coretta Scott King, Special Convocation, Morehouse College, 1969, Bennett papers, box 2, p. 17.

⁴⁹⁰ Scott, *My Life*, p. 175.

Yet, some popular white and black-owned outlets remained friendly with her. *The New York Times* cast Scott as ‘an undaunted widow’ who vowed to resume the struggle of her husband while the regional white-owned newspaper *Florida Today* perceived Scott as a woman, ‘married to a man and a cause’.⁴⁹¹ The Chicago black-owned newspaper *Chicago Tribune* lent her space to recount her first meeting with her husband while the New York white-owned outlet *Star Gazette* declared that Scott became ‘the social activist’ she always dreamed about.⁴⁹²

The black radical periodicals, however, drew a lukewarm response to her activism. Apart from *Freedomways*, which compared her prominent activism with Dick Gregory and Ralph Abernathy, other popular black leftist magazines such as *Liberation News Service* and *The Movement* had either paid little interest to her or doubted her efforts.⁴⁹³ When Ralph Abernathy announced his resignation as the head of the SCLC in 1973 on financial reasons, the radical black magazine *Berkeley Barb* noted that Scott might take the lead. However, it disclosed her unwillingness to finance the SCLC as well as her dissent with Abernathy, noting that Scott, ‘would cripple the political thrust of the SCLC.’⁴⁹⁴

Amidst all the favourable and unfavourable responses Scott gained from the major white and black print media, Scott privileged *Ebony* more than any other outlet. Scott revealed that she told *Ebony* things that she did not tell any other outlet such as her husband’s ephemeral

⁴⁹¹ 'Rights Leader's Undaunted Widow: Coretta Scott King', *The New York Times*, 9 April 1968, p.34; , 'Married to a Man and a Cause', *Florida Today*, 25 June 1972, p.2.

⁴⁹² Coretta Scott King, 'Mrs. King Tells how She Met Husband', *Chicago Tribune*, 5 April 1970, p.29; Naomi Rock, 'Coretta Scott King is Becoming the Social Activist She Always Wanted to Be', *Star-Gazette*, 19 December 1970, p.5.

⁴⁹³ William Loren Katz, 'The Afro-American's response to U.S Imperialism', *Freedomways*, 1971, p.58.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Ralph Abernathy Resigns, What Next for SCLC?', *Berkeley Barb*, 27 July-2 August 1973, pp.6-7.

depression and his accusation of tax evasion, ‘I’ve told them to you because I trust you [...]’ said Scott to *Ebony*.⁴⁹⁵

This close relationship grew even stronger in the wake of her husband’s murder. During her husband’s funeral, Scot prevented all the photographers from taking pictures of her deceased husband except *Ebony*’s photographer Moneta Sleet Jr., declaring that, ‘if *Ebony* can’t be here, you can’t be here’, referring to the other photographers.⁴⁹⁶ Scott invited Sleet to attend the funeral service to take pictures of her and her husband.⁴⁹⁷ A year later, Sleet won Pulitzer Prize for his poignant photograph of a mourning Scott at her husband’s death.⁴⁹⁸

In fact, *Ebony* looked to cement its relationship with her on multiple occasions. A few months after King’s murder, *Ebony* decided to run a story on Scott, giving the assignment to Phyl Garland who had just run a memorable story on her deceased husband.⁴⁹⁹ The assignment, however, was not easy as Garland was not permitted to conduct any interview with Scott following her husband’s murder.⁵⁰⁰ Yet, Garland was prepared to have her story ready for publication, with *Ebony* having announced in August 1968 to its audience that it would feature Scott in its next issue, informing them that Garland was knee-deep in working

⁴⁹⁵ ‘Cover’, *Ebony*, November 1970, p.4; Charles E. Saunders, ‘I’ve began to live again’, *Ebony*, November 1970, p.175.

⁴⁹⁶ John H. Johnson (The HistoryMakers A2004.231), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, November 11, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 7, story 1, John H. Johnson remembers photographer Moneta Sleet and Dr. King's funeral.

⁴⁹⁷ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *Key Images of American Life: Pulitzer Prize Winning Pictures* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2015), p. 158.

⁴⁹⁸ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *Key Images of American Life: Pulitzer Prize Winning Pictures* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2015), p. 158; Farhana Haider, *Moneta Sleet: The Great Black Photographer You've Never Heard of* (2019) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/>> [accessed 15 October 2020].

⁴⁹⁹ Phyl Garland, ‘I’ve Been to the Mountaintop’, *Ebony*, May 1968, pp.124-142.

⁵⁰⁰ Phyl Garland to Mrs. Larry Judy Schmidt, June 26, 1969, box 3, folder 26.

on her profile. In its announcement, *Ebony* hinted to its readers that the special, '[...] looks like another good one [...].'⁵⁰¹

As promised, *Ebony* introduced Scott's profile to its audience, illustrating and detailing her dedication to increasing black women's activism and her intent on fulfilling commitments that her husband did not live to meet. The profile, titled, 'Coretta King, in her Husband's Footstep', welcomed Scott's attempt to expand her husband's tactic of non-violence, noting that Scott should be cast as 'a leader of the movement' as she struggled alongside her husband and supported his cause on multiple occasions.⁵⁰²

Ebony also assessed her role in the black women's liberation movement, introducing Scott as, 'a supporter of woman power.'⁵⁰³ *Ebony* highlighted her importance to the black women liberation in creating, 'a solid bloc of woman power' which could address women's concerns and the crucial issues facing black Americans.⁵⁰⁴ This sentiment was also picked up by journalists such as Naomi Rock, who noted that while Scott did not see herself as the leader of the struggle, her fight for justice and equality was pushing black women, 'to assert themselves as new and powerful creative force for social change.'⁵⁰⁵

In 1970, *Ebony* expanded its relationship with Scott by conducting an intimate and revealing interview with her, probably the most extended interview that Scott granted to a national magazine. In fact, this was not the first time Scott granted an interview to *Ebony*. In 1956, and in the aftermath of the terrorist bombing of their house in Montgomery, Scott also

⁵⁰¹ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, August 1968, p.26.

⁵⁰² Phyl Garland, Coretta King, in her Husband's Footsteps, *Ebony*, September 1968, pp. 154-162.

⁵⁰³ Garland, Coretta King, p. 156.

⁵⁰⁴ Garland, Coretta King, p. 156.

⁵⁰⁵ Naomi Rock, 'Coretta King Thinks of Past, Future', *Marshfield News-Herald*, 31 December 1970, p.10.

granted an interview to *Ebony*'s senior editor Lerone Bennett. Bennett declared that he was impressed by Scott King.⁵⁰⁶

The interview, managed by *Ebony*'s managing editor Charles L. Sanders had been conducted in Martin Luther King's office in Atlanta, and it lasted for four days, in addition to several hours of telephone conversation.⁵⁰⁷ The interview, which appeared in the November 1970 issue, focused on Scot's personal life and her commitments to the King Memorial Centre in the post-assassination period. *Ebony* showed how Scott was revitalised after her husband's murder, dedicating her life to looking after her children and committing to commemorating her husband's struggle via memorial events and activities.⁵⁰⁸

While the special feature paid such a tribute to Scot, it also served another purpose. *Ebony* sought to glamorise Scot's popular image by focusing on her beauty and providing superb, shiny photographs showing her smiling, laughing, and spending time with her children. In other words, while *Ebony* perceived her as an activist in her own right, it was also keen to underscore her femininity, beauty, and maternal qualities, 'She is lively, really lovely', said *Ebony*, and at 43 looks extraordinarily young [...] very much aglow [...] and very much a woman.'⁵⁰⁹ Such an effort was reflected as its readers were very delighted to hear about Scott, with Indiana resident Simon Collins thanking *Ebony* for reassuring him that Scott was, 'at peace.'⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ Coretta Scott, Lerone Bennett, Box 2.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Cover', *Ebony*, November 1970, p.4.

⁵⁰⁸ Charles L. Sanders, 'Finally, I've begun to Live Again', *Ebony*, November 1970, pp. 173-182.

⁵⁰⁹ Charles L. Sanders, 'Finally, I've begun to Live Again', p. 173.

⁵¹⁰ 'Letters to the editors', *Ebony*, January 1971, p. 12.

Ebony's distinctive engagement and its close relationship with Scott were admired by the black owned outlets, such as *The Atlanta Voice*, which described *Ebony*'s response to Scott, 'a giant step' as *Ebony* spoke of her as 'the world's most admired woman [...]'. *The Atlanta Voice* had even invited its readers to read about the interviewer's story in *Ebony*, 'His interview report is out of this world and if you haven't read it, please do', said the newspaper.⁵¹¹

The JPC's editors also admired her role in the black liberation movement. Lerone Bennett was probably the most respectful JPC editor for Scott and her dedication to joining the black struggle. Bennett proudly spoke for Scott, showcasing her role during the movement, 'Coretta Scot King was one of those great black women', declared Bennett '[...] I was impressed repeatedly over the years, by her toughness and buoyancy of the spirit.'⁵¹² Scott had in turn returned the favour to *Ebony*, admiring the magazine and articulating her awareness of its role within the black struggle. She put,

Just the fact that there was now a first-rate magazine that spoke to our experience provided a sense of racial pride and accomplishment. *Ebony* represented to me a significant milestone in the growth of our self-awareness and identity as a people [...].⁵¹³

While *Ebony* bolstered the image of Scott and many other popular black women, it appeared on other occasions contradictory. In less than a year, and during the height of the Women's Liberation Movement in the early 1970s, *Ebony* stirred up a little storm among its female readers by dismissing black women's liberation as irrelevant to the Women's

⁵¹¹ Lillian B. Garnett, "'Ebony and Jet Magazines Honor Three', *The Atlanta Voice*, 29 November 1970, p.3.

⁵¹² Coretta Scott, Lerone Bennett, Box 2.

⁵¹³ Coretta Scott, from Marion, Ala., to the Mountaintop of the Dream, November 1995, p. 56.

Liberation Movement.⁵¹⁴ Responses were fierce, with Los Angeles Sharon Smith describing *Ebony* ‘a male-run magazine’ and noted that the magazine was against the whole women’s movement as its staff or any black men were afraid of female superiority.⁵¹⁵

To avert more sharp reactions, Johnson quickly announced the appointment of three black women employees as vice-presidents and councils of his company while another was promoted as his personal director. *Ebony* declared that the appointment of these black women was a landmark in his company’s progress, ‘[...] another milestone that should get more than the normal amount of attention from supporters of the Women’s Liberation movement.’⁵¹⁶ However, the appointment of new female employees coincided with *Ebony* focusing on Angela Davis’s trial, which became a cause celebre in the U.S and across the world.

‘Davis Belong to Ebony’

Ebony paid scant attention to black women revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s. A number of popular Black Power women such as Kathleen Cleaver and Elaine Brown scarcely appeared in its pages though their role in the BPP or during the Black Power Movement was quite remarkable. This could probably because Johnson was not in favour of black revolutionaries or the Black Panther Party. Nonetheless, *Ebony*’s focus on black women in the 1970s centred on Angela Davis, the political activist and the Black Power advocate, who gained rapt attention (nationally and internationally) due to her advocacy of Communism and her alleged involvement in a murder conspiracy.

Like Scott, Davis was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She participated in demonstrations when she was a teenager but spent most of her time at home, taking piano

⁵¹⁴ Helen H. King, ‘The Black Woman and the Women Liberation’, *Ebony*, March 1971, p. 76.

⁵¹⁵ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, May 1971, p.22.

⁵¹⁶ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, March 1972, p. 28.

lessons or reading books.⁵¹⁷ In 1959, Davis moved to New York to attend Elizabeth Irwin High School, where she joined a communist group known as the Che-Lumumba Club. Her affiliation with the club pushed her to develop a Marxist political outlook. In her autobiography, Davis revealed that she privileged Socialism over Capitalism because she felt that the former could effectively bring about a utopian society where anyone could receive material and spiritual aid in accordance with his needs and in exchange for what he gives to the society.⁵¹⁸

Davis flew to France, where she majored in French literature and then moved to Germany to study philosophy.⁵¹⁹ Upon her return to the U.S, Davis was offered a position at the University of California in Los Angeles, where she taught philosophy but was soon dismissed due to her ties with the Communist Party though she was not officially a member (she would later be reinstated through court proceedings).⁵²⁰

In fact, Davis's case was not new. Long before her, black figures such as Paul Robeson, the popular bass baritone concert artist and stage and film actor, was also labelled a communist in 1949, resulting in him being banned from travelling or even performing concerts.⁵²¹ More tellingly, the late 1950s and early 1960s was a tumultuous era as it saw the rising tide of Communism and the increasing tension between the U.S and the Soviet Union,

⁵¹⁷ Jules Loh, 'The Radicalization of Angela Davis', *The Boston Globe*, 23 October 1970, p.2.

⁵¹⁸ Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis, An Autobiography* (London: The Women's Press, 1988), pp. 109-111.

⁵¹⁹ Davis, *Angela Davis*, pp. 125, 135-138; Jules Loh, 'the Radicalization of Angela Davis', *The Boston Globe*, 23 October 1970, p.2.

⁵²⁰ Jules Loh, 'Giving Her Life to the Struggle', *Springfield Leader and Press*, 28 October 1970, p.22; Wolfgang Saxon, 'Jerry Pacht, 75, Retired Judge Who Served on Screening Panel', *The New York Times*, 14 April 1997, p.9.

⁵²¹ Kenneth Mostern & Timothy Brennan, *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in Twentieth-Century America*.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 174 in, <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

which led to shifts between cautious cooperation and often bitter rivalry during the post-war era. Therefore, while the U.S was concerned about the spread of communism, coupled with a likelihood of massive black revolts, Davis was conceived as, ‘a key fear of right-thinking Americans.’⁵²²

Davis also stressed the role of black women in the black liberation struggle. She emphasised that no black man can be free unless, ‘the Black woman can liberate herself from all the muck – and it works the other way around.’⁵²³ Like her black women peers, Davis also fought black male chauvinism and patriarchy. In her autobiography, Davis argued that patriarchy and black manhood was, ‘an unfortunate syndrome among black male activists’ as the male peers saw black womanhood or their attainment of leadership as a threat to their manhood.⁵²⁴ Questioning the masculinist perceptions of black America in her writings, Davis addressed her male comrades by posing a rhetorical question, ‘Why is it not obvious that any successful effort to save black men is destined to fail if it relies on the subjugation of black women?’⁵²⁵

Davis was also a Black Power advocate. Recalling her meeting with Carmichael and Michael X in London in 1967, Davis was astonished by Carmichael’s confidence, admitting that she felt, ‘the cathartic power of his speech’. In her autobiography, Davis noted that she aligned herself with Carmichael, accompanying him to his meetings and helping him to

⁵²² Kenneth Mostern & Timothy Brennan, *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics*, p. 174.

⁵²³ Kimberly Nichele Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva: Women's Subjectivity and the Decolonizing Text* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 133 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 15 November 2020].

⁵²⁴ Davis, *An Autobiography*, p.161.

⁵²⁵ Angela Y. Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2012), p. 23 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 14 November 2020].

organise gatherings.⁵²⁶ Her advocacy of Black Power pushed her to join the BPP, attending their meetings and forging friendships with some of its members. Davis admitted that the BPP's approach for liberation was far more sophisticated and more satisfying than what she thought before.⁵²⁷

From a different standpoint, Davis asserted that her involvement in the struggle was to reinforce the black liberation movement, declaring that, 'I needed to redirect my energy and use them to give my man strength and inspiration so that he might more effectively contribute his talents to the struggle for black liberation.'⁵²⁸ As such, her vision of a utopian society, serious affiliation with communism, and advocacy of Black Power thrust her into a glare of national media attention.

While Davis was a role model for many black Americans, especially black women; a negative media portrayal tainted her image. Journalists such as Nelson George contend that Davis's images were ubiquitous in the media, 'Whether in journalistic photos, respectful drawings or disrespectful caricatures.'⁵²⁹ The white mainstream media, such as *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine, racialised her as a black militant to reinforce the traditional sexist-racist tropes of black women as, 'emotionally unstable, sexual sirens.'⁵³⁰ Davis was aware of the media's deception of her image, declaring that, 'The media did not confine their misrepresentations to continual allegations of my culpability. They misconstrued my present

⁵²⁶ Angela Davis, *An Autobiography*, pp. 149-150.

⁵²⁷ Davis, *An Autobiography*, pp.160-164.

⁵²⁸ Davis, *An Autobiography*, p. 161.

⁵²⁹ Nelson George, *Angela Davis* (2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/>> [accessed 19 November 2020].

⁵³⁰ Meredith L. Roman, "'Armed and Dangerous": The Criminalization of Angela Davis and the Cold War Myth of America's Innocence', *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 08.01, (2020), 87-111 (pp. 89-90), in <*project_muse*> [accessed 7 November 2020].

condition [...].⁵³¹ When *Life* magazine ran a profile on her following her disappearance on a murder conspiracy, Davis charged the magazine as an FBI vehicle as the outlet printed, along with its article, wanted posters similar to the posters that the FBI exhibited.⁵³²

The FBI sought Davis following her alleged involvement in a conspiracy to free black inmates. She was charged with supplying a gun to Jonathan Jackson, a young black man who burst into the Marin County courtroom in New York in August 1970 in the hopes of freeing three black convicts and claiming hostages to exchange for his brother, who was also incarcerated in San Quentin prison. Jackson, Superior Court Judge Harold Haley, and two other inmates were killed in an ensuing shootout with police.⁵³³

Davis was convicted as an accomplice as the guns used during the attempted escape were registered in her name, not to mention that she was a close friend to George. Davis was consequently accused of murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. Lest she would be arrested, Davis abruptly dropped out of sight, placing her name on the FBI's ten most wanted list.⁵³⁴ In less than two months, Davis was apprehended by FBI agents in New York, accompanied by a friend named David Poindexter, who was suspected of harbouring Davis.⁵³⁵ She was then

⁵³¹ Michael Myerson, 'Angela Davis in Prison', *Ramparts*, February 1971, p.23; Kimberly Nichele Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva*, p. 128.

⁵³² Kimberly Nichele Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva*, p. 128.

⁵³³ Earl Caldwell, 'Angela Davis Is Moved Secretly, Flown to Coast in Military Plane: Angela Davis Is Flown to the West Coast', *New York Times*, 23 December 1970, p.1.

⁵³⁴ 'Angela Davis Placed on FBI's List', *Asbury Park Press*, 19 August 1970, p.2.

⁵³⁵ Davis, an Autobiography, pp. 13.-16; Richard Dougherty, 'Angela Davis Arrested in N.Y', *The Miami Herald*, 14 October 1970, p.115.

extradited from New York to Marin County Jail near San Francisco and kept in custody awaiting trial.⁵³⁶

Her trial and incarceration became a cause celebre in the early 1970s, and a mass movement was launched by blacks, liberals, and other leftist groups to reinforce Davis's freedom.⁵³⁷ The Communist Party also organised a major political campaign and rallied in the U.S and abroad. Flyers, pamphlets, and posters were all designed for her release.⁵³⁸ Popular figures such as Muhammed Ali and Julian Bond, black state representative of Georgia, also sympathised with Davis by urging a massive rally in support of her freedom.⁵³⁹

The radical black print media also played a crucial role in reinforcing Davis freedom through propaganda and petitions. In late 1971, *Freedomways*'s editors declared that Davis was innocent and told its readers that her incarceration was in itself a conspiracy to suppress her.⁵⁴⁰ Likewise, the leftist magazine *Berkeley Barb* deliberately featured Charles Garry, Huey Newton's lawyer, who sympathised with Davis, by using his declaration that, 'This was the first reaction of many people to the news that Hoover's gestapigs had kidnapped Davis.'⁵⁴¹ *The Short Times* castigated those who called for executing her, while *Left Face* urged its readers to sign a petition for Davis's release, informing them that it was their

⁵³⁶ Earl Caldwell, 'Angela Davis is Moved Secretly, Flown to Coast in Military Plane: Angela Davis Is Flown to the West Coast', *New York Times*, p.1.

⁵³⁷ Massive Mobilisation urged for Angela Davis, *Jet*, 26 Nov 1970, p. 5.

⁵³⁸ Ben Marks, *Trailing Angela Davis, from FBI Flyers to 'Radical Chic' Art* (2013) <<https://www.collectorsweekly.com/>> [accessed 3 December 2020].

⁵³⁹ 'The Red Line', *The Reporter-Times*, 28 January 1971, p.7.

⁵⁴⁰ The Editors, 'Free Angela Davis!', *Freedomways*, 11.02, (1971), pp.131-230 (p. 139), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 28 October 2020].

⁵⁴¹ 'Free Angela!!!', *Berkeley Barb*, October 1970, p.3.

responsibility to reinforce her freedom, '[...] we have to support Angela, and we will. She's working for the people on the bottom, just as we are', declared the magazine.⁵⁴²

However, the mainstream and the popular white-owned newspapers and magazines acted as 'pessimists', foreboding or warning that Davis would face a death penalty. As soon as FBI agents caught her in October 1970, *The Washington Post* quickly headlined, 'The Angela Davis tragedy'. The article seemed to grieve over her cause as it asserted that her radical activism and her significant contribution to the national political debates were the key motives that alienated her.⁵⁴³ The Indiana based and the white owned newspaper *The Reporter Times* reassured its audience that Davis was massively supported by blacks, liberals, and even Soviet scientists. Nonetheless, it went on to hint that Davis could have no chance in her trial. The newspaper deliberately used a statement said by Floyd Mckissick, director of CORE, who noted that, 'There is no way for Miss Davis to get a fair trial in the United States.'⁵⁴⁴

If the mainstream media probed Davis's release, then anonymous people were equally determined to push Davis to face a death penalty. They sought to counter the movement set for Davis by seeking to demonise her or provoke hostility between her and the major leaders of the black liberation movement. Indeed, fabricated and divisive letters were being sent to the BPP's offices and leaders to accuse Huey Newton that he was, 'the fingerman' in her arrest. The letters sometimes appeared to be written by black people or members of the BPP. But in many ways, the letters were undoubtedly written by FBI agents as part of the FBI's program, COINTELPRO, which was designed to discredit, provoke, disrupt, and neutralise

⁵⁴² 'Why Free Angela', *The Short Times*, 28 February 1971, p.3; 'Free Angela ', *Left Face*, 1 February 1971, p.9.

⁵⁴³ 'The Angela Davis Tragedy', *The New York Times*, 16 October 1970, p.34.

⁵⁴⁴ 'The Red Line', *The Reporter-Times*, 28 January 1971, p.7.

the BPP.⁵⁴⁵ Since Davis was quite close to the BPP, the letters were intended to cause hostility between her and the BPP.

Surprisingly, the FBI agents targeted *Ebony* as well, probably because they felt that *Ebony* would stand for her cause or because *Ebony* was too supportive of the black liberation struggle and Black Power women. Almost immediately, *Ebony* received a fictitious letter, supposedly written by a black man, which stated that Newton informed on Davis. The anonymous writer implicitly informed the magazine that, 'I tell you that Sister Davis would still be free if her capture was left to the federal pigs alone [...] it was not that way at all [...] put into an eager black hand which in turn twisted the knife of treachery in our Sister's back.'⁵⁴⁶

Ebony never disclosed the letter story (the letter itself did not come to light until 1977).⁵⁴⁷ Yet, *Ebony* seemed to challenge the FBI by joining the radical black magazines, the liberals, and other leftist groups which called for Davis' freedom. Indeed, *Ebony* appeared serious and assertive in aligning itself with Davis's cause, with its female editor Phyl Garland standing up for her, angrily declaring that, '[...] What's happening to her is wrong, it's happening to her because she's black.'⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. by David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pp. 348-350 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 29 October 2020]; 'Hoover Tried to Discredit Blacks?', *The Times*, 20 October 1980, p.5.

⁵⁴⁶ *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. by David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 350 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 29 October 2020]; "Dear Huey...Love, J. Edgar Hoover", *The Guardian*, 7 November 1977, p.5.

⁵⁴⁷ The letter was known to public in 1977, in the same year Newton returned to the US after having spent some time in exile. Some lawyers who acted for Newton's case made the letter publicly known.

⁵⁴⁸ Janet Chusmir, 'No Black Free Until All Free', *The Miami Herald*, 27 July 1971, p.41.

Ebony's wholehearted support for Davis and its defiance of the FBI could be perceived in the magazine having published a letter that Davis wrote while in jail. *Ebony* never divulged how it procured the letter, but Johnson proudly declared that he could successfully feature Davis when she was jailed, for the letter was probably not published by any other outlet except *Ebony* as the magazine declared that it was an exclusive one.⁵⁴⁹

In her letter, Davis negated Capitalism, castigating it as a self-destructive force and urging black people to unite to fight its tentacles such as the court system and the prison repression.⁵⁵⁰ However, *Ebony* placed a somewhat bio poster in its issue, which showed her picture, read her date and place of birth, and briefly summarised her career history as well as her political affiliations. The poster was very similar to the warrant poster that the FBI exhibited when Davis dropped out of sight, which could also be perceived as a challenge to the FBI's phoney letter, which targeted the magazine.⁵⁵¹

Gender studies scholar Kimberly Nichele Brown admitted that *Ebony* laid, 'an avid support of Davis.'⁵⁵² Indeed, when *Ebony* began to align itself with Davis's cause, it deliberately compared the blatant racism in Birmingham, where she was born and grew with the oppression that Algerian people endured during the colonial era. Such a comparison was pursued to justify that Davis's suffering during her childhood and her political activism forced her to embrace communism and socialism as "a saviour" from oppression and a means to fully achieve liberation for black Americans.⁵⁵³ More tellingly, when *Ebony* published her

⁵⁴⁹ Walter Morrison, 'Ebony's Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History', *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975, p.19.

⁵⁵⁰ Angela Davis, Rhetoric vs reality, *Ebony*, July 1971, pp.115-120.

⁵⁵¹ Charles L. Sanders, 'The Radicalization of Angela Davis', *Ebony*, July 1971, p. 114.

⁵⁵² Kimberly Nichele Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva*, p.123.

⁵⁵³ Charles L. Sanders, 'The Radicalization of Angela Davis', p.114.

letter in July 1971, it dared many of its moderate readers by deliberately retaining sections where Davis confessed that she was a communist. One of the passages, for instance, read as follows: ‘Yes, I am a communist [...] I am a communist because I am convinced that the centuries old sufferings of black people cannot be alleviated through the current social arrangement.’⁵⁵⁴

Furthermore, the magazine also sought to raise funds in support of her cause. In February 1972, Robert A. Reed, a regular reader from Maryland, corresponded with *Ebony* by asking the magazine to share, if possible, an address where funds could be sent. The magazine quickly responded, with one of its editors, who did not reveal his name, publishing an address and asking the readers to contribute if possible.⁵⁵⁵

After sixteen months of imprisonment, Davis was freed on bail and lived in an undisclosed residence in San Jose in Northern California. Under bail, Davis was prohibited from traveling outside San Francisco without court permission. She was also forbidden to travel by plane, to meet, or attend public rallies without permission.⁵⁵⁶

At the JPC, many of *Ebony*’s readers, such as Dewitt Porter and John L. Lee, commended *Ebony* for its focus on Davis and asked the magazine to keep the readers attuned to her case.⁵⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, *Ebony* responded to its readership by tracking Davis’s release on bail, with a special feature titled, ‘A New Look at Angela Davis’.⁵⁵⁸ In its article, *Ebony* opened its profile with a glossy photograph showing Davis frowning. The photograph was

⁵⁵⁴ Davis, ‘Rhetoric vs Reality’, pp. 114-115.

⁵⁵⁵ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, February 1972, p.26.

⁵⁵⁶ ‘Angela Davis Freed on Bail’, *The Washington Post*, 24 February 1972, p.1.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, October 1971, p.22.

⁵⁵⁸ Robert A. DeLeon, ‘A New Look at Angela Davis’, *Ebony*, April 1972, pp.53-60.

followed by a statement which focused on her life in the post-incarceration period. The statement depicted Davis as, ‘a striking woman who was admired by blacks throughout the country for her physical beauty as well as her astonishing intellect.’⁵⁵⁹

Ebony’s article could also be interpreted from a different angle. Via its article, *Ebony* sought to acquit Davis by revealing to its audience that she bought the guns not to supply them to Jonathan but rather to protect herself from the threat calls that she received.⁵⁶⁰ Similarly, *Ebony* also sought to mainstream her image by informing its audience that Davis was not only an activist, ‘like it or not, Angela Davis is still an academician who finds it difficult to relate to the masses of people [...] She is a Communist, and finally, she is a theoretician [...].’⁵⁶¹

In June 1972, Davis was acquitted of all charges as witnesses testified before the court committee that Davis did not plot the escaped murder.⁵⁶² Her acquittal drew national attention and many people, especially black Americans, rejoiced when they heard about Davis’s release. Davis described this as a victory and after her release, she toured America to thank those who stood up for her and raised money to pay her lawyers.⁵⁶³

Ebony’s focus on Davis was timely for two reasons. First, it could be seen as a way to “stave off” black women’s criticism on its survey on black beauty or its article on the role of black women in the struggle. Second, *Ebony* bravely contested the mainstream press and the U.S leaders such as President Richard Nixon who sought to depoliticise Davis as a violent

⁵⁵⁹ Robert A. DeLeon, ‘A New Look at Angela Davis’, p. 53.

⁵⁶⁰ DeLeon, ‘A New Look at Angela Davis’, p. 55.

⁵⁶¹ DeLeon, ‘A New Look at Angela Davis’, p.60.

⁵⁶² Edith Lederer, 'Angela Davis Acquitted', *The Journal News*, 5 June 1972, p.1.

⁵⁶³ 'Angela Davis Tour', *The Washington Post*, 11 June 1972, p.23.

criminal, if not a terrorist.⁵⁶⁴ Missouri resident Warrant Burnett declared that *Ebony's* authentic portrayal of Davis should help people to, 'gain a better understanding for what of her fight for: the underprivileged and the oppressed.'⁵⁶⁵

Kimberly Nichele Brown assessed how *Ebony* introduced Davis as an increasingly revolutionary figure to conjure up an image that revolutionary ideals were expected and almost inevitable.⁵⁶⁶ Conversely, *Ebony* introduced Davis as an outspoken advocate for the oppressed black people, regardless of her gender. *Ebony's* reader Easling acknowledged that *Ebony*, '[...] made an outstanding contribution toward providing America with an understanding of Angela as a brilliant and courageous human being, dedicated to the struggle for a better life for all people.'⁵⁶⁷

Ebony's response to Davis was distinctive. Conventional media scholars such as Rita J. Simon and Norma Pecora admitted that among the major American magazines which foregrounded Davis's cause, '*Ebony* gave Angela Davis the most coverage. Right or wrong [...]', they even went on to declare that, 'Davis belong to *Ebony* and it was happy to claim her'.⁵⁶⁸ Davis herself was aware of *Ebony's* assertiveness in reviving and enhancing the image of black Americans and black women in the U.S. In her autobiography, Davis noted that, 'Throughout those years, I learned something about every black person "respectable"

⁵⁶⁴ Meredith L. Roman, "'Armed and Dangerous'", p.89.

⁵⁶⁵ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, October 1971, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁶ Kimberly Nichele Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva*, p. 129.

⁵⁶⁷ 'Letters to the editors', *Ebony*, October 1971, p.22.

⁵⁶⁸ Rita J. Simon and Norma Pecora, 'Coverage of the Davis, Harris, and Hearst Trials by Major American Magazines', *Studies in Communications*, 3, (1983), pp.111-134 (p. 126), in <<http://cds.bl.uk/>> [accessed 8 November 2020].

enough to be allotted a place in the history books — or [...] into "Who's Who in Negro America" or [in] *Ebony* magazine'.⁵⁶⁹

Ebony's focus on Davis and other popular Black Power women was impressive. It proved that *Ebony* also championed black women and bolstered their image and activism, regardless of their political, racial, and social affiliations. In its 'The Negro Woman' special issue, Johnson himself admitted that black women and their efforts and contribution to the black struggle should deserve the highest commendation. He declared that, 'the Negro woman is the most fascinating in the world today [...], she is a cab driver, civil rights worker, maid, teacher [...] you name it and she is it [...] it makes her all one woman and it makes her all woman.'⁵⁷⁰

Conclusion

A few years after the release of Angela Davis, and in response to widespread readers' demands, *Ebony* decided to run a second instalment on 'The Negro Woman' special issue. The issue, published in August 1977 and titled 'The Black Woman', came as a celebration and a tribute to all the unsung and nameless black women who stood at the centre of the black struggle for equality and justice.

Ebony's focus on black women demonstrates two focal points. First, gender roles in *Ebony* were progressive as it expanded from a limited focus on a few black women activists such as Gloria Richardson to involve special issues and interviews. Second, and perhaps more importantly, *Ebony* fused activism with beauty as a means to revitalise black women activists' popular image (which could also be connected to its glamorous stories and glossy

⁵⁶⁹ Angela Davies, *An Autobiography*, p. 91.

⁵⁷⁰ John H. Johnson, Publisher's Statement, *Ebony*, August 1966, p. 25.

pages), which was often misconceptualised, if not undermined, by the mainstream media, the elite, and even the major leaders of the black liberation struggle.

Although *Ebony* sparked off a debate around black aesthetics and the black women's role in the black liberation struggle and was often accused of overlooking their image, it staved off the latter by showing its tenacity in defending and championing their cause. It is true that *Ebony* was reactive or pragmatic in its response to the latter, but the magazine was also exceptional when responding to the black women's cause. Black male readers themselves, such as Warren Burnett, admitted that *Ebony*'s efforts in endorsing and bolstering the image of black women in America prompted the magazine to fulfil its role as, 'a messenger for black people.'⁵⁷¹

Ebony's strong response to Black Power women and their fight for liberation was also passionate. Its female editor Phyl Garland recalled when she listened to the story of Hamer and other black female activists in 1966 in Ruleville, Mississippi, she admired their contribution to the struggle for justice and equality, 'They are, to me, some of the great champions' admitted Garland, 'Yes, I loved the leaders, and I loved Martin Luther King. But they also helped to make it possible.'⁵⁷²

In addition to all its positive reactions and tremendous support of their cause and activism, *Ebony* hoped for 'a bright future' for black women. In August 1966, *Ebony* published in its *Photo-editorial* section a statement which reassured its audience that, 'the Negro woman is here to stay and she should make every effort now to ensure herself of a better life in the future.'⁵⁷³ However, just as *Ebony* hoped for a better life for black women, it was

⁵⁷¹ 'Letters to the editors, *Ebony*, October 1971, p.23.

⁵⁷² 'Civil Rights and the Press Symposium Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act', 24 April 2004; https://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/phyl_garland_transcript.pdf

⁵⁷³ 'Photo-editorial', *Ebony*, August 1966, p. 150.

disconcerted by massive black revolts, which intensified in the summer of 1966. *Ebony* turned from hoping for a bright future into fearing for “a dark decade” as the perpetual urban rebellions alerted the nation of prolonged racial turmoil that would devastate the whole black communities. Its growing concern, however, prompted John H. Johnson and his editors to intervene, committing themselves to bringing about a set of social resolutions to head off the revolts. Their concern also forced them to turn the magazine into a more serious, critical, and radical outlet which spoke against the revolts, urging its audience to embrace radical methods to reform their lives and blaming the U.S government for the outbreak of the mass rebellions. In the next chapter, we shall examine how *Ebony* critically engaged with the black rebellion and how it shifted towards embracing the ethos of Black Power as an alternative method to bring about a radical change to black America.

Chapter 4: *'To Face the Battle Ahead!': The Black* Revolt and the Search for a Social Resolution: 1966-1970

'Ebony, to its great credit, is more than doing its part. It is leading'

George Bush

The insight and the financial success of Carmichael's profile prompted Johnson to expand his magazine's focus by injecting special features and issues which looked to represent the black struggle. Indeed, in August 1967, *Ebony* ran an article titled 'Negro Youth in America', a special issue which addressed the black youth and the hurdles they faced in the ghettos during the black revolts.⁵⁷⁴ In fact, 'Negro Youth in America' had coincided with Johnson and his editorial staff having attained a circulation of a million readers. The celebration, held amidst national turmoil, prompted Johnson and his editors to describe October as a month of bright weather but also of hopeful expectations. As a publisher who undoubtedly sought to profit from the black struggle, Johnson and his editors declared that, 'We've made it [...] but why should we stop dreaming? [...] Wonder how long it will take to reach two million?'⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁴ Both Black Youth and the Black Revolt terms were used by *Ebony* for the purpose of its own study of the latter, and they are expanded upon in this chapter. The Black youth, according to *Ebony*, were young Black Americans who aged 25 and below and who either took part or sparked off the riots across the U.S in the late 1960s. See, 'Negro Youth in America', *Ebony*, August 1967, p.21. The Black Revolts, however, were mass uprisings, both peaceful and violent, made by distressed young Black people who protested against the U.S government which neglected or deprived them of their rights for jobs, education, or housing.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, October 1967, p. 26.

The special issue was unique as many black and white outlets, including *McCall*, a popular white-owned magazine located in New York, commended the special issue's intellectual cachet, declaring that it was, 'a brilliant example of writing and editing at its very best – penetrating, significant, and timely'.⁵⁷⁶ The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, an 11-member commission established by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the 1967 riots, also acknowledged the special issue as it approached *Ebony* to request some of its copies, claiming that the latter could be used as a reference for their studies on the riots, their causes, and their impact on the black and white communities. Johnson and his editors were ecstatic about how 'very effective' their special edition and their magazine had become.⁵⁷⁷

Building on Korey Bowers Brown's thesis, which argued that *Ebony* reflected the growing sentiment of impatience among the rioters, this chapter adds that *Ebony* also stepped in with a set of social resolutions to suppress the uprisings, which was culminated in a special issue that critically examined black youth and their motivations for inciting the riots.⁵⁷⁸ This chapter also demonstrates that *Ebony's* intervention in the black revolts had paid off as popular white and black-oriented media admired its vital role, whereas Lyndon B. Johnson's administration asked the magazine and its editor Bennett to cooperate with its governmental voices to quell the revolts. However, with the slow progress of the black liberation struggle in the late 1960s and *Ebony's* resentment over the social issues which were still impinging upon black Americans, the magazine metamorphosed into a radical magazine, embracing the black radicals' approaches of self-help and self-determination and calling its audience to emulate his programs to transform their social conditions.

⁵⁷⁶ See, 'Negro Youth in America', *Ebony*, August 1967; 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, November 1967, p.22.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, March 1968, p.26.

⁵⁷⁸ Brown, *Souled Out*, pp. 134-142.

The Rise of the Black Revolt

The Black Power Movement emerged in late 1966 as a radical twin of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, which created public dissension among its major leaders.⁵⁷⁹ In fact, the advocates of each movement were at loggerheads with each other, with the Civil Rights leader Dr. King asserting that the struggle should be achieved by non-violent and integrationist tactics while Carmichael emphasising that liberation could only be brought about through autonomy, self-help, and self-determination.⁵⁸⁰

King's and Carmichael's growing disagreements led to a rupture in the mainstream of the black liberation struggle. In July 1966, CORE declared that it would metamorphose from a Civil Rights party into a Black Power organisation.⁵⁸¹ Within the same month, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP noticed CORE's shift into an entire Black Power organisation and declared, during the NAACP's annual convention, that he and the NAACP would oppose Black Power. He claimed that the latter was, 'a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan'. Wilkins later noted in NAACP's magazine *The Crisis* that the NAACP would completely repudiate Black Power, 'No matter how endlessly, the term "black power" means "anti-white power" [...] said Wilkins 'in a racially pluralistic society, the concept, [...] means opposition to other ethnic powers [...] We of the NAACP we will have none of this [...]'.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2006), pp. 136-138; Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Civitas Books, 2016), pp. 152-153.

⁵⁸⁰ Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, p. 143; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p.90.

⁵⁸¹ Charles Jones, *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, ed. by Ollie Johnson & Karin Stanford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 87; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power, Radical Politics and African American Identity*, p. 62.

⁵⁸² Roy Wilkins, Whiter "Black Power", *The Crisis*, Aug-Sep 1966, p. 354; Simon Hall, 'The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966–1969', *The Historian*, 69.1, (2007), pp.49-82 (p. 58), in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 15 April 2019].

Wilkins's and the NAACP's rejection of Black Power was followed by an agreement between the leaders of the Civil Rights movement, such as Dr. King and the executive director of National Urban League (NUL) Whitney Young, who signed a statement named 'the Crisis and Commitment'. This statement publicly declared their rejection of Black Power and called for integration and non-violence as the only tactics to achieve freedom.⁵⁸³

While the black liberation movement was at a cross-roads, more Black Power entities emerged, which led the black freedom movement into different trajectories. In late 1966, two Louisianan African Americans and Meredith Collegian students, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, met in Oakland to found the Black Panther Party (BPP), a radical and revolutionary Black Power organisation. Upon its foundation, the party implemented, 'the decidedly violent and deadly wrath of all levels of government', taking its responsibility for the survival and the advancement of black America and challenging, 'the white monopoly on violence in black communities.'⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, the Black Panthers took on a commitment as the vanguard of the people by fighting police brutality in Oakland and engaging in social and political activities across the U.S and abroad. However, the BPP's growth attracted the FBI's attention, which alerted the nation to a long-standing racial animosity between whites and their black counterparts.⁵⁸⁵

The rupture in the mainstream of the modern black liberation movement was combined with mass black revolts. James Baldwin predicted that the rebellion would, 'spread to every metropolitan center in the nation which has a significant Negro population'.⁵⁸⁶ In fact, 1967

⁵⁸³ "Crisis and Commitment", *The New York Times*, 15 October 1966, p.206.

⁵⁸⁴ Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, p. 20.

⁵⁸⁵ See for example: Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr, *Black against Empire*; Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall*; Robin C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come, Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁵⁸⁶ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 90.

saw the worst black rebellions in the twentieth century. There were around 200 riots in major cities like Detroit and Newark, hundreds of buildings were burnt to the ground, and there were over 100 deaths, mostly of black people, and almost \$80 million worth of property was damaged.⁵⁸⁷

Many reasons contributed to the outbreak of the riots, whether directly or indirectly. Dr. King blamed the United States Congress for inciting the riots by failing to adopt social programmes such as job programmes or by implementing “economic cuts” in specific black neighbourhoods.⁵⁸⁸ However, for many black Americans, the majority of riots began as a result of residential segregation and employment discrimination in urban areas.⁵⁸⁹ The failures of the Civil Rights Movement, according to historian Peter B. Levy, may have contributed to the outbreak of race riots in the 1960s, as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did not fundamentally, ‘signify the fulfilment of the black freedom struggle’.⁵⁹⁰

Fears of the black uprising spreading prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to appoint an 11-member panel, led by Illinois governor Otto Kerner, to investigate the 1967 riots. The committee, known as the 'National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,' issued a

⁵⁸⁷ 'The Riots: How Much Fire, How Much Smoke?', *Detroit Free Press*, 24 July 1977, p.1F; Jess Engebretson and Matthew Green, *Riots in Detroit and Newark 50 Years Ago* (2017) <<https://www.kqed.org/>> [accessed 5 September 2021].

⁵⁸⁸ King/SCLC, Bennett papers, box 2, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

⁵⁸⁹ Susan Olzak et al, 'Poverty, Segregation, and Race Riots: 1960 to 1993', *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996), pp. 590-613; Susan Olzak, Suzanne Shanahan, 'Deprivation and Race Riots: An Extension of Spilerman's Analysis', *Social Forces* 74 (1996), pp. 931-961.

⁵⁹⁰ Peter B. Levy, *The Great Uprising Race Riots in Urban America during the 1960s* (Pennsylvania: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 2.

detailed study (known as the Kerner report) outlining the reasons, repercussions, and potential remedies to the riots.⁵⁹¹

The report also suggested that the BPP and other violent groups may have sparked the riots inadvertently. While it clearly stated that no organization or group had planned for the eruption of the riots, it suggested that the BPP and their violent or revolutionary stance, their intent on improving the social conditions, and their influence over young black males had indirectly inflamed them, which could probably spark off the riots. The report stated,

Militant organizations, local and national, and individual agitators, who repeatedly forecast and called for violence, were active in the spring and summer of 1967. We believe that they sought to encourage violence, and that they helped to create an atmosphere that contributed to the outbreak of disorder.⁵⁹²

However, most of the report stated that police practises, unemployment, and slum conditions were the leading causes of the riots. Despite suggesting various remedies to stop the riots, the panel expressed its concern about racial division, ‘This is our basic conclusion: our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal’, said the panel.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ *The Civil Rights Movement in America: From Black Nationalism to the Women's Political Council*, ed. by Peter B. Levy (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2015), 188; Rick Loessberg, ‘Two Societies: The Writing of the Summary of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders’, *Journal of Urban History* 44 (2017), pp.1039-1061 (p. 1039).

⁵⁹² The National Criminal Justice Reference Service, p. 5.

⁵⁹³ *The Civil Rights Movement in America: From Black Nationalism to the Women's Political Council*, ed. by Peter B. Levy (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2015), p. 188; Rick Loessberg, ‘Two Societies: The Writing of the Summary of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders’, *Journal of Urban History* 44 (2017), 1039-1061 (p. 1039).

The civil unrest was also causing anxiety among the white print media. *The New York Times*, a widely circulated white daily newspaper, was concerned that the riots might result in a national backlash against white-black relations.⁵⁹⁴ *The Crisis* magazine, on the other hand, bemoaned the riots' intensity and longed for a successful conclusion, whereas *The Tribune*, a Pennsylvanian daily newspaper, described the riots as the most devastating domestic crisis since the Civil War and demanded an immediate halt to the violence.⁵⁹⁵

From a different perspective, other popular white-owned newspapers and magazines directed their attention to the connection between Black Power and the black revolts, pointing out that the wave of the riots that rippled throughout America was reflection of Black Power. *The Washington Post* blamed Carmichael and Rap Brown, Carmichael's successor as the chairmanship of the SNCC, for their intention to boil up the black rebellion.⁵⁹⁶ *Time* magazine, however, declared that the emergence of Black Power had led to the eruption of the riots while *The Detroit Free Press*, a Detroit-based newspaper, linked the spark of the riots to the ideology of black militancy, viewing the latter as a destructive phenomenon that did contribute to, 'feed the fires'.⁵⁹⁷

The Detroit riot was arguably the most tragic racial uprising in 1967. Looting, vandalism, and ransacking ravaged the city, turning it into a war zone. The police and fire departments were dispatched, but they were unable to contain the situation. As a result, Governor George

⁵⁹⁴ See for example, *The Backlash: After Progress and Riots Protest at the Polls*, [New York, N.Y] 02 Oct 1966, p. 203.

⁵⁹⁵ The Editorial, 'The Grim Hot Summer of 1967', *The Crisis*, Aug-Sep 1967, pp.334-335., 'Congressional Investigation of Racial Riot is Proposed', *The Tribune*, 26 July 1967, p.2.

⁵⁹⁶ See for e.g., 'Carmichael, Brown Show at Columbia: Carmichael, Brown Invade Columbia, Back Protesters', *The Washington Post*, 27 April 1968, 01; William S. White, 'Long Hot Summer...: Repeated Cliche Seen as Blackmail', *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1967, p.17; 'U.S. Probing Carmichael's Role in Riot', *The Washington Post*, 12 April 1968, p.1.

⁵⁹⁷ Races: The Jungle and the City, *Time*, July 29, 1966, p. 11; 'As we see it, Collision of Subtle Forces Contributed to City's Riots', *Detroit Free Press*, 28 July 1967, p.6.

Romney of Detroit was compelled to bring in approximately 7,000 National Guard and U.S Army forces, who patrolled the city with tanks and armoured vehicles in order to disperse the rioters.⁵⁹⁸

The Washington Post noted that the Detroit riot led to the highest level of anxiety and dissatisfaction among African Americans. The newspaper noted in one of its statements that the Detroit riot started for a simple reason, ‘A bottle was thrown at police officers, and just like that, Detroit exploded’.⁵⁹⁹ The riot in Detroit was reported by *The New York Times* as the worst civil strife in recent times, with approximately 1,400 buildings damaged, over 7,200 people detained, 43 people killed, 1,189 injured, and property damage estimated at \$50 million.⁶⁰⁰

“Put Yourself in My Place”: Ebony and the Black Revolt

Amid a national upheaval, Johnson and his editors decided to interfere to help end the rioting. They suggested providing a set of social resolutions to their black and white readers. These social resolutions were offered to reduce racial tensions while also addressing social issues that black Americans faced, such as ghetto conditions, poverty, unemployment, educational deprivation, poor criminal justice system, and homelessness. By introducing a set of social resolutions, John. H Johnson and his editors were convinced that they would be able to improve race relations and thus, put an end to the revolts.

Yet, they were also worried that the revolts which erupted in many cities in 1966 and 1967 would expand to other regions. ‘Today the Pot is Boiling Over’, feared Johnson and his editors. Johnson and his editorial staff were anxious that the riots might signal “the beginning

⁵⁹⁸ ‘Detroit Armed Camp’, *The Windsor Star*, 24 July 1967, p.1.

⁵⁹⁹ DeNeen L. Brown, “In Detroit, ‘the rage of oppression.’ For five days in 1967, riots consumed a city” (2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Sheriff Tells of Cost’, *The New York Times*, 16 August 1967, 27; DeNeen L. Brown, *In Detroit*; Kenneth T. Walsh, ‘50 Years After Race Riots, Issues Remain the Same’.

of revolt” which would prompt black people to seek liberation through means other than integration.⁶⁰¹

In fact, *Ebony*'s involvement in the uprisings was nothing new. At the end of 1966, *Ebony* printed an article which stated that programs such as slum clearance, neighbourhood restoration, education, and job opportunities should all be introduced, enhanced, and supported by the federal government without regard for partisan politics. Similarly, it also noted that black people and Civil Rights organisations should be accountable for establishing these programmes by organising groups and having meetings to research and address these racial issues.⁶⁰²

In another issue published in the same year, *Ebony* sought to encourage its audience to quell the revolts by offering testimonies of some black residents who played a crucial role in heading off violence. In an article titled 'Parents for Peace', *Ebony* recounted the story of San Francisco resident Ted Patrick, who worked with the black and white youth in sabotaging the riots and street violence in Los Angeles through negotiation and round-table meetings.⁶⁰³

Despite such efforts, some white-oriented newspapers such as *Florida Today* doubted *Ebony*'s effectiveness, noting that the magazine was merely, 'a popularizer of ideas rather than an innovator.'⁶⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Johnson underscored that his magazine was also a critical outlet as it also sought to address the social issues facing black Americans, 'its mission' declared Johnson, 'was not to constantly remind blacks on discrimination, but rather, "to tell them how to overcome it"'.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ 'How Long, Oh Lord, How Long?', *Ebony*, September 1967, p.106.

⁶⁰² 'Request for a Riot Cure', *Ebony*, December 1966, p.144.

⁶⁰³ 'Parents for Peace', *Ebony*, October 1966, pp.72-76.

⁶⁰⁴ 'Ebony', *Florida Today*, 01 December 1968, p.4E; Walter Goodman, 'Ebony, Biggest Negro Magazine', *Dissent*, 15.01, (1968), p. 405.

⁶⁰⁵ E.R. Sheep, '40 Years of *Ebony*', *Detroit Free Press*, 11 December 1985, p. 19A.

In the context of the growing racial unrest which threatened the nation in 1966, Johnson and his editors were pushed to intervene. In a special feature published in December 1966, they announced to their audience that, ‘The Time Has Come, when something must be done about the “things” that causes senseless, violent, damaging riots’.⁶⁰⁶ As such, and as part of its mission to resolve the racial issues, *Ebony* began to use its Photo-editorial section, a space where the editors (and occasionally the publisher) expressed their thoughts on major milestones of the black social and political progress, to critically engage with more complex issues related to racism, race relations, black political progress, and the struggle for black liberation.

In fact, *Ebony's* Photo-editorial section reflected, for the most part, the magazine's apparent shift in tone, with messages directed at white America. ‘Put Yourself in My Place’, a statement published in October 1966, was probably one of the more vehement editorial statements printed by the magazine. The statement invited white readers to imagine themselves being discriminated and harassed in the same way that black people were. *Ebony* stated that if they ever found themselves in such a position, ‘they would revolt almost immediately and there would be no talk of non-violence on their part’.⁶⁰⁷ E. Washington Rhodes, publisher of the popular black-owned daily *The Philadelphia Tribune*, praised *Ebony* for its sharp reaction while Louise Smith, a New York resident admired *Ebony's* statement, saying, ‘you have hit [...] the most critical issue of race relations to face us [...]’.⁶⁰⁸

It appeared, more than once, that Johnson and his editors were committed to ensuring that *Ebony* addressed the racial problems in a more critical tone. In December 1966, *Ebony* blamed the U.S government, calling into question the rationale behind intervening beyond its

⁶⁰⁶ ‘Request for a Riot Cure’, *Ebony*, December 1966, p.144.

⁶⁰⁷ ‘The Rights of Man’, *Ebony*, October 1966, p.142.

⁶⁰⁸ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, December 1966, p.13; ‘Letters to the editors’, November, *Ebony* 1966, p.18.

borders while neglecting its domestic problems. The magazine emphasised to its white audience that, ‘just as the federal government spends billions of Dollars on its space programs it must be prepared to spend billions on its race programs’.⁶⁰⁹

The editors expressed their dissatisfaction with the U.S government's indifference to the socioeconomic issues that affected black Americans. Its assistant editor David Llorens chastised white Americans and the black middle class for turning their backs on black ghetto residents, while its senior editor Lerone Bennett Jr. claimed that “the system” was to be blamed for the uprising of black youth.⁶¹⁰ The black youth revolted, according to historian Korey Brown, not only because they were violent, but because, ‘too many Americans would rather turn a blind eye to the tragedy of the ghettos than commit the time and money needed to properly fix the situation’.⁶¹¹

Yet, if Johnson and his editors were satisfied with *Ebony*'s intervention in the black revolts debate, then some of their readers were not. Irene Herbert, a white resident from New Orleans, attacked *Ebony* for its focus on the black revolts, declaring that the magazine was attempting to inflame the riots, ‘all I can see is that you are hurting the Negro cause’, declared Herbert, ‘In my opinion, *Ebony* all but incites riots with its mildly sarcastic hate materials’.⁶¹² Washington D.C resident W. Porter Kendall also shared Herbert's opinion, declaring that *Ebony*'s knee-jerk reaction to the riots and black issues would make the magazine eschew its traditionally bourgeois sensibilities and could push it to be involved in a debate which was not compatible with its orientation.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁹ ‘Request for a Cure Riot, *Ebony*, December 1966, p. 144.

⁶¹⁰ David Llorens, Titles, Labels, or People? In Search of Commitment, box 22, folder 5, Hoyt Fuller Papers, Clark Atlanta University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Special Collections, Atlanta. GA; Lerone Bennett Jr, Interview, box 7, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶¹¹ Korey Brown, *SOULED OUT*, p. 140.

⁶¹² ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, January 1967, pp. 14, 16.

⁶¹³ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, October 1967, p.18.

More tellingly, regional white-oriented outlets such as *Emporia Gazette* was also dissatisfied about *Ebony*'s intervention, warning Johnson about his magazine's wrong orientation.⁶¹⁴ In contrast to their unfavourable comments, Johnson responded by explicitly declaring that, [...] I am not speaking for looters and burners, though I can understand them [...].⁶¹⁵ Sociologist Jason Chambers argues that Johnson did not hesitate to address issues facing black America via the pages of his magazine.⁶¹⁶ As such, he sometimes situated his magazine at the heart of the black revolts, regardless of the media's response, as he said, 'We are committed to telling all of the story, the good and the bad [...].'⁶¹⁷

Ebony's resolute attempt to understand the black revolts expanded more broadly in the summer of 1967 to involve special issues on the black youth and their relationship to the black revolts. In fact, *Ebony* was well aware that the black uprisings were almost entirely due to the black youth as its publisher Johnson declared that the black youth were 'the original spark for the revolt'.⁶¹⁸ The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders found out that the majority of the riots that erupted in 1967 in major cities were the direct result of black youth, who made up over 53 per cent of those arrested.⁶¹⁹

'To Face the Battle Ahead': Ebony and "The Negro Youth"

Some popular and regional white-owned outlets also attributed the spark of the revolts to the young black Americans, yet they seemed antagonist to them. The Maryland white-oriented newspaper *The Evening Sun* deliberately relied on some statements made by Dr.

⁶¹⁴ 'Ebony Changes Style', *Emporia Gazette*, 26 March 1968, p.4.

⁶¹⁵ Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue*, p. 62.

⁶¹⁶ Chambers, Jason, 'Presenting the Black Middle Class, John H. Johnson and Ebony Magazine, 1945-1974', in *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to 1970s*, ed. by David Bell and Joanne Hollow (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.62.

⁶¹⁷ John H. Johnson, 'Ebony Magazine: On Turning 30', *The Washington Post*, 21 November 1975, p.A19.

⁶¹⁸ John H. Johnson, 'Publisher statement', *Ebony*, August 1967, p.21.

⁶¹⁹ National advisory of Civil Disorder, p.6, <http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf>.

King, who pointed to a possible connection between black revolts and the black youths, whereas The Iowa white-owned newspaper *Des Moines Tribune* accused the black youth of the outbreak and the devastating impact of the riots within the white and black communities. Though concrete evidence demonstrates that black people listened to radio, the newspaper went on to note that, ‘Lots of the young people don’t read speeches or listen to radio, but they have been antagonized by the kinds of things they hear in neighbourhood gangs or street corners.’⁶²⁰

By contrast, *Ebony* seemed sympathetic towards the young black rioters as it declared that the special issue would come to understand their predicament in America.⁶²¹ The special issue titled ‘Negro Youth in America’ was published to commemorate *Ebony's* third annual series of special issues. It featured a diverse group of contributors, commentators, and editorial staff members, including David Llorens and Phyl Garland, who made critical statements and expressed empathy for the black youth and their experiences during the riots. *Negro Youth in America*, according to *Florida Today* newspaper, was one of the most essential issues the publication had ever published.⁶²²

Some participants, such as Alex Poinsett and Kenneth B. Clark, argued that racial inequities, a lack of suitable education, racial alienation, school segregation, and joblessness were the catalysts for the black youth revolution. These factors prompted black youth to protest in order to affirm their black identity, manhood, and self-esteem.⁶²³

⁶²⁰ ‘King Calls for Massive Job Program to Curb Rioting’, *The Evening Sun*, 25 July 1967, p. A2; ‘Youths Responsible’, *Des Moines Tribune*, 31 July 1967, p.8; On the role of the black radio in the black struggle, see: Brian E. Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2006).

⁶²¹ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, July 1967, p.25; ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, August 1967, p.19.

⁶²² Walter Goodman, ‘Ebony, The Black Man's Life’, *Florida Today*, 1 December 1968, p.4E.

⁶²³ Alex Poinsett, ‘Ghetto School, an Educational Wasteland’, p.42.

Unlike the mainstream white-owned media, which seemed to some extent hostile or at least antagonistic towards the black rioters or the black youth, *Ebony* sought to search for practical resolutions to resolve their issue. *Ebony's* special issue demonstrated to its young readers their limitless potential to improve their social circumstances as it provided them with numerous examples of black young people who were able to successfully establish funding or rehabilitation programmes for themselves or for other young black Americans in cities like Watts and Chicago.⁶²⁴ In so doing, *Ebony* showed to its young audience their ability to improve their social conditions without rioting, 'if you are a Negro youth growing up in a slum ghetto area [...]' said *Ebony* 'there is a chance [...] without any major help from anyone, you will get education, go on to college, and become a productive, well-adjusted to the society.'⁶²⁵

As such, *Ebony* aimed to quell young blacks' unrest by encouraging them to improve their social life through perseverance and altruism. In fact, *Ebony* exhorted its young audience to be determined to "face the battle ahead" and fight for social change. While it was a magazine with an uplifting tone, *Ebony* reassured its young black audience that their growing black consciousness, recognition of their past, and pride in their race would definitely help them seize ample opportunities to achieve liberation, compared to previous decades, 'Negro Youth must take up the challenge [...] wrote *Ebony* 'Poor schools are better than no school at all [...] Jobs paying minimum wages [...] are better than being unemployed.'⁶²⁶

The special edition had a big impact, with the Wisconsin white-owned newspaper *Portage Daily Register* pronouncing it as, 'a much more level-headed, accurate, and fairer

⁶²⁴ Stanley Sanders, 'I'll Never Escape the Ghetto'; David Llorens, 'Apostle of Economics'; *Ebony*, August 1967, pp.78-86; 'Opportunity Please Knock', *Ebony*, August 1967, pp.104-107.

⁶²⁵ 'A Challenge to Youth', *Ebony*, August 1967, p.144.

⁶²⁶ 'A Challenge to Youth', p.144.

examination of the position of the young black in America at that time'.⁶²⁷ The readership, on the other hand, also admired the special issue, sending a flood of letters to *Ebony* which praised the magazine for its focus on the black revolts. Pennsylvania resident Jacqueline A. Akins admired its critical tone and admitted that the special issue was a product of its time as it had addressed the black revolts promptly and critically. Lawrence H. Janssen, director of Church Strategy Program in Pennsylvania, felt that the issue was valuable that it should be published as a book, distributed for more comprehensive reading, or put in the library shelves.⁶²⁸

Furthermore, the significance of the special issue also drew the attention of some governmental voices, which approached the magazine to obtain copies, claiming that the special issue might be used as a reference to research the uprisings. Indeed, Vice president Hubert H. Humphrey's office ordered fifty copies of the special issue from *Ebony* to use it in the summer program around the country. Otto Kerner himself, whom President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed to investigate the riots, also requested copies from *Ebony* to use them for the same purpose.⁶²⁹ Even members of the Commission of the Civil Disorder used *Ebony's* special issue in their investigation and admitted that the special issue was helpful in arriving at their conclusions.⁶³⁰ Moreover, the significance of its special issue prompted the National Advisory Commission to invite *Ebony's* senior editor Lerone Bennett to participate in its meetings, arguing that he was an expert who could deal with, 'historical, economic, sociological, and psychological factors of the ghettos life'.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ 'Father Groppi is Negative', *Portage Daily Register*, 2 September 1967, p.2.

⁶²⁸ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, October 1967, pp.15-16.

⁶²⁹ 'HHH, Riots Study Penal Get *Ebony* Special Edition', *Jet*, 24 August 1967, pp.20-21.

⁶³⁰ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, March 1968, p.26.

⁶³¹ The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to Bennett, 11 September 1967, Kerner report 67-8, Box 6, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Bennett as an Outspoken Critic of the Black Revolts

In September 1967, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders invited its senior editor Bennett and other prominent participants such as the economist Dr. Vivian Henderson and the social scientist Dr. Kenneth Clark, to a closed meeting at the executive office building in Washington D.C. The Commission invited Bennett as it believed he was an expert who could deal with ‘historical, economic, sociological, and psychological factors of the ghettos life’. Bennett accepted the Commission’s invitation and the meeting was scheduled at the Indian Treaty room at the executive office building in Washington D.C.⁶³²

During the meeting, Bennett argued that the black revolts that erupted in Detroit and various other cities had much deeper roots that stem back from the past three centuries.⁶³³ He also directly traced the roots of the black revolts to the early twentieth century, demonstrating to his audience that the riots which erupted in the past, such as the 1904 Ohio riot, were stark examples that black revolts broke out and would break out for the same reason: ‘rejection, denial, or deprivation form constitutional rights’.⁶³⁴ He also contended that the major problem was economic. He noted that the ways blacks searched and competed with their white counterparts for their jobs, homes, or wages had instilled in them (whites) a feeling of economic encroachment. He also noted that blacks also lacked open occupancy in the labour world, declaring that the real estate and financial institutions should have open occupancy for all Americans.⁶³⁵

While he addressed black Americans’ real problems during the riots, Bennett also outlined ambitious programs to quell the revolts. This included teaching both races a comprehensive

⁶³² Kerner report 67-8, Box 6, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶³³ The Roots of Rejection, Bennett papers, Kerner 67-8, Box 6; pp. 3-4.

⁶³⁴ The Roots of Rejection, Bennett papers, p. 40.

⁶³⁵ Excerpt from Statement of Lerone Bennett, Jr. before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, September 12, 1967; Bennett papers, pp. 13, 29.

and inclusive history of America that reflected a shared history that would in turn enhance the race relations between black and white America by facing up to its troubled past.⁶³⁶ In addition, he suggested devising a federal funding program for the slums that would, ‘rebuild them, tear them down, [*and*] use the people living in the slums into carpenters, electricians, training them [...]’.⁶³⁷

Although other pivotal figures such as Washington governor George Romney also shared their views on the riots and suggested comprehensive programs to improve the urban ghettos, Bennett’s suggestions were particularly admired by the Commission, which noted in a letter sent to him, ‘you were great’ it added ‘It [Bennett’s testimony] has caused a great deal interest and reaction we hoped for’.⁶³⁸

Bennett’s recommendations were deemed to be very crucial, with members of the commission reaching out to him on multiple occasions to invite him to cooperate with the commission remotely. In January 1968, David L. Chambers, an assistant in the Kerner commission, communicated with Bennett by asking for his opinions on black consciousness, Black Power, and the race relations.⁶³⁹ David Ginsburg, executive director of the commission also communicated with Bennett by sending him drafts of some testimonies given by other figures and asked him to revise them for a formal report.⁶⁴⁰

Moreover, various other committees also sought to approach Bennett to cooperate with him over the race relation issues in America. A committee at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. invited participants to a symposium in November 1968 to commemorate

⁶³⁶ Excerpt from Statement of Lerone Bennett, Jr, p. 16.

⁶³⁷ The Roots of Rejection, Bennett papers, p. 21.

⁶³⁸ The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder to Bennett, n.d, Kerner report, 67-8, 'Romney Testifies, Hatred Could Spark 'Guerrilla Disorder'', *Lincoln Journal Star*, 12 September 1967, p.1.

⁶³⁹ David L. Chambers to Bennett, 11 January 1968, Kerner report 67-8, Box 6, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶⁴⁰ David Ginsburg to Bennett, 08 January 1968, Kerner report 67-8, Box 6, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

the 1st anniversary of the release of the Kerner report.⁶⁴¹ One of the figures that the committee sought to invite was Bennett, noting that he was one of ‘the best authorities on the subject in the country.’⁶⁴² In a formal invitation, the committee declared that, ‘your leadership in dealing with this national crisis has been noted by young people of America, and it is for this reason we are inviting you [...]’⁶⁴³ Bennett did not respond to the invitation, but the committee continued to communicate with him via follow-up letters, asking him to attend as his expertise in the race relations would add to the symposium.⁶⁴⁴

Bennett’s significance as an outspoken critic of the black revolts motivated him in his continued commitment to resolving the black revolts. Upon his return from the meeting, Bennett wrote a comprehensive and insightful article on the black revolt. ‘How to Stop the Riots’, enunciated possible avenues to pursue to put down the riots.⁶⁴⁵ In his article, Bennett argued that the revolts which were sparked by the black youth had stemmed from their long-held grievances over the entrenched social injustice. In other words, Bennett attributed the mass black uprisings to the long discontent and the perpetual discrimination impinged upon them, which propelled them to run out of patience and risk their lives to improve their social conditions by means of protesting and rioting. Bennett noted that,

They [*Blacks*] have been remarkably patient over the years, but now they are saying that they would rather die than live the way their fathers and forefathers lived. They are serious, and America cannot meet their challenges unless it becomes serious, too [...]

⁶⁴¹ Committee on the Kerner Report to Bennett, 15 November 1968, Kerner report 67-8, Box 6, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶⁴² Committee on the Kerner Report to Bennett, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶⁴³ Committee on the Kerner Report to Bennett, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶⁴⁴ Committee on the Kerner Report to Bennett, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers.

⁶⁴⁵ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, October 1967, p.26.

when a man risks his life to validate his humanity, you can't offer him less than what he needs [...].⁶⁴⁶

Historian Korey Brown contends that Bennett's article was one of *Ebony's* most compelling commentaries on the race riots.⁶⁴⁷ Indeed, at first glance, the article seemed to tap into sensational news on the Detroit riot. Yet, the bulk of the article outlined possible approaches that could be employed to head off the riots. Similar to his suggestions before the committee, Bennett proposed that the government should first understand the motives behind the riots, arguing that the rebellion would not stop until the conditions that fuelled those rebellions ceased. Moreover, Bennett addressed new policies that would be implemented through such blueprints and programs such as the multi-billion dollars program, which would be set to eradicate slum conditions and build a working-class community.⁶⁴⁸

Bennett's key role in engaging with the black revolts within and outside the JPC demonstrates his commitment as an outspoken critic of the black riots and an advocate of the black rioters. In one of his interviews, Bennett rationalised the black revolts, declaring that if white people accepted the idea of discriminating blacks, then they should be prepared to accept the idea that blacks were going to fight against their discrimination.⁶⁴⁹

Ebony's impact on the black revolts, the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, and, to a larger extent, the black and white public was pronounced.⁶⁵⁰ The black print newspaper and

⁶⁴⁶ Lerone Bennett Jr, 'How to Stop the Riots', *Ebony*, October 1967, p.32.

⁶⁴⁷ Korey Brown, *Souled Out*, p. 140.

⁶⁴⁸ Bennett, How to Stop the Riots, pp.29-36; Brown, *Souled Out*, pp.140-142.

⁶⁴⁹ George Foster, *The Heritage of Slavery (1968) w/ Fannie Lou Hamer & Lerone Bennett, Jr.*, Online Video Recording, 12 December 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1EAY0RDDJQ&list=TLGGBMW0gtRmlcEyMDA2MjAyMQ&t=537s>> [accessed June 14, 2021].

⁶⁵⁰ Sid Ahmed ZIANE, "Today the Pot is Boiling Over!": *Ebony Magazine*, the Black Revolts, and the Search for a Social Resolution, 1966-1967', *European journal of American studies*, 16.02, (2021), 01-16 (p. 09), in <<https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/16993>> [accessed 27 March 2022].

the Chicago-based *South Side Bulletin* admitted that when the white print media predicated on sensational stories and failed to improve the race relations ‘*Ebony* is forced to attempt a monumental task of filling the void [...] to be standing alone at the bulwarks of a national communications crisis’.⁶⁵¹

Yet, while *Ebony* played a significant role in intervening in such crucial issues to head off the urban rebellion, its concern over black America, its social conditions which continued to falter, and the magazine’s bitterness over the slow progress of the black liberation struggle prompted *Ebony* to pursue a different approach. From late 1967 to the mid-1970, the magazine toughened its tone, metamorphosing into a more radical magazine.

Black Power and the Radical Blackness of *Ebony*

It is worth mentioning that *Ebony*’s shift to a more radical magazine was relevant, given the social conditions of black Americans at the time. Though black Americans secured some Civil Rights gains, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which prohibited housing discrimination, and the 1969 Civil Rights act, which forcefully prohibited white people from attacking blacks, they still had much left to fight for. Indeed, black Americans gained full legal rights in many sectors and regions, but these did not equate to equality in different ways. Also, the black community lacked unity as many black bourgeoisie became extremely self-interested, neglecting many rural and urban poor black Americans, who were still suffering from exploitation and oppression.⁶⁵² Stokely Carmichael pointed to a social class issue as he lamented the black middle class, which focused only on its narrow class interest and individual aspirations, arguing that assimilation into the American mainstream middle

⁶⁵¹ ‘*Ebony* Mag Points to ‘Positivism’, *South Side Bulletin*, 7 August 1968, p.9.

⁶⁵² Eldridge Cleaver, ‘The Crisis of the Black Bourgeoisie’, *The Black Scholar*, 4.4, (1973), pp.2-11 (p. 6-7), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 8 July 2021].

class, 'would do nothing to serve the broader cause of black liberation from white oppression and exploitation.'⁶⁵³

Ebony was aware of these trends. In October 1967, the magazine headlined that, 'No Progress in Years' venting that 'the school integration bill means nothing [...] The voting bill means nothing [...] The Northern ghettos slum dweller is living today about the same as he was 20 years ago [...]'.⁶⁵⁴ This statement was also emphasised by Bennett during his meeting with the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, asserting that no considerable change was made since the Supreme Court decision of 1954 and warning that blacks would see, 'more retrogression than progress, more rejection than acceptance'.⁶⁵⁵

To tackle the social issues, which were still affecting black Americans, *Ebony* called upon its audience to change their tactics by embracing Carmichael's programs (who had just defected from the SNCC to become prime minister of the Black Panther Party). Indeed, the magazine's adoption of his philosophy could be seen in many of *Ebony's* pages, which seemed to embrace his approach of black consciousness, self-interest, and self-help. In fact, *Ebony's* support of Carmichael's programs could probably stem from its belief that his programs were the most moderate and viable tactics for achieving liberation. Not to mention that it was clear that Bennett backed up his philosophy in *Ebony*. While he was a staunch defender of his philosophy, as discussed in chapter two, Johnson gave Bennett carte blanche over editorial duties at the JPC, and it was no coincidence that Bennett endorsed his philosophy in his articles in *Ebony*.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Kwame Ture & Charles Hamilton, *Black Power, the Politics of Liberation*, pp.40-41; Tom Adam Davies, *Mainstreaming Black Power*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), p. 218.

⁶⁵⁴ 'A Time for Cooperation', Photo-editorial, *Ebony*, October 1967, p. 150.

⁶⁵⁵ Excerpt from Statement of Lerone Bennett, Jr. before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, September 12, 1967; Bennett papers, p. 18; Bennet papers, Box 6, p. 40.

⁶⁵⁶ For the most part, *Ebony* endorsed Carmichael's philosophy via its *Photo-editorial* section. Whilst this section never revealed its author, it seemed to hold many of Bennett's rhetoric as the latter sometimes addressed

In November 1967, *Ebony* surprised its readers by declaring that a non-violent demonstration such as the March on Washington in 1963 was not effective enough as it had minimal impact on Congress to pass bills such as the federal fair housing legislation. As such, and similar to Carmichael's call for electing blacks as national representatives, *Ebony* also encouraged its readership to focus on electing blacks as representatives in national offices so that they can speak for the need of the grassroots of black America.⁶⁵⁷ San Francisco resident Louise Bullock appreciated its call for political participation and asked *Ebony* to foster this philosophy, 'it remained for you to spell it out for all Afro-Americans who are at the crossroad between token integration and black power' said Bullock.⁶⁵⁸

This sentiment was also reiterated on other occasions. In its February 1968 issue, *Ebony* afresh highlighted the importance of electoral voting, asserting that electing blacks to offices or in the Congress can give black America, 'a sizeable voice in the federal government', which can eventually allow black people to practise their daily lives in a way similar to their white counterparts.⁶⁵⁹

In 1969, Carmichael published his path breaking book, 'Black Power, the Politics of Liberation', with the collaboration of the political scientist and a Black Power adherent Charles V. Hamilton. Their monograph outlined the reasonable opportunities that black America should pursue to bring about liberation in America. In his monograph, Carmichael called black people to unify, redefine their goals, and reappraise their identity, their policies,

historical facts or revealed the buried achievements of black Americans, which were obviously Bennett's writings as he was also a popular historian.

⁶⁵⁷ Stokely Carmichael (Ture Kwame), 'Power and Racism: What We Want', *The Black Scholar*, 27.03-04, (1997), pp.52-57 (p. 54), in <<https://www.tandfonline.com/>> [accessed 26 June 2018]; A logical assumption, Photo-editorial, *Ebony*, November 1967, p. 64.

⁶⁵⁸ 'Letters to the Editors', April 1968, *Ebony*, p. 21.

⁶⁵⁹ 'A Bright Black Future', Photo-Editorial, *Ebony*, February 1968, p. 60.

and their black institutions by means of self-help, and self-interest, and self-determination.

He wrote that Black Power,

[...] is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community, it is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations.⁶⁶⁰

Similarly, *Ebony* also regularly advised its readers to pull back from cooperating with whites and instead redefining their programs, raising their consciousness, and building their own institutions.⁶⁶¹ In fact, *Ebony* clearly emulated Carmichael's tactics of achieving liberation through self-help, self-interest, and autonomy. It asserted that,

[...] the power of the group is a function of the power of its individual components [...] A teacher stretching the minds of children and expanding their horizon is black power. A student getting his head and soul together is black power. An institution, guided and controlled by blacks within the perspective of the strengthening of the total black community, is black power. A child saved is black power.⁶⁶²

Ebony's emulation of Carmichael and his politics of liberation shows that its editors were influenced by his programs and activism. In 1970, Bennett ran perhaps one of most radical statements in *Ebony*. He wholeheartedly rejected the integrationist approach, describing it as, 'a false choice' and arguing that it was impotent in transforming black America. Bennett declared, harking back to the black revolts of 1966 and 1967, that liberation should be achieved by means of unity, self-identity, self-interest, and self-determination. He noted,

The masses spoke in Watts, in Detroit, in Newark [...] what were they saying? [...] were they demanding separation? Were they demanding the right to sit down beside White people? No:

⁶⁶⁰ Charles V., Hamilton and Kwame Ture, *Black Power, The Politics of Liberation in America*. (New York: Library of Congress, 1992), p. 67.

⁶⁶¹ 'A Bright Black Future', *Ebony*, February 1968, p. 60; 'The Unity of Blackness', *Ebony*, August 1969, p. 42.

⁶⁶² 'What You Can Do Now', *Ebony*, May 1972, p. 96.

I believe they were demanding the right of self-determination [...] the dignity – that would make self-determination meaningful and would enable them to decide for themselves freely [...].⁶⁶³

Ebony's endorsement of Carmichael's programs and its editors' advocacy of his activism and approaches show how Black Power had in turned reshaped *Ebony*'s orientation, albeit indirectly. Regardless, *Ebony*'s readership marvelled at the magazine's and its editors' radical tone. New York resident John Sharper compared *Ebony* with the radical black periodical *Muhammed Speaks* because both had 'unifying effect' on their readership, while Maryland resident Sulayman Shahid Mufassir described Bennett as 'the most brilliantly committed mind around these days' due to his role in intensifying the modern black liberation struggle.⁶⁶⁴

Moreover, the magazine was also critical to other events such as Dr. King's assassination, who was murdered while leading a strike in Memphis in April 1968. Dr. King travelled to Memphis to lead the striking sanitation workers as part of his Poor People's campaign. At Mason Temple in Memphis, Dr. King delivered a speech and later led a peaceful march in support for the sanitation workers. Yet, whilst he urged for the use of the non-violent tactic as part of the campaign, violence spread, with looting and vandalism erupted in the neighbourhood and police being called in to disperse the looters. On April 3rd, King delivered his famous 'I've been to the Mountaintop' speech, discussing and addressing the sanitation strike. After the speech, he went to the Lorraine Motel to rest. On the evening of April 04th, King emerged at his balcony and at first sight, a sniper bullet shot him. King fell on the

⁶⁶³ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Liberation', *Ebony*, August 1970, pp.36-43.

⁶⁶⁴ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, October 1970, pp. 14-16.

balcony ground but was quickly taken to the nearby hospital. An hour later, he was pronounced dead.⁶⁶⁵

The murder of Dr. King hit the nation like a thunderbolt, which was swept up in a frenzy of shock, anger, bitterness, and mourning. It also inflamed the rest of the world, who called into question the motives behind the murder. Black Power advocates expressed their dismay and anger. Floyd McKissick, director of CORE told *The New York Times* that the murder of Dr. King meant the end of the non-violent approach, whereas Carmichael (now prime minister of the BPP), declared that when white America killed Dr. King, ‘she killed all reasonable hope’.⁶⁶⁶

President Lyndon B. Johnson admitted how painful the murder of Dr. King was to African Americans.⁶⁶⁷ In a special meeting with the Civil Rights activists at the white House, Johnson explicitly declared that, ‘If I were a kid in Harlem, I know what I’d be thinking right now. I’d be thinking that the whites have declared open season on my people, and they’re going to pick us off one by one unless I get a gun and pick them off first’.⁶⁶⁸

Many people from the white and black community mourned the death of Dr. King. ‘The Prince of Peace is Dead’ eulogised *Ebony* in its own pages.⁶⁶⁹ On the day of the funeral, more than 200,000 Americans followed his casket, which was carried through the street of Atlanta

⁶⁶⁵ Carol E. Dietrich, *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots, Volumes 1 & 2*, ed. by Walter Rucker & James Nathaniel Upton (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 338-340.

⁶⁶⁶ , ‘McKissick Says Nonviolence Has Become Dead Philosophy’, *The New York Times*, 5 April 1968, p.26; Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Civitas Books, 2016), p. 258.

⁶⁶⁷ Lorraine Boissoneault, *Martin Luther King Jr.’s Assassination Sparked Uprisings in Cities Across America* (2020) <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/>> [accessed 1 July 2020]. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/martin-luther-king-jrs-assassination-sparked-uprisings-cities-across-america-180968665/>

⁶⁶⁸ Peter B. Levy, *The Great Uprising: Race Riots in Urban America during the 1960s*, pp. 155-156.

⁶⁶⁹ ‘The Prince of Peace is Dead’, *Ebony*, May 1968, p.172.

on a wagon.⁶⁷⁰ Johnson, Bennett, and the other editorial peers also attended the funeral, marching behind the mule-drawn wagon which was carrying his casket.⁶⁷¹

The murder of Dr. King shocked and angered the black-owned media. *The Crisis* and *Baltimore Afro-American* mourned for him following his assassination, whereas the radical newspaper *The Paper* declared that the murder of Dr. King was ‘a murder of non-violence by violence’.⁶⁷² Likewise, *Jet*, the weekly news magazine of the JPC, also regretted King’s death, ‘[...] the only Negro who captured the respect of youth and militants was eliminated from the civil rights frontlines.’⁶⁷³

On the other hand, the white-oriented media seemed less sympathetic about the killing of Dr. King as most of them provided only daily or weekly news on his death or the motives behind his murder. *The New York Times* rarely mourned in the post-assassination period and focused more broadly on reporting the plot, the motives, and the conspiracy behind the murder.⁶⁷⁴ In the same vein, *The Washington Post* also followed suit by reporting on Dr.

⁶⁷⁰ Lerone Bennett Jr., *The Rise of Black Power*, *Ebony*, February 1969, p. 42.

⁶⁷¹ John H. Johnson (The HistoryMakers A2004.231), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, November 11, 2004, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 7, story 1, John H. Johnson remembers photographer Moneta Sleet and Dr. King's funeral; King funeral, Box 2, Bennett papers; ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, January 1996, p. 21.

⁶⁷² ‘The Martydrome of Martin Luther King, Jr.’, *The Crisis*, April 1968, pp.114-115; ‘I Tried to Love...Humanity’, *Baltimore Afro-American*, 20 April 1968, p.29; Cliff Kachinske, ‘A Most Significant Murder’, *The Paper*, 17 April 1968, p.4.

⁶⁷³ ‘Dr. King was Last Link with Militants, Youths’, *Jet*, 25 April 1968, p.28.

⁶⁷⁴ *The New York Times* provided copious articles and sidebars on the plot behind the murder of Dr. King. See for example articles by its correspondent Martin Waldron: Martin Waldron, ‘Alabama Named in Dr. King Inquiry’, *The New York Times*, 12 April 1968, p.1; Martin Waldron, ‘New Theory Told in Dr. King Inquiry’, *The New York Times*, 14 April 1968, p.60. Martin Waldron, ‘The Search: Weird Trail of King's Killer’, *The New York Times*, 28 April 1968, p.4.

King's murderer, James Earl Ray, or expressing its concern over revenge plots made by black radicals and militants.⁶⁷⁵

In *Ebony*, the readers were inflamed by the assassination of Dr. King, demanding and advocating the idea that black people should spearhead a rebellion 'open and violent' in retaliation for King's murder.⁶⁷⁶ Initially, *Ebony* glossed over the motives behind the murder of Dr. King and instead devoted a special feature which paid tribute to Dr. King.⁶⁷⁷ Yet, a year later, the magazine set out to unearth the motives behind the killing of Dr. King. Though the director of FBI and the attorney general of the U.S announced that James Earl Ray, the murderer of Dr. King, was the solo assassin and no motive was given for his act, *Ebony* called into question that Ray was just, 'a pawn in a huge conspiracy against Dr. King'. *Ebony* called for a full re-investigation of the real motives behind slaying Dr. King and declared '[...] let the whole truth be known about the King assassination.'⁶⁷⁸

A few weeks after King's assassination, the fires began to be extinguished throughout the nation, but the cost was dreadful. Some cities, such as Washington D.C and Chicago, appeared to be war zones. Buildings burned to the ground, shops ruined, and damage valued at more than \$ 27 million.⁶⁷⁹ Historian Peter B. Levy described the post-assassination riots, 'the Holy Week Uprising' and noted that 1968 witnessed 'the greatest wave of social unrest since the Civil-War.'⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁵ Karl E. Meyer, 'Suspect Ray Denies Killing Dr. King', *The Washington Post*, 28 June 1968, p.A1; Robert C. Toth, 'U.S. Asks Extradition of Ray in Dr. King's Murder', *The Washington Post*, 13 June 1968, p.A26; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, 'Black Vengeance', *The Washington Post*, 5 May 1968, p.B7.

⁶⁷⁶ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, June 1968, p.16.

⁶⁷⁷ See *Ebony*'s special feature, May 1968.

⁶⁷⁸ Stuart Wexler & Larry Hancock, *The Awful Grace of God: Religious Terrorism, White Supremacy, and the Unsolved Murder of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Counterpoint: Berkeley, 2012), (online, unpaginated); 'The Whole Truth', *Ebony*, May 1969, p.56.

⁶⁷⁹ Ayodale Braimah, *The Martin Luther King Assassination Riots (1968)* (2017) <<https://www.blackpast.org/>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

⁶⁸⁰ Peter B. Levy, *The Great Uprising*, p. 153.

However, *Ebony's* intervention in the black revolts was impressive, prompting the white and black print media to applaud but also marvel at the magazine for its daring endeavours to engage with complicated issues and resolve them in critical, analytical, insightful tone. White journalist Don Terry challenged the mainstream white and black critics who debunked *Ebony* for its glamorous tone, contending that *Ebony* was also a critical magazine which positioned itself at the heart of the black struggle, '*Ebony* has a tough side too' emphasised Terry, 'She didn't always wear flouncy ruffles and Yves St. Laurent shoes. When she had to, she'd pull on a pair of sturdy boots and hit the freedom trail, singing "We Shall Overcome."'681

Conclusion

Rob Cuscaden, a journalist from *The Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper, released in April 1973 a divisive piece about the role of black media within the black community. While he acknowledged that the black media was sympathetic and truthful in representing the concerns of African Americans, he noted that *Ebony* had a better reputation among African-Americans because it covered topics of particular interest, used language understandable to its readers, and covered serious and important events.⁶⁸² His opinion was echoed by Johnson, who stated that his magazine had been highly successful because it depicted all aspects of black life, regardless of their orientations. Johnson declared that this included, 'the progress and the setbacks, the peaceful demonstrations and the riots, the middle of the readers and the black militants [...].'⁶⁸³

Beyond its commercial success, *Ebony* established an essential and valuable benchmark within the field of American publications due to its injection of social resolutions to quell the black uprisings. *Ebony's* concerted attempts to settle racial issues prompted several governmental bodies to contact the magazine and its editorial team to work with them, as

⁶⁸¹ Don Terry, *An Icon Fades* (2019) <<https://archives.cjr.org/>> [accessed 4 July 2021].

⁶⁸² Rob Cuscaden, *Ebony* Surveys the Market, Hoyt Fuller Collection, box 21, folder 19.

⁶⁸³ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1970, p.25.

observed by John H. Johnson, who proudly declared that his publication had become a powerful voice in America. Such clout pushed Johnson and his editorial staff to keep fighting the black uprisings, stating that they would not back down, ‘we will peer into complicated situations and make them understandable to the average man’, said Johnson.⁶⁸⁴

The New York Times’s editor Brent Staples declared that *Ebony* surpassed its commitment to mirroring the positive aspects of black life to include how corporate America viewed blackness and how African-Americans viewed themselves in relation to business, the arts, the Civil Rights Movement, and history itself.⁶⁸⁵ Furthermore, *Ebony* demonstrated that it was a successful magazine and that its response was relevant, substantial, and distinct among the black and even white-owned print media. William I. Nichols, owner of the white popular *This Week* magazine, corresponded with *Ebony* in which he declared that though it was hard for a black magazine like *Ebony* to address the issue of black youth in America, ‘you have been successful in making “the constructive side” seem attractive, thrilling, and contagious’.⁶⁸⁶

Nonetheless, its evident frustration over the slow progress of the black liberation in the late 1960s pushed *Ebony’s* editors to appeal to Carmichael’s programs, often calling their audience to embrace his philosophy of unity, self-help, and self-determination. Such a shift propelled *Ebony* to pursue a more radical orientation. Washington (not D.C) based white owned newspaper *Longview Daily News* published in its November 1969 issue a statement which noted that *Ebony* had become a representative of the black radical press.⁶⁸⁷

Its shift towards radicalism also coincided with the magazine fearing for a violent revolution, with Johnson warning that the murder of Dr. King meant that, [...] The times are

⁶⁸⁴ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, January 1971, p.24.

⁶⁸⁵ Brent Staples, *The Radical Blackness of Ebony Magazine* (2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/>> [accessed 11 July 2020].

⁶⁸⁶ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, Novembre 1967, p.22.

⁶⁸⁷ Ted Natt, ‘Ex-editor of *Ebony* Defends Black Press’, *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p.74.

such that breeds revolution, and some black people are ready for a desperate violent protest.’⁶⁸⁸ It was against this backdrop that Johnson and his editors were prepared to face another challenge amidst a mounting black revolution which was looming on the horizon.

⁶⁸⁸ John H. Johnson, Publisher Statement, *Ebony*, August 1969, p. 29.

Chapter 5: *'The Black Revolution is a Total Revolution': The Black Revolution and the Black Panther Party*

'The greatest revolution in America today is the one occurring in the minds of America's Negroes, and Ebony itself reflected these changes more than any other publication'

Mrs. Joyce Randolph, July 1968

As indicated in earlier chapters, *Ebony* was always at the vanguard of the black struggle. Yet, many radical and left-wing outlets criticised the magazine for its overemphasis on covering black celebrities while ignoring the fight for justice and equality. Even though *Ebony* featured Black Power and its supporters several times, other radical publications often saw this as insufficient, stating that the magazine should do more to better represent all aspects of the black struggle. Some radical magazines, such as *The Liberator*, had even charged *Ebony* for its neglect of the black revolution. In one of its statements published in May 1966, the magazine noted that *Ebony* was unconcerned about the black revolution and the quest for self-identity.⁶⁸⁹

Despite such criticism, Johnson steadfastly defended his magazine. He argued that his magazine was always at the heart of the black struggle coverage as it supported popular black figures and activists while sometimes giving space for them to share their perspectives on the fight for justice and equality, 'We rescued Paul Robeson from obscurity' declared Johnson,

⁶⁸⁹ Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, p. 97.

‘we dealt with W.E.B Du Bois [...] we had an article by Angela Davis [...] we’ve run articles by blacks who’ve picketed us, claiming that we were not militant’.⁶⁹⁰

This chapter illustrates that *Ebony*’s fear of a violent revolution pushed its publisher and its editors to run a special issue on the black revolution. In contrast to the major white and even black print media, which cast the black revolution as a violent phenomenon, *Ebony* attempted to show to its audience that the black revolution was moderate in its approach as it was pursued in favour of transforming the social lives of black Americans. The special issue and the acclaim it gained from the white press had pushed the magazine to additionally feature the Black Panthers as the embodiment of the black revolution. Such a reaction was reinforced by internal and external factors. Its left-wing staff’s powerful position, resignation threats, and the expansion of the Free Huey Newton campaign had forced Johnson to respond to the BPP. This chapter reveals that *Ebony* engaged with the BPP to rebrand its image and to show to its readers that it could also be perceived as a moderate, political, and intellectual phenomenon.

From the Black Revolt to the Black Revolution

When the riots were quelled and life returned to normal in the wake of Dr. King’s murder, *Ebony* began to temper its tone by lapsing into a discussion on the black revolts. This was coupled with Bennett having printed a striking article on the controversy of Black Power. In peculiar ways, Bennett retracted his advocacy of Black Power and the black rioters by arguing that the riots were indeed (and indirectly) stimulated by the rise of Black Power. The same sentiment was provided by other white-owned outlets such as *The Washington Post* and

⁶⁹⁰ Walter Morrison, ‘*Ebony*’s Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History’, *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975, p.19-A.

Time magazine.⁶⁹¹ In his article titled, 'The Rise of Black Power', Bennett called Black Power 'the most formidable thrust of the opposition and discontent seething among the black masses' which fed into 'small wars' that broke out in Chicago, Newark, Detroit, and other cities.⁶⁹²

Bennett's retraction was most likely motivated by his fear of a violent revolution or racial unrest. He declared that '[...] the division of America became sharper, and more irremediable [...] it became increasingly clear that the black revolution and the Vietnam War had put questions on the American agenda which could no longer be avoided'.⁶⁹³ Other prominent figures, such as Michigan governor George Romney, also shared Bennett's view as he cautioned of a potential violent revolution to be waged against white America.⁶⁹⁴ Even Black Power advocates such as Carmichael and Huey Newton warned of a black revolution that would sweep the entire nation.⁶⁹⁵

From a different perspective, the idea of the black revolution was a complex term that varied among the advocates of Black Power. Many black students, for instance, believed that a revolution was a prerequisite to ending the racial discrimination being practised against black students. As such, they instigated hundreds of violent strikes, protests, and pickets on college campuses.⁶⁹⁶ In fact, violent revolutions on some campuses succeeded in achieving

⁶⁹¹ Races: The Jungle and the City, *Time*, July 29, 1966; The Long Hot Summer, *The Washington Post*, July 26, 1967.

⁶⁹² Lerone Bennett Jr., The Rise of Black Power, *Ebony*, February 1969, p. 37.

⁶⁹³ Bennett, The Rise of Black Power, p.42.

⁶⁹⁴ Harry Kelley, 'Seeds of Revolution Sown, Romney Tells Commission', *The Times*, 13 September 1967, p.22.

⁶⁹⁵ 'Stokely Predicts Revolt', *The San Francisco Examiner*, 15 November 1967, p.5; Huey P. Newton, 'The Black Panther', *Ebony*, August 1969, p.112.

⁶⁹⁶ Muhammad Ahmad, 'On the Black Student Movement — 1960-70', *The Black Scholar*, 09.08, (1978), 2-11, in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 6 July 2020]; Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, p.1.

the black students' demands. The student strike at San Francisco State College (SFSC), which lasted from November 1968 until March 1969 and which was often met with violence, disorder, and vandalism at the college, had successfully led to the foundation of the first black studies department in the U.S.⁶⁹⁷ More tellingly, the black revolts, which transpired at other predominately white universities and historically black colleges, such as Howard University, also led to the creation of black studies units, black degree programs, and even black journals and black think tanks.⁶⁹⁸

Other advocates of the black revolution, such as the Black Panthers, had different views on the latter. The co-founders of the BPP Huey Newton and Bobby Seale believed that the revolution should be staged through a process of educational and social programs. They declared that a revolution meant a profound change to the social, political, and economic system by means of social programs rather than violent revolts.⁶⁹⁹ By contrast, other members, such as Eldridge Cleaver, minister of information at the BPP, advocated urban guerrilla warfare to be waged against the existing system, asserting that a violent revolution should be instigated to overthrow the U.S government, 'total liberty for black people or total destruction for America', declared Cleaver. Cleaver believed that the American government

⁶⁹⁷ Martha Biondi, *the Black Revolution on Campus*, pp. 43-73; Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, pp.68-86; William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, p. 65; Joy Ann Williamson, 'In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities', *The Journal of Negro Education*, 68.1, (1999) (p. 97), in <<http://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 13 June 2018].

⁶⁹⁸ Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, p. 93; Peniel E. Joseph, 'Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement', *The Journal of African American History*, 88.2, (2003), (pp. 191-196), in <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 4 July 2018]; Joy Ann Williamson, 'In Defense of Themselves', p. 97.

⁶⁹⁹ Judson L. Jeffries, *Huey P. Newton: The Radical Theorist* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002). pp. 34-38; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 297; *The Black Panther Party, Service to the People Program*, ed. by David Hilliard (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

had failed the black people, and the Black Panthers needed to re-establish the prevailing system via a violent revolution so that the needs of black Americans could be met.⁷⁰⁰

Unremarkably, the major white-owned media was hostile to the idea of the black revolution. As the Black Panthers rose to prominence, the major white newspapers cast them as stimulators of a violent revolution. Indeed, *The Pittsburgh Press* described the Panthers as ‘the worrisome aspect of the black-left revolution’ and noted that if there were a mass violent black revolution, it would certainly be ascribed to them.⁷⁰¹ *Philadelphia Daily News*, however, warned its audience about the belligerence of the Black Panthers and their readiness for a violent revolution, calling authorities, ‘to stop them before they open fire.’⁷⁰²

Some black-owned media did not acclaim the Black Panthers but sought to redefine the concept of the Black revolution. The Baltimore-based black newspaper *Baltimore Afro American* informed its readers that the black revolution had paid off. It declared that the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, such as facilities desegregation and the voting test elimination, were typical examples of a black revolution. The newspaper had hoped for a successful social revolution, ‘a meaningful black revolution is for freedom, equality, justice – and for all humanity’, said the newspaper.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ E. Mkalimito, 'Basic Tenets of Revolutionary Nationalism', in *The Black Seventies*, ed. by Floyd B. Barbour (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1970), pp. 309-310; Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, pp.153, 156; Judson L. Jeffries, *Huey P. Newton: The Radical Theorist* ([n.p.]: University Press of Mississippi, 2002). pp. 34-38; Eldridge Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*, ed. by Robert Scheer (London: Jonathan Cape Thirty Bedford Square, 1969), p. 38; Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2017) pp. 10, 144, 181; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (London: Wildow House London, 1973), pp. 330-331.

⁷⁰¹ Nicholas Horrock, 'Ghetto-Born Black Panther Party Thrives on Discipline, Militancy', *The Pittsburgh Press*, 5 May 1969, p.21.

⁷⁰² 'Taming the Panthers', *Philadelphia Daily News*, 17 December 1969, p.29.

⁷⁰³ Preston M. Yancy, 'We Should Work for Humanity', *Baltimore Afro-American*, 27 December 1969, p.45.

On the other hand, many radical black magazines seemed supportive of the BPP and their revolutionary approaches, both violent and socialist. At the end of 1969, the new left and the underground outlet *Liberation News Service* called the white liberals and other minorities to join blacks for mass urban uprisings to overthrow what it viewed as U.S imperialism.⁷⁰⁴ Similarly, the leftist magazine *The Liberator* published in its September 1967 issue one of its most extreme remarks. The piece titled ‘The Eve of Revolution’, urged readers to reject separatist dogma and prepare for a violent confrontation, with a concluding sentence that read, ‘When that moment arrives, we at *Liberator* shall lay down our pens and take up the sword’.⁷⁰⁵

‘No Time for Violent Revolution!’, *Ebony* and ‘*The Real Black Revolution*’

While the major white and black-owned media filled their pages with heated debates on the black revolution, responses from *Ebony*’s readers on the latter were unseen, or not actually printed in the magazine between 1968 and 1969. This was most likely because most of *Ebony*’s readership heralded their departure from the approaches of Black Power at the turn of the decade to embrace the black cultural consciousness, liberation, and full inclusion within the American mainstream life, as was noted by Wisconsin resident G. Alexander Lewis, who emphasised that, ‘We have to make it together as Americans [...]’.⁷⁰⁶

In the same vein, Bennett’s ‘The Rise of Black Power’ could also be seen as a departure from discussing the ethos of Black Power to find a set of social resolutions to address or to escape from an imminent violent revolution. In fact, *Ebony*’s publisher and editorial staff’s

⁷⁰⁴ Nick Gruenberg, ‘Weatherman: an Analysis’, *Liberation New Service*, 22 November 1969, pp.7-11.

⁷⁰⁵ Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald Maberry Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, 1991), p. 175 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 20 July 2021].

⁷⁰⁶ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, April 1969, p. 14.

concern about a violent revolution could also stem from the expansion and the intense activities of the Black Panthers, who almost dominated the black political and social spotlight in the late 1960s while overshadowing the activities and activism of other Black Power organisations such as CORE, SNCC, and Us. *Ebony* believed that their revolutionary approaches would alienate them from other camps of the black liberation struggle.⁷⁰⁷

Bennett's and Johnson's sustained concern for the black revolution had settled upon running an entire issue on Black Power and the black revolution. They felt this was a necessary slant to America's most important domestic problem.⁷⁰⁸ As such, the publisher and his editorial staff suggested inviting a host of Civil Rights and Black Power activists to discuss and articulate their thoughts and ideologies on the multifarious aspects of the black revolution. August was always a month dedicated to special issues, and with the success of the previous special issue 'The Negro Youth', the magazine solidified its decision to carry out a special issue each August.⁷⁰⁹

In August 1969, *Ebony* printed its special symposium, which looked at the various aspects of the black revolution. 'The Black Revolution' symposium, the first of its kind in the magazine's history and the first Black Power symposium to be published in *Ebony*, brought together an array of black authors, critics, students, Civil Rights, and even Black Power advocates to discuss and provide critical comments on black liberation and revolution.

Historian E. James West described the special issue as, 'a productive collaboration between an old generation of leftist writers and a new cohort of new Black Power

⁷⁰⁷ 'The Unity of Blackness', *Ebony*, August 1969, p. 42.

⁷⁰⁸ Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, *Afro-American Life, History and Culture* (Washington D.C., 1985), p. 185.

⁷⁰⁹ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, August 1967, p.19.

journalists.’⁷¹⁰ Indeed, the special issue served as a nexus between the Civil Rights activists, Black Power advocates, and the Black Power editors at the JPC. Johnson noted that the special issue was of such significance to the modern black struggle, ‘a must reading for anyone seeking an insight into black America [...]’ noted Johnson.⁷¹¹

Other white and black-owned newspapers and magazines proved, to some extent, hostile to the concept of the black revolution, often perceiving it as a violent phenomenon. By contrast, *Ebony* asserted in its special issue that the black revolution was not a violent one, ‘The “revolution” of which we speak is not a violent political revolution aimed at overthrowing the established government [...]’ declared *Ebony*’s editors, ‘The black revolution which is going on fits more the definition of revolution as “a sudden, radical, and complete change [...] more like the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century [...]’.⁷¹²

Ebony asserted that for this revolution to succeed, there should be unity among all black Americans in which revolution should not be, ‘restricted to just a few rebels – it goes across the board.’⁷¹³ This sentiment was shared by its contributors who emphasised that the black revolution was involved in every segment of the black lives and not only confined to ghettos or campuses. Charles L. Sanders recounted the story of George William Crocket Jr., a Detroit Judge, who sparked a revolution in court by his attempts to transform the judicial system in favour of blacks and the ways he confronted police, white lawyers, and the white press, which often lashed out at his radical endeavours.⁷¹⁴ A. Peter Bailey, however, argued that

⁷¹⁰ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr*, p.84.

⁷¹¹ John H. Johnson, Publisher Statement, *Ebony*, August 1969, p.29.

⁷¹² ‘The Unity of Blackness’, Photo-editorial, *Ebony*, August 1969, p. 42.

⁷¹³ ‘The Unity of Blackness’, *Ebony*, p.42

⁷¹⁴ Charles L. Sanders, ‘Detroit’s Rebel Judge Crockett, Champion for Justice for Blacks Sparks Mini-Revolution in Court’, *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.114-124.

revolution was integral to many theatrical performances, which projected themes of revolution and rebellion.⁷¹⁵

Other writers, moreover, demonstrated how the black revolution might affect every aspect of black America. James Turner, a PhD student at Northwestern University, stated that to transform black studies, black students needed new, significant ideals and definitions.⁷¹⁶ Vincent Harding, the black political scientist and director of the Institute of the Black World (IBW), discussed the problems and the progress of the black students, who sought educational improvement during the black struggle. Harding's article involved the whole picture of the black revolution and its implication for the black society. He contended that the black students' demands were more of a black revolution on campus and noted that their protests were to achieve liberation, transformation, and revolution of the black culture, identity, and heritage of all black Americans in the U.S.⁷¹⁷

Among the contributors who provided a much more balanced discussion and analysis of the concept of the black revolution was Lerone Bennett Jr. Bennett was always assertive in supporting the black revolution in America, often hinting at the idea that 'the Black revolution is a total revolution'.⁷¹⁸ In a speech delivered in November 1966 at a convocation in Boston, Massachusetts, Bennett declared that the real black revolution was a social movement instigated to awaken the black masses to precipitate liberation. As a radical figure, Bennett emphasised that revolution in America was a prerequisite for liberation, 'Whatever the problems, whatever the setbacks, whatever the danger, oppression must be rejected at any

⁷¹⁵ A. Peter Bailey, 'The Black Theater Take Revolutionary Works to Community', *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.126-134.

⁷¹⁶ James Turner, 'Black Students and their Changing Perspective', *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.135-140.

⁷¹⁷ Vincent Harding, 'Black Students and the Impossible Revolution', *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.141-148.

⁷¹⁸ Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), pp. 315-316.

cost', emphasised Bennett.⁷¹⁹ Bennett viewed revolution in America as a moderate phenomenon, with a black-led transformation of the existing socio-economic system to allow full and equitable participation by African Americans.

In Bennett's article printed in 'The Black Revolution' symposium, he asserted that the black revolution meant different attitudes, programs, and goals, 'I have a sense that a real black revolution here would be different from any other revolution [...]', declared Bennett.⁷²⁰ He stressed that the real black revolution would be black Americans calling for unity and redefining their goals, then developing and mobilising realistic programs to achieve them.⁷²¹ Bennett's tentative suggestions were also reiterated by other Civil Rights activists such as Bayard Rustin, who contended that the black liberation would be achieved by allowing more black political participation and representation in the American democratic process as well as expanding jobs opportunities for blacks and whites alike, which would only precipitate a political and social transformation for black Americans.⁷²²

Bennett's suggestions were wholeheartedly welcomed by pivotal figures such as Robert F. Campbell, executive director of the Southern Education Reporting Service (SERS), who admitted that, 'I have read and reread your brilliant article [...] I wish every citizen would read it and take it to heart.'⁷²³ *Ebony's* readership also praised his article, perceiving it as 'a blueprint for a moderate revolutionary program'. California resident, Adam J. Viney Sr. noted that his proposal should be examined and implemented, whereas Curtis C. Brice, administrative assistant of the Urban Coalition in Kansas City, Missouri, warned that if black

⁷¹⁹ Bennett, "Freedom Black and White", Bennet papers, box 7.

⁷²⁰ Bennett Jr, 'Of Time, Space, and Revolution', *Ebony*, August 1969, p.38.

⁷²¹ Bennett Jr, 'Of Time, Space, and Revolution', p.38.

⁷²² Bayard Rustin, 'The Myth of the Black Revolt', *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.102, 104.

⁷²³ Robert F. Campbell to Bennett, "Chicago Movement", Bennett papers, box 6.

people would not accept and implement what Bennett suggested, ‘we will continue to “not see the forest for the trees”’.⁷²⁴

However, Bennett also articulated his concern for the future of black Americans and the black liberation. He noted that what black people had experienced in the last few years, such as the murder of Dr. King, could determine a new path and method for young black Americans, who would grow more frustrated but also more belligerent and militant. Bennett had even noted that, ‘[...] it is likely to get worse [...] the very young, who will lead the black revolutions tomorrow, are more militant and more alienated than the black young of today.’⁷²⁵

The black revolution symposium was complex and insightful. It impressed the readers, who felt that *Ebony* had become a vehicle attempting to unite all black Americans and define meaningful goals for their freedom.⁷²⁶ Virginia reader S.M Breedlove proclaimed that *Ebony*’s symposium should not be read only but studied and passed on to millions of blacks across the nation, while Oklahoma resident Annette Gilliam claimed that she came across many issues of the black revolution in other popular magazines but admitted that, ‘*Ebony* is the only magazine to approach the revolutionary sentiment of black people with an open-minded attitude to different viewpoints’.⁷²⁷

Nonetheless, not all readers seemed happy with the symposium. New York reader Corine Baker attacked *Ebony*, calling its special issue ‘a junk’ and asked *Ebony* not to send him any more issues.⁷²⁸ *Ebony*’s contributor Sheeri Mitchell argued that *Ebony*’s symposium reflected

⁷²⁴ ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, October 1969, p.16; ‘Letters to the editors’, *Ebony*, November 1969, p.18.

⁷²⁵ Bennett Jr. ‘Of time, Space, and Revolution’, p. 39.

⁷²⁶ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, October 1969, p.17.

⁷²⁷ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, October 1969, p.14, p. 17; ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, December 1969, p.26.

⁷²⁸ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, October 1969, p.24.

in many ways the disappointment of black Americans in the 1960s, which was firstly marked with, ‘the March on Washington landmark but later culminated with the murder of its leader.’⁷²⁹

However, the special issue and its discussion of the black revolution demonstrated how *Ebony* was helpful and impacted the black struggle and, to some extent, Black Power. Johnson proudly announced that the popularity of *Ebony* had prompted the magazine to be used in high school, college history, and sociology classes as, ‘a supplementary reading’.⁷³⁰ Indeed, some black students at Cornell University and members of the Ivy League procured copies of its special issue to use in their analysis of the black revolution on campus. Also, Russell D. Lynch, a white resident and a teacher of the eighth grade in an all-black school in Ohio, admitted that *Ebony* was always ‘invaluable’ for his classrooms while a nursing student from I. J Goldberg School in Chicago provided the school’s library with copies of *Ebony*, claiming that the magazine was required for the school and writing to the magazine that, ‘*Ebony* completes library.’⁷³¹

In addition to the wide-acclaim from the readers, the black-owned-newspapers also praised the special issue, admitting that the latter was very significant and relevant. *The Philadelphia Tribune* saluted *Ebony* and its editorial staff for the comprehensiveness of their symposium, admitting that, ‘you and your staff deserve the highest commendation for presenting to the American public a truly great magazine.’⁷³²

⁷²⁹ Sheeri Mitchell, *The Blacks of the 1960s: Black History from the Pages of Ebony* (2020) <<https://www.ebony.com/>> [accessed 29 May 2020].

⁷³⁰ Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, *Hearings* (Washington: U.S Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 395.

⁷³¹ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, November 1970, p. 16; ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, December, 1969, pp. 18-20.

⁷³² ‘Letters to the Editors, *Ebony*, October 1969, p.16.

Perhaps more importantly, *Ebony's* responsiveness to Black Power and its engagement with the black revolts and later the black revolution had even resonated beyond the borders of the U.S, with letters from the United Kingdom reaching the JPC. Yorkshire resident F.C Garry, a regular reader of *Ebony*, corresponded with *Ebony* with a letter that acclaimed the magazine for making such efforts in foregrounding the black liberation struggle in America. He declared that, 'In the fight for freedom and equality, *Ebony* is a powerful force and a guardian of the important right of every Afro-American to express his opinion freely and without favour.'⁷³³

Such a reaction pushed *Ebony* to keep addressing the black revolution at the turn of the decade, calling its audience to shy away from a violent revolution and unite and call for a programmatic revolution in favour of transforming their social lives. In May 1970, *Ebony* headlined: 'No time for Violent Revolution', addressing its audience that black Americans could achieve their liberation through radical changes and not via a violent revolution.⁷³⁴

This insightful approach proved that *Ebony* was a unique magazine within the black and white publication fields due to its symposium, which addressed the black revolution in its timely and significant milestone. The significance of the symposium could also be seen in the magazine having involved and featured the major leaders of the Black Panther Party, such as Huey P. Newton, who appeared for the first time in the magazine's pages.

⁷³³ 'Letters to the editors', *Ebony*, September 1968, p. 14.

⁷³⁴ 'No Time for Violent Revolution', *Ebony*, May 1970, p.134.

***Ebony*, the Editorial Left-Wing, and the Debate over the Huey Newton Movement**

Media scholars Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin and Charles Whitaker argue that *Ebony* was very cautious in its response to the Black Panthers.⁷³⁵ More tellingly, while Johnson was pleased to run a symposium on the black revolution, he was hesitant to feature the Black Panthers in his special issue as he regarded them as firebrands.⁷³⁶ He also felt that featuring the Black Panthers would risk alienating his advertisers, who were yielding colossal capital for him.⁷³⁷

Nonetheless, he seemed to be swayed by the activism of his left-wing editors, who were eager to print stories about the Black Panthers. They claimed that few people knew about their true goals, policies, and thoughts.⁷³⁸ In fact, some left-wing editors had backed and aligned themselves with their cause; with Llorens defining their ambitions as ethically correct while Alex Poinsett referring to them as, ‘the swaggering superstars of the radical movement’.⁷³⁹

In many ways, their appearance in *Ebony* was important and timely, given that they were regarded as the epitome of the black revolution. Among the left-wing editors who gravitated

⁷³⁵ Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin and Charles Whitaker, 'On Johnson's Shoulders the Lessons and Legacy of Ebony Magazine', in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. by Miglena Sternadori & Tim Holmes, 1st edn. (River Street: John Wiley & Sons, 2020). p. 150.

⁷³⁶ John Woodford, 'Messaging the Blackman', in *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*, ed. by Ken Wachsberger, William M. Kunstler, and William M. Kunstler (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), p. 1.

⁷³⁷ Kuram Hussein and Mark Stern, 'News Media and the Neoliberal Privatization of Education', in *Lessons from "the Pen alongside the Sword": School Reform Through the Lens of Radical Black Press*, ed. by Zane C. Wubbena, Derek R. Ford, and Brad J. Porfilio, (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2016), p.202.

⁷³⁸ Huey Newton, 'The Black Panthers', *Ebony*, August 1969, p.107.

⁷³⁹ Ted Natt, 'Ex-editor of *Ebony* Defends Black Press', *Longview Daily News*, 19 November 1969, p.74; Alex Poinsett, 'Where Are the Revolutionaries?', *Ebony*, February 1976, p.86.

toward featuring the Panthers was John Woodford, a writer and a journalist who joined *Ebony* in 1965 to serve as an associate editor.⁷⁴⁰ Woodford was willing to feature Huey Newton, who was in jail in Alameda County, Berkeley, following an assault conviction.

Newton was jailed for killing a police officer in Berkeley in October 1967. The shootout occurred when Newton was out with his friend, Gene McKinney, driving his car and celebrating the end of his probationary period. The two bumped into a police officer named John Frey, who happened to have in his dashboard a list of twenty cars that the Oakland police had identified as Black Panther vehicles. Realising Newton was there, Frey quickly called for backup and stopped Newton and his friend. What started as a mere check and search turned out to be a shoot-out between Newton and Frey and his fellow Officer Herbert Heanes. The shootout ended with Frey dead and the other three wounded.⁷⁴¹

Newton was immediately arrested, and though he pled not guilty of killing Frey, he was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and faced a death penalty. However, while in prison, Newton's case was handled by attorney Charles Garry who was assigned to defend Newton through trial proceedings. In the meantime, the BPP formed a coalition with other organisations such as the white leftist Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) and SNCC in favour of Newton's freedom.

Historian Jane Rhodes contends that while Newton remained in custody, the popular Bay Area print media such as *Oakland Tribune* and *San Francisco Examiner* reacted to his case and his trials with a flurry of extensive coverage.⁷⁴² However, the radical black-owned

⁷⁴⁰ John Woodford, 'Messaging the Blackman', p. 1.

⁷⁴¹ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, *Black against Empire*, p. 99-100, 105-106; Joe Street, 'The Shadow of the Soul Breaker: Solitary Confinement, Cocaine, and the Decline of Huey P. Newton', *Pacific Historical Review*, 84.03, (2015), pp.333-363 (p. 334), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 26 July 2021].

⁷⁴² Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007), pp. 133-136.

journals played a significant role in setting Huey free. *The Paper* urged its readers to rally to support his freedom while *The Movement* raised funds through its readership to reinforce his freedom.⁷⁴³ Likewise, *The Black Panther* newspaper, the mouthpiece of the BPP, exonerated Newton via inflammatory rhetoric and headlines and solicited financial and political support in favour of his freedom.⁷⁴⁴

If the black-oriented media accrued more significant impact over his freedom, then the white media in the Bay Area sought to push Newton to face a death penalty. Some white publishers, such as William F. Knowland, *The Oakland Tribune*'s owner, were determined to convict Newton to face a gas chamber penalty via derogatory and hatemonger reports.⁷⁴⁵ Other white-owned newspapers, such as *The Oakland Post*, also seemed very antagonistic towards the Panthers. When its office was firebombed in the summer of 1968, the newspapers implicitly accused the Panthers. After this crisis, though its publisher, Tom Berkeley, showed some sympathy towards Newton when he was in jail, his hostility towards the Panthers continued.⁷⁴⁶

In opposition to the white media's open hostility, the radical black-owned media declared that it would retaliate if Newton was executed. *Liberation New Service* declared that freeing Huey was a challenge to stamp out racism and imperialism in the U.S, whereas *Berkeley Barb* threatened that, 'The high stake [...] is not life or death for Huey, but life or death for

⁷⁴³ 'Huey Newton Is', *The Paper*, 4 January 1968, pp.8,10; 'Huey Newton Must be Saved', *The Movement*, 1 December 1967, p.2.

⁷⁴⁴ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, pp. 128-129.

⁷⁴⁵ Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 139.

⁷⁴⁶ Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 272 in, <<https://z-lib.org/>> [accessed 25 August 2020].

the United States.’⁷⁴⁷ James Forman, the executive secretary of the SNCC, also warned police, CIA, and the FBI that he would take revenge if Newton be murdered in jail, ‘[...] I tell you this [...] the sky is the limit if you kill Huey Newton. The sky is the limit if Huey Newton dies,’ warned Forman.⁷⁴⁸

The story of Newton and the Black Panthers appealed to Woodford, who declared that the latter was one of the biggest stories in 1968 and one which was worth reporting in *Ebony*. Yet, when he looked to run a profile on Newton, he was barred by Johnson. Such a reaction forced Woodford to resign from his position in *Ebony* to join the NOI’s newspaper *Muhammed Speak*.⁷⁴⁹ In a letter written to Johnson, Woodford declared that his resignation from his position at the JPC was because ‘JPC refuses to help the jailed Huey P. Newton [...] and for countless other reasons, which, all in all, I take as insults to the African American country and to myself’.⁷⁵⁰

Moreover, his editor’s resignation was further compounded by external factors, with Black Power advocates denouncing Johnson for not fully reflecting the cause of the black struggle. In December 1969, 25 black militants, among them the popular poet Don Lee, picketed at the JPC, protesting that the magazine had to do more to reflect upon the growing black

⁷⁴⁷ 'Free Huey Newton', *Liberation News Service*, 3 September 1968, p.14; 'Nation's Life at Stake', *Berkeley Barb*, July 19-25 1968, p.3.

⁷⁴⁸ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 526; Joe Street, 'Free Huey or the Sky's the Limit': The Black Panther Party and the Campaign to Free Huey P. Newton', *European journal of American studies*, 14.01, (2019), pp.1-21 (p. 9), in <file://studenthome> [accessed 1 September 2020].

⁷⁴⁹ John Woodford, 'Testing America's Promise of Free Speech: Muhammad Speaks in the 1960s, A Memoir', *Voices of the African Diaspora*, 07.03, (1991), pp.3-16 (p. 3-5), in <<https://www.freedomarchives.org/>> [accessed 20 August 2020].

⁷⁵⁰ John Woodford, Message to JPC, Hoyt Fuller collection, box 15, folder 20; E. James West, 'Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History', p. 132.

consciousness and black militancy. The picket castigated *Ebony* for filling its pages with stories which overemphasised the white skin while ignoring, ‘a sense of pride [...] the intellectual development or functioning of black people in their struggle for liberation’.⁷⁵¹

The picket by black militants was ignored by Johnson, who claimed that his magazine had encouraged black militants to write for *Ebony*.⁷⁵² Yet, he was compelled to yield to the black militants’ demands to avoid future pickets or public condemnation. As a result, he felt obligated to include the Black Panthers. Johnson maintained solid editorial control, according to media researcher Tony Atwater, who argues that *Ebony* exhibited Johnson's personal viewpoint.⁷⁵³ By contrast, Johnson did not have total control over *Ebony*’s focus or orientation as many topics and articles were suggested or managed by his editors. As stated in chapter one, Johnson consented his senior editor Bennett publishing stories about Black Power activists not because Johnson was interested in them, but because his editor had a strong tendency to do so, which was why the two had a falling out over their inclusion in *Ebony*. Phyl Garland declared that, ‘We editorial people think in terms of informing the public. The publisher thinks in terms of business [...] But in the long run, he usually will do what we want.’⁷⁵⁴ Johnson himself stated that he published stories with which he was dissatisfied. He proudly asserted in his autobiography that by paying close attention to the

⁷⁵¹ "Ebony" Hit For Lack of Militancy.', *The Washington Post*, 31 December 1969, p.2; Haki Madhubuti (The HistoryMakers A1999.006), interviewed by Julieanna L. Richardson, December 20, 1999, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 4, story 5, Haki Madhubuti talks about conflicts with magazine publisher John H. Johnson.

⁷⁵² Walter Morrison, 'Ebony's Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History', *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975, p.19-A.

⁷⁵³ Tony Atwater, 'Ebony's Civil Rights Focus: A Study of Editorial Policy Before and After the Civil Rights act OF 1964', (Published Ph.D thesis, Michigan State University, 1980), p. 5, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED189613.pdf>.

⁷⁵⁴ Janet Chusmir, 'No Black is Free until All Free, 'Ebony Editor Works for Change', *The Miami Herald*, 27 July 1971, p.41.

black struggle, he contributed to laying the groundwork for it. Yet, he also admitted that, [...] ‘I’d be lying if I say that I published these stories without reservation [...] I didn’t know what I was doing [...].’⁷⁵⁵

Another motive which drove Johnson to engage with the Black Panthers was the timing of the Huey Newton campaign. The Oakland based white-owned newspaper *Oakland Tribune* singled out the Newton case as one of the most significant news events of the year.⁷⁵⁶ Indeed, the Free Huey campaign was a rallying cry as it symbolised solidarity and racial coalition as many white students and anti-war activists joined the campaign to reverse the conviction and set Newton free.⁷⁵⁷ The campaign had even resonated beyond the borders of the U.S, propelling the Third World decolonisation movement to support his case and demand his freedom.⁷⁵⁸

In fact, 1968 was the year of “trials and triumphs”. The Senate enacted the Fair Housing Act on the day Dr. King was murdered. The BPP rose to prominence, but its leaders were killed or thrown in jail. Black American athletics Tommie Smith and John Carlos received the gold and bronze medals in the 200-meter dash at the Olympic Games in Mexico City but immediately stripped from their titles on raising a Black Power salute. Historians Robert C.

⁷⁵⁵ John H. Johnson with Lerone Bennett Jr., *Succeeding against the Odds, the Autobiography of a Great American Businessman* (New York: Amstad Press, 1989), pp. 287-288.

⁷⁵⁶ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: the Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007), p. 132 in, <<https://z-lib.org/>> [accessed 20 August 2020].

⁷⁵⁷ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, *Black against Empire*, pp. 108-111; Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, pp. 130-135; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (London: Wildow House London, 1973), p. 201; Joe Street, “Free Huey or the Sky’s the Limit”, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁵⁸ Joe Street, “Free Huey or the Sky’s the Limit”, p. 1.

Cottrell, Blaine T. Browne contends that in 1968, 'it seemed as if anything were possible [...]'.⁷⁵⁹

Because of these factors, Johnson found himself obliged to follow the parade and move with the ebbs and flows of the movement. This could be clearly manifested in his decision to assign his West Coast editor and the head of *Ebony's* office in California, Louie Robinson, to visit Newton to interview him in his cell at Alameda County jail in Oakland, as many journalists and reporters were doing at the time.⁷⁶⁰ Escorted by his lawyer Charles Garry, Robinson conducted a revealing interview with Newton, which focused on the goals and the ideologies of the BPP, his time in prison, how he endured its politics, and the attitudes of the prison's officials.⁷⁶¹ In fact, Newton was familiar with *Ebony's* publications as he used to read copies of the magazine while incarcerated.⁷⁶² *Ebony* and its articles on the black struggle and the black challenges confronting black Americans would later assist Newton in developing his opinions on the black liberation movement. Newton admitted in his autobiography that *Ebony*, 'had—and still has—a profound effect on me'.⁷⁶³

It was probably due to this connection that *Ebony* singled out Newton to appear in its 'The Black Revolution' symposium. 'The Black Panthers' manifesto (which was in fact excerpts from his interview testimony) outlined in a favourable light the BPP's aims of eradicating capitalism, which Newton believed was a blatant form of oppression. Like Carmichael's

⁷⁵⁹ De Robert C. Cottrell, Blaine T. Browne, *1968: The Rise and Fall of the New American Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), preface, p. ix.

⁷⁶⁰ Huey P. Newton, 'I found Freedom in Jail', *Ebony*, May 1973, p.58; Joe Street, 'The Shadow of the Soul Breaker: Solitary Confinement, Cocaine, and the Decline of Huey P. Newton', *Pacific Historical Review*, 84.03, (2015), pp.333-363 (p. 343), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 26 July 2021].

⁷⁶¹ Huey P. Newton, 'I found Freedom in Jail', *Ebony*, May 1973. p. 58.

⁷⁶² Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 3.

⁷⁶³ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p.3.

approach, Newton called for autonomy, self-control, and self-determination in which black people could seize American wealth and resources for adequate production and consumption. Newton believed that for these approaches to work out, black people should eradicate capitalism and forge a socialistic society where all black people can participate in the decision-making, which can in turn liberate them.⁷⁶⁴

Although Newton's article was revealing, it was quickly mocked by the white-owned media. The white-owned newspaper *The Indianapolis Star* negated Newton's approach and noted that such a program would be a failure because any society needs a ruling system which decides, 'what to produce and for whom to produce'. The newspaper concluded, '[...] it is what the Black Panther Huey Newton views as a remedy for the shortcomings of our society. It is a mirage'.⁷⁶⁵ Similarly, Newton's appearance also seemed largely unwelcomed by *Ebony's* moderate readership, which propelled them to delve into heated debates around the Black Panthers, their cause, and the rationale behind their appearance in *Ebony*.

'An Appalling Outpouring of Unbridled Hate': *Ebony*, the Black Readership, and the Debate over the Black Panthers

Ebony's decision to feature Newton did not seem to bode well as many of *Ebony's* moderate readers accused the magazine of being a leftist outlet, while others had cancelled their subscription because they deemed the magazine to be too militant.⁷⁶⁶ Minneapolis resident Lociese E. Deneff informed *Ebony* that his friends had also cancelled their subscription because they found the magazine to be overly radical, whereas San Francisco

⁷⁶⁴ Huey Newton, 'The Black Panther Party', *Ebony*, August 1969, pp.107-112.

⁷⁶⁵ 'Huey Newton's Mirage', *The Indianapolis Star*, 24 September 1969, p.23.

⁷⁶⁶ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, February 1970, pp.16-17.

reader Gordon Brigman accused *Ebony* of being a separatist magazine due to the ways it condoned the BPP.⁷⁶⁷

Despite such criticism, other readers may have pushed *Ebony* to feature the Black Panthers on other occasions. In May 1972, *Ebony* listed Newton as one of the most influential black Americans in the U.S. In its 'The 100 Most Influential Black Americans', which was a follow-up to its 1963 'America's 100 Most Influential Negroes' special feature, *Ebony* selected Newton among the 100 black figures and activists who, 'decisively affected, for better or for worse, the lives, the thinking, and the actions of black people in America'.⁷⁶⁸ *Ebony* declared that the figures that appeared in this special issue were selected in response to numerous letters from readers who asked the magazine to feature them.⁷⁶⁹

While *Ebony* never revealed whether Newton appeared because of its readers' demands, clear evidence points to professional respect paid by some readers to the Panthers. Francisco resident and the black soldier Larry Burton declared that the reason for writing to *Ebony* was because, '[...] in almost every edition, there is someone who is downing one of our black leaders', referring to the Black Panthers. Burton expressed his support for the Panthers, stating that despite being violent, they were fighting and sometimes risking their lives for the liberation of black Americans.⁷⁷⁰

The readers' support pushed for more efforts and encouraged the magazine to endorse them on other occasions. In 1973, *Ebony* collaborated with the Southwestern Company, an entrepreneurial program for university students, to praise and honour Newton. *Ebony* decided

⁷⁶⁷ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, May 1972, p. 11; Letters to the Editors, *Ebony*, October 1969, p. 26.

⁷⁶⁸ 'America's 100 Most Influential Negroes', *Ebony*, September 1963, pp.228-232; 'The 100 Most Influential Black Americans', *Ebony*, May 1972, p.82.

⁷⁶⁹ 'The 100 Most Influential Black Americans, p. 77.

⁷⁷⁰ 'Letters to the Editors, *Ebony*, December 1970, p.24.

to feature Newton in its new volume, 'The Ebony Success Library', a set of books which featured pivotal black figures who were invaluable to the spur of black America and the growth of the black liberation struggle.⁷⁷¹ In its volume, *Ebony* provided positive writings about Newton, often calling him Mr. Newton while reminding its audience of his role in the party and what he aspired to do for the black liberation struggle.⁷⁷²

Ebony declared that the reason behind featuring Newton was because of his focal role in the black struggle. Indeed, in a special letter sent to Newton, *Ebony* and the Southwestern Company declared that they were proud to include him in *Ebony*'s volume because of his contribution to the struggle of African Americans. The pair also expressed their gratitude and admiration for his activism by concluding that, 'you are to be congratulated for what you are adding to our lives [...] your life is a tangible proof of what a person can become through willpower, determination, and a burning desire to succeed'.⁷⁷³

Ebony's endorsement of Newton was quickly developed to feature him again in its pages. In May 1973, *Ebony* afresh featured Newton in its new department, 'Liberation' by recalling his time in jail and how he endured and defied prison officials.⁷⁷⁴ Yet, despite *Ebony*'s efforts to popularise Newton, many of its moderate readers remained dissatisfied. Some readers questioned the rationale behind *Ebony* having selected Newton and Bobby Seale in its 'The

⁷⁷¹ Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, M0864. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif, announcement for inclusion in "The *Ebony* Success Library" box 2, folder 10; *Ebony* Editors, *The Ebony Success Library*, Vol 1 (Chicago: The Southwestern Co. & Johnson Pub. Co., 1973), p.236.

⁷⁷² *Ebony* Authors, *The Ebony Success Library*, Vol 1 (Chicago: The Southwestern Co. & Johnson Pub. Co., 1973), p. 236.

⁷⁷³ Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, "The *Ebony* Success Library" box 2, folder 10.

⁷⁷⁴ Huey P. Newton, 'I found Freedom in Jail', *Ebony*, May 1973.

100 Most Influential Black Americans' series, asking the magazine to exclude them from its selection as both were considered to be firebrands.⁷⁷⁵

Other readers went further to denounce the Panthers' ideologies and their appearance in *Ebony*. New York reader Victoria Christiano compared the Panthers with the Italian Mafia and claimed that their interests were only confined to, 'their pocket and self-aggrandizement'.⁷⁷⁶ Michigan resident Bill Bennett, however, (not a relative of Lerone Bennett) lamented Newton's manifesto published in 'The Black Revolution' special issue, describing his thoughts as, 'an appalling outpouring of unbridled hate'. Bennett noted that Newton and his comrades would drag themselves into their own demise because of their, 'own blind hatred of anything and everything not Black Panthers-inspired [...]'.⁷⁷⁷

The BPP's appearance in *Ebony* led to a contentious debate between the readers, often attacking and condemning *Ebony* and sometimes each other for their comments and thoughts on the Black Panthers. Barry L. Hicks, Christiano's neighbour, championed the Panthers by attacking her, 'If Miss Christiano [...] is tired of people backing up the Panthers, I am more than tired of people like her'.⁷⁷⁸ Francisco resident Larry Burton urged his peers to stop condemning the Panthers, declaring that, 'we should be glad that someone has overcome the fear of going to jail or even death to help us' addressing his audience, 'Just get yourself together enough to do the same'.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, May 1970, p. 18.

⁷⁷⁶ 'Letters to the Editors', p. 18.

⁷⁷⁷ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, November 1969, pp. 18-19.

⁷⁷⁸ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, July 1970, p.23.

⁷⁷⁹ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, December 1970, p.24.

Although Larry Burton aligned himself with the Panthers, most of *Ebony*'s readers were not in favour of them, most likely because they were moderate and hence, not identified with the Black Panthers or their ideologies. However, while the readers were clashing over the appearance of the Black Panthers, *Ebony*'s editors were being invited on many occasions to speak for, eulogise, and commemorate the martyrs of the BPP. In August 1971, Dolores J. Smith, chairman of Fred Hampton Legal Assistance Scholarship Fund, invited Bennett, along with other prominent Civil rights activists such as Ralph Abernathy, to a scholarship presentation which was a tribute to Fred Hampton, a member of the BPP who was murdered in his bed in December 1969 in Chicago during a predawn raid led by the Chicago Police Department and the FBI. Smith's letter highlighted the activism of Hampton to Bennett and informed him that the fund was established for all black students who were committed to continuing the fight for liberation.⁷⁸⁰

It was uncertain if Bennett attended the scholarship presentation as he turned down many invitations due to his hectic schedule. However, a new decade emerged to set the stage for black Americans to make impressive strides in politics, academia, and business. Johnson noticed that black liberation in the 1970s should be achieved, 'not through the radical action, but "through a shift to the middle."' ⁷⁸¹ Indeed, if Black Power of the 1960s was rife with racial turmoil, discord, and murder, then Black Power of the 1970s would be brim-full with celebrity, political action, and intellectual activities.

With the growth of the black middle-class and black America in the early 1970s, the Black Panthers began to defuse their revolutionary tactics, with Bobby Seale (co-founder of the BPP) revealing his intention to enter conventional politics. His efforts in reverting to more

⁷⁸⁰ Dolores J. Smith to Bennett, Letters 60-70, box 1, Lerone Bennett, Jr. papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

⁷⁸¹ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*, p.111.

traditional politics signalled a move from the left to the middle and propelled *Ebony* to reflect his endeavour.

***Ebony*, Bobby Seale, and the Shift to the Middle**

Ebony's contributor Sheeri Mitchell noted that in the early 1970s, *Ebony* was at the forefront of discussion on the need for Black Power, self-acceptance, and black unity.⁷⁸² Indeed, *Ebony* was always at the heart of the modern black struggle due to the ways it discussed and addressed its goals, debates, and perspectives. In August 1970, *Ebony* published another special issue titled 'Which Way Black America?', printed by an array of Civil Rights and Black Power advocates such as Whitney Young, James Boggs, and Julius Lester. The special issue discussed the multi-faceted orientations of the modern black liberation struggle and how black Americans were seeking to achieve freedom for black Americans.⁷⁸³ *The Boston Globe* newspaper noted that the special issue was, 'a true interpretation of black feeling today in America.'⁷⁸⁴

However, the early 1970s seemed to mark a turning point in the mainstream of the Black Power Movement as Black Power's militant and revolutionary approaches began to fade away from the social and political spotlight. This was due to the increased efforts of elected black officials and the Black Student Movement, who proved effective in mitigating the radical waves of Black Power.⁷⁸⁵ Historian Tom Adam Davies argues, however, that the mainstream white politicians and institutions such as the Ford Foundation also played a

⁷⁸² Sheeri Mitchell, *The Afro-Americans of the 1970s: Black History from the Pages of EBONY* (2020) <<https://www.ebony.com/>> [accessed 9 August 2020].

⁷⁸³ See, 'Which Way Black America', *Ebony*, August 1970.

⁷⁸⁴ Arthur Jones, 'Black Magazines, Born of Necessity, Now Flourishing', *The Boston Globe*, 25 July 1971, p.47.

⁷⁸⁵ Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power*, p.199.

crucial role in defusing the radical and revolutionary agendas of Black Power by striving to meet the political and economic demands that Black Power had asked.⁷⁸⁶

On the other hand, the fading-away of the radical and revolutionary waves of Black Power could also be attributable to its major leaders having been jailed, in exile, or underground. Stokely Carmichael, the pivotal figure of Black Power, fled to Guinea in 1969 on FBI infiltration and provocation and changed his name to Kwame Ture.⁷⁸⁷ Eldridge Cleaver and his wife Kathleen Cleaver escaped to Algeria in 1969 after an attempted murder charge while Bobby Seale and Huey Newton were in prison.⁷⁸⁸ Such dispersion left Black Power in disarray, which would in turn propel its advocates to temper their militant approaches and redirect their ambitions towards politics and popular culture as a means to transform black America.

This disintegration paralleled with a substantial reduction in the editorial left-wing's duties at the JPC. Allan Morrison, who was a Civil Rights activist and an established editor at the JPC, died in May 1968.⁷⁸⁹ In February 1970, Bennett was rushed to the hospital to have a 20-year-old ulcer removal and remained absent from his editorial duties at the JPC for about four months.⁷⁹⁰ David Llorens, the militant and the leftist editor at the JPC, died in a car accident

⁷⁸⁶ Tom Adam Davis, *Mainstreaming Black Power* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 11-12 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 19 July 2021].

⁷⁸⁷ Curtis J. Austin, *Up against the Wall*, pp.147-149.

⁷⁸⁸ Austin, *Up against the Wall*, p. 199; Lina Benabdallah, *Algeria and the American Black Panther Party* (2020) <<https://africasacountry.com/>> [accessed 30 August 2020]; Paul Delaney, 'Panthers Exchanging Guns for Ballots', *The New York Times*, 20 August 1972, p.1.

⁷⁸⁹ 'Allan Morrison, 51, *Ebony* Editor Here', *The New York Times*, 24 May 1968, p.47.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, May 1970, p.25.

in November 1973, and in less than two years, A. Peter Bailey resigned from his position as an associate editor for *Ebony* (though he remained a contributor to the magazine).⁷⁹¹

In light of these trends, references to Black Power in *Ebony* became less oriented towards radicalism or black revolution.⁷⁹² Historian Robin D. G. Kelley, adds that during the early 1970s, there was, '[...] a little less talk about revolution and more emphasis on winning local elections.'⁷⁹³ Indeed, black America began, in the early 1970s, to gather strength in the electoral process.⁷⁹⁴ As such, African American representation in Congress increased significantly. By 1972, eighty-six black mayors ran major cities like Cleveland, Ohio, and Washington D.C and about 14 black representatives and one senator served in the U.S Congress.⁷⁹⁵ Shirley Chisholm of New York stole the limelight within the black political spectrum as she became the first female candidate for president of the U.S in 1972.⁷⁹⁶ Blacks also gained three seats in the white House in 1972 alone and within the same year, 23 candidates won elections in state legislature, increasing the number from 204 in 30 states to

⁷⁹¹ 'David Llorens, 34, Writer and Editor', *The New York Times*, 2 December 1973, p.85; , 'D.E. Llorens, Professor, Black Writer', *The Washington Post*, 29 November 1973, p.11, , *A. Peter Bailey* (2020) <<https://www.thehistorymakers.org>> [accessed 20 May 2020].

⁷⁹² West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett*, p.104.

⁷⁹³ De Robin D. G. Kelley, *Into the Fire: African Americans Since 1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11.

⁷⁹⁴ Charles P. Henry, 'Ebony Elite: America's Most Influential Blacks', *Phylon*, 42.02, (1981), pp.120-132 (p. 120), in <<https://www.jstor.org/>> [accessed 25 August 2020].

⁷⁹⁵ De Marlee Richards, *America in the 1970s* (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2010), p. 71; Mia L. Anderson, 'I Dig You, Chocolate City', p.400.

⁷⁹⁶ Anastasia Curwood, 'Black Feminism on Capitol Hill: Shirley Chisholm and Movement Politics, 1968–1984', *Meridians*, 13.01, (2015), 204-232 (p. 204), in <<https://dlwqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/51454896> > [accessed 27 July 2021]; Towela M. Munthali, 'Pushing the Glass Ceiling: Shirley Chisholm & the Democratic Party', *Women Leading Change*, 3.2, (2018), pp.15-24 (p. 15), in <<https://journals.tulane.edu/>> [accessed 27 July 2021].

227 in 38 states.⁷⁹⁷ Black female activist Coretta Scott King described these gains ‘a real step forward for Black Power.’⁷⁹⁸

Amidst such an impressive gain in the political spectrum, the Black Panthers saw their revolutionary stance, ‘extinct’. Kathleen Cleaver declared that the Black Panther Party was ‘dead [...] obsolete, and non-functional’.⁷⁹⁹ A U.S senate subcommittee and the FBI (which sought to neutralise the BPP in the past few years) reflected her sentiment, explicitly declaring that the Panthers of the 1970s no longer posed a real threat to internal security.⁸⁰⁰

As such, the Black Panthers revealed their intention to temper their revolutionary approaches to meet new political goals. Bobby Seale admitted that their revolutionary activities, confrontation with police, and militant stance achieved nothing but death, killings, and arrests. Therefore, he believed that the BPP had to shift its strategies and start collaborating with the Black middle-class and using their political and intellectual skills to achieve liberation.⁸⁰¹

The white owned-media such as *The Washington Post* welcomed this shift, noting that ‘the emphasis has changed [...] from the old “by any means necessary”, to the new “by any means available.”’⁸⁰² However, this metamorphosis had in turn created good conditions for the Black Panther and other Civil Rights organisations to have some common ground,

⁷⁹⁷ ‘Annual Progress’, *Ebony*, January 1973, p. 34.

⁷⁹⁸ Coretta Scott King, *My Life, My Love, My legacy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017), p. 243 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 15 October 2020].

⁷⁹⁹ Cordell S. Thompson, ‘Mrs. Eldridge Cleaver Returns to U.S to Give State of Revolution Message’, *Jet*, 2 December 1971, pp.21,24.

⁸⁰⁰ ‘Mrs. Eldridge Cleaver Returns to U.S to Give State of Revolution Message’, *Jet*, p.21.

⁸⁰¹ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), pp. 83-84.

⁸⁰² Paul Hendrickson, ‘Revolutionary Reconsiderations’, *The Washington Post*, 10 March 1978, p.3.

achieving liberation through democratic endeavours rather than violent revolutionary tactics.⁸⁰³

The clearest example of the BPP's shift to the middle was their attempt to pursue conventional politics. In 1972, the Black Panthers saw no choice but to put down guns and start to conduct voter registration drives in light of the increased black political representation in the Congress, in federal, state, and local branches and offices. In fact, Bobby Seale admitted that, 'the politics of guns and revolution had failed' adding that 'it's about time we started getting things together [...] running for offices are "part of our new program of going into politics at the grass-root level."'804

As a result, Seale announced his intention to run for mayor of Oakland. *The Black Panther* newspaper declared that the aim of this endeavour was because the previous mayors had turned "a blind eye" to the black issues in Oakland such as poverty, slum conditions, oppression, and police brutality.⁸⁰⁵ Seale intended to become a mayor to meet and address the social issues facing the local black residents of Oakland, 'The dress doesn't make any difference' declared Seale, 'The people see me as one who wants to end their exploitation [...].'⁸⁰⁶

The BPP's new direction and the metamorphosis of Seale as a moderate figure appealed to the major black leaders. Vernon E. Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League

⁸⁰³ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, p. 83.

⁸⁰⁴ Roger Wilkins, 'Bobby Seale for Mayor?', *The Washington Post*, 7 May 1973, p.22.

⁸⁰⁵ The Black Panther, *Chairman Bobby Seale for Mayor!*, ed. by David Hilliard (New York: Atria Books, 2007), p. 70; Lon Daniels, 'Seale Expects to Win Bay Mayor's Race', *The San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1973, p.16.

⁸⁰⁶ Donna Murch, *Living for the City*, p.191.

(NUL) was pleased with Seale's new direction.⁸⁰⁷ Jesse L. Jackson, director of Operation People United to Save Humanity (PUSH), was also glad to invite members of the BPP for his July 1972 summit to discuss and address the black problems with the major leaders.⁸⁰⁸

The radical and underground black and white magazines and newspapers supported Seale's endeavours. *Great Speckled Bird* marvelled and welcomed his endeavour, casting his shift, 'a noticeable change [...] Suits and ties have replaced Bobby Seale's familiar leather outfit. So, too the language has changed'.⁸⁰⁹ *Chicago Tribune* commended the Panthers for redirecting their efforts towards electoral politics, reiterating its declaration that the Black Panthers had the right to choose any alternative method which would best achieve liberation.⁸¹⁰ Even popular white newspapers such as *The Washington Post* applauded Seale's endeavours, with its journalist Roger Wilkins rethinking Seale's position within the black struggle, 'I never thought he was a killer' said Wilkins, '[...] he always argued that the Panthers were not racists and I believe him.'⁸¹¹

Nonetheless, not all the print media welcomed Seale's campaign. The North Carolinian newspaper *The Charlotte Observer* wondered why a young black leader who was feared and despised in the 1960s could run for mayor of Oakland, 'there is something poignant now [...] ' wrote the newspaper, 'there was Julian Bond of Georgia [...] now a respected member

⁸⁰⁷ Paul Delaney, 'Panthers Exchanging Guns for Ballots', *The New York Times*, 20 August 1972, p.1.

⁸⁰⁸ Paul Delaney, 'Jesse Jackson Calls for Summit Meeting of Black Leaders to Set Priorities', *The New York Times*, 6 July 1972, p.21.

⁸⁰⁹ *The Washington Post*, Paul Hendrickson, 'Bobby Seale, Ex-Black Panther Living his own Life', *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, 15 April 1978, p.27; Habalo Bebe Mbutu, 'Bobby Seale & Oakland', *Great Speckled Bird*, pp.14-15.

⁸¹⁰ Vernon Jarrett, 'Life: Prerequisite to option', *Chicago Tribune*, 23 January 1973, p.18.

⁸¹¹ Roger Wilkins, 'Bobby Seale for Mayor?', *The Washington Post*, p.22.

of the Georgia State Legislature [...] and now there is Bobby Seale running for a mayor of Oakland. Bobby Seale for mayor?' wondered the newspaper.⁸¹²

Though these white outlets sought to downplay Seale and disrupt his campaign, Seale moved on as he started to canvas the local resident of Oakland and hand out leaflets with quick handshaking forays.⁸¹³ Seale was also delivering conferences and speeches in many districts and states. During his speeches, Seale advocated a freeze on property taxes, with a 1% tax on privately owned stocks and bonds. He also promised to provide more jobs, senior citizens' safety programs, decent housing, and preventive medical care units.⁸¹⁴

Yet, the mainstream white print media was persistent in disrupting his campaign as the majority favoured and aligned themselves with the white candidate and the previous mayor John Reading. *The San Francisco Examiner* doubted the likely outcomes of Seale's success due to his past distorted image.⁸¹⁵ *Oakland Tribune*, however, stood up for Reading, hoping that he would win and anxiously declaring that, '[...] if (John Reading) doesn't make it, Seale will be the runoff opponent'.⁸¹⁶

Ebony commended his efforts at the JPC, prompting the magazine to undertake an in-depth interview with him. Rather than backing Seale's mayoral campaign, *Ebony* wanted to discover more about his ties with the black middle class. While *Ebony* was a magazine geared at the black middle class, it seemed content to see Seale avoiding a violent revolution and moving to the middle instead. More simplistically, the interview centred on Seale and the

⁸¹² Roger Wilkins, 'Bobby Seale Gives 'The System' a Chance', *The Charlotte Observer*, 12 May 1973, p.10.

⁸¹³ Gayle Montgomery, 'Mayor's Run off Top Election', *Oakland Tribune*, 13 May 1973, p.1.

⁸¹⁴ 'Bobby Seale Bids for Mayor Post', *The Californian*, 16 April 1973, p.25.

⁸¹⁵ Lon Daniels, 'Seale Expects to Win Bay Mayor's Race', *The San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1973, p.16.

⁸¹⁶ Gayle Montgomery, 'The Hottest City Election in Years', *Oakland Tribune*, 15 April 1973, p.29.

black middle-class link and how Seale intended to co-opt with the latter. Before his mayoral campaign, Seale had expressed reservations about the black middle class, frequently criticising them for turning their backs on the black masses.⁸¹⁷ However, he retracted his denunciation of the black middle class during his campaign, 'I have criticised the middle-class but not in a negative sense' declared Seale [...] we encourage them to donate their time to our projects [...].⁸¹⁸

In fact, the retraction of his criticism was to generate support from the black businesses or the black-middle class in favour of his candidacy. His comrade Elaine Brown declared that, '[...] the so-called black middle class became more than a smattering of Survival Program supporters. Our electoral campaign was one all of them could openly support. It was that support we sought'.⁸¹⁹

Ebony also hoped that his endeavour would signal an end to the BPP's paramilitarism and would mark a new stage in the thrust for black liberation.⁸²⁰ Seale reiterated on many occasions that his candidacy was part of the black liberation struggle in the U.S. He emphasised that putting liberators in offices was a key step to seize control of the political process in some areas to give or equalise opportunities between whites and blacks.⁸²¹

In the Bay Area, Seale surprised Reading as he propelled him into a runoff campaign because Reading missed getting the majority by some 60 votes. *The Washington Post*

⁸¹⁷ Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City*, pp. 207-211; Robert Strand, 'A New Bobby Seale Runs for Mayor in Oakland', *Tulare Advance Register*, 2 January 1972.

⁸¹⁸ Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City*, pp. 207-211; Robert Strand, 'A New Bobby Seale Runs for Mayor in Oakland', *Tulare Advance Register*, 2 January 1972, p.8; B. J. Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', *Ebony*, pp.82,87.

⁸¹⁹ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), p. 324.

⁸²⁰ B. J. Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p. 80.

⁸²¹ Habalo Bebe Mbutu, 'Bobby Seale & Oakland', *Great Speckled Bird*, 7 May 1973, pp.14-15.

declared that this was ‘a major achievement for Seale and the Panthers’ while Charles Garry, his lawyer during his trial, marvelled at such an impressive stride, ‘[...] Just two years ago, I was defending Bobby against murder charges in New Haven’.⁸²² *Chicago Tribune* had even speculated that Seale would win, with the outlet headlining ‘Seale winds up Oakland Campaign’.⁸²³

Despite such impressive strides, Seale’s endeavour was unsuccessful as he lost the campaign to the incumbent mayor Reading in the runoff. Yet, he came in second, accumulating over 47,000 votes.⁸²⁴ *The Black Panther* claimed this as ‘A people’s victory’ while the white contributor Earl Caldwell of the regional *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* was impressed by the dramatic change that Seale’s campaign had brought to the image of the BPP, ‘his vote total was evidence enough that the “new” Black Panther party has arrived’.⁸²⁵ Seale promised that he would fight for political convention in the future, ‘[...] We are going back to the ballot’ declared Seale, ‘We worked for a people’s plan and we haven’t stopped yet’.⁸²⁶

Coinciding with his loss, *Ebony* printed a special issue on the black middle class; an insightful study carried out by *Ebony*’s editors and other contributors who provided their own analysis and views on the nature, size, and orientation of the black middle-class in

⁸²² Leroy F. Aarons, 'Seale Gains Runoff in Race for Mayor', *The Washington Post*, 19 April 1973, p.9.

⁸²³ 'Seale winds up Oakland Campaign', *Chicago Tribune*, 14 May 1973, p.72.

⁸²⁴ B. J. Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p.81.

⁸²⁵ 'A People's Victory', *The Black Panther*, 19 May 1973, p.1; Earl Caldwell, 'A New Panther Party', *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 May 1973, p.22.

⁸²⁶ 'Seale Makes Impressive Showing in Mayor's Race', *Jet*, 2 December 1971, p.6; 'Mayor of Oakland Vows to Work with Loser Bobby Seale', *The Washington Post*, 17 May 1973, p.2.

America.⁸²⁷ In this special issue, *Ebony* featured Seale as “the embodiment of the middle-class”. The feature, headlined ‘*A Shift to the Middle*’, focused on his mayoral campaign and approach to the black middle-class. *Ebony* welcomed this as a significant step to meet black political endeavours.⁸²⁸ Meanwhile, *Ebony*’s reaction to Seale could also be perceived as an attempt to forge an image of respectability about him to its audience. *Ebony* informed its readers that Seale and his peers had become peaceful figures rather than revolutionary personas, ‘Seale is now known a peaceful man working to change the system from within’.⁸²⁹ The Illinois white owned-newspaper *Herald and Review* also shared *Ebony*’s sentiment, pointing out that Bobby Seale, [...] had gone on to work within the American political system [...] Mr. Seale lost to Mayor Reading, but he vowed to continue working within the system’.⁸³⁰

Such a backdrop was further complemented by a dozen photographs that *Ebony* offered. While Seale shed his leather jacket for modern business suits, *Ebony* sought to use this as a means to further rebrand Seale to its audience. Historian Maren Stange contends that *Ebony* always sought to avoid images of degradation and victimisation of blacks in its pages to represent naturalised images of class respectability and achievements.⁸³¹ Within this context, *Ebony* deliberately ignored imagery such as his revolutionary outfit, which could be used to distort his image. It instead provided excellent photographs showing him wearing a suit and a

⁸²⁷ John H. Johnson, the Publisher statement, August 1973, *Ebony*, p. 32; see the Black Middle Class, *Ebony*, August 1937.

⁸²⁸ B. J. Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p.80.

⁸²⁹ Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p.82.

⁸³⁰ 'Bobby Seale, A Worthy Opponent', *Herald and Review*, p.6.

⁸³¹ Maren Stange, 'Photographs taken in everyday life: *Ebony*’s photojournalistic discourse', in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by Todd Vogel (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press., 2001), p. 208.

tie, delivering his programs in front of a black and white audience, and greeted by white by-passers ahead of his mayoral campaign.⁸³²

Moreover, *Ebony* also sought to reframe Seale as an intellectual figure. Shortly after his memoir 'Seize the Time' was out in 1970, *Ebony* included his book within its book-division, declaring that it was, 'some best sellers.'⁸³³ In the period between the late 1970 and late 1972, *Ebony* featured his monograph more than often, declaring that the latter was a recommended book by *Ebony*'s editors and emphasised to its readers that, 'those books are important [...] well worth your valuable time to read [...].'⁸³⁴

In its *Book Shelf* section, *Ebony* also reminded its readers about Seale's introspection and informed them that his aim of writing his book was to refute the misconception and allegations made about the BPP. He declared that, 'I wanted to write this book so that people would have a better insight into the inner workings of the Party [...] said Seale, 'so that people would have a proper understanding of the Black Panther Party'.⁸³⁵ In so doing, *Ebony* sought to attract its readers' attention to the Black Panthers' intellectualism to mainstream their popular image and give a real insight beyond the misconception. Seale himself was aware of *Ebony*'s role and its commitment towards black America, 'I know that my people relate to the slick, *Ebony-Jet* type, especially the older people [...]', declared Seale.⁸³⁶

Conclusion

While *Ebony* eagerly followed Seale's lead and attempted to rebrand him for its readership, most of its readers remained disinterested. This was most likely because its target

⁸³² B. J. Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p.82.

⁸³³ 'Some Best Sellers', *Ebony*, September 1970, p.142.

⁸³⁴ 'Books Recommended by the Editors of *Ebony*', *Ebony*, November 1971, p.183

⁸³⁵ '*Ebony* Book Shelf', *Ebony*, July 1970, p.26.

⁸³⁶ Mason, 'A Shift to the Middle', p.87.

audience, the moderates, did not approve of Seale's transformation into a moderate and intellectual figure. Furthermore, while *Ebony* highlighted Seale as the most radical figure in its pages, other leftist publications such as *Muhammad Speaks* chastised *Ebony* for ignoring other radical figures such as Elijah Muhammed, the leader of the Nation of Islam. The newspaper's copy editor wrote that *Ebony's* neglect of their leader was, 'the journalistic blunder of the century.'⁸³⁷

Despite the criticism, *Ebony* magazine was at the forefront of the fight for liberation in the 1960s and early 1970s. The magazine pioneered black and white print media in responding to the Black Panthers. Indeed, the latter appeared in *Ebony* for the first time in 1969 whereas popular white and black publications like *Life*, *Esquire*, and even *The Crisis* did not feature them until 1970.⁸³⁸

As a result, *Ebony* was indeed a magazine positioning itself at the heart of the modern black struggle. In its 1973 backstage, the magazine declared that it did its utmost to represent and support the black struggle in America, 'we talked with the youth and women [...] said *Ebony*, 'We questioned militants who had criticised the middle-class and we talked with liberals who defended them. We visited them in colleges and in their homes.'⁸³⁹

However, in its *The Black Revolution* special issue, *Ebony* urged its audience to embrace a moderate and a programmatic revolution in favour of revitalising their social, political, and economic conditions. The magazine also warned its audience not to wage a violent revolution as the timing was not to breed a violent one. The magazine emphasised that revolution should be instigated by the unity of black people, who should devise programs to transform their

⁸³⁷ Charles 67X, 'Ebony Commits News Blunder', *Muhammad Speaks*, 15 September 1972, p.9.

⁸³⁸ Gordon Parks, 'Black Panthers: the Hard Edge of Confrontation', *Life*, February 1970, pp.18-27; Jack Davis, 'Is it Too Late for you to be Pals with a Black Panther?', *Esquire*, 1 November 1970, pp.141-146; 'The Police vs. the Black Panthers', *The Crisis*, January 1970, pp.23-25.

⁸³⁹ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, August 1973, p. 28.

social lives.⁸⁴⁰ Bobby Seale shared *Ebony*'s sentiment, declaring that, 'What they [blacks] didn't understand is that revolution also means that you have to implement basic community programs like Breakfast for Children, Liberation Schools and free health clinics, and really work on these programs every day.'⁸⁴¹

When the Black Panthers began in the early 1970s to get a foot in the door of American political institutions, *Ebony* welcomed this approach as it featured them in its pages. *Ebony*'s focus on Seale and his mayoral campaign was a stark example that the magazine sought further to introduce him as a political and intellectual figure. Such an attempt sought to gravitate its readership's attention towards the idea that Black Power should not only be confined to violence, revolution, or armed self-defence, but was also infused with political conventions, social activities, and intellectual endeavours. Its view of Black Power would later be shared by Newton, who would admit in his autobiography that their efforts in achieving Black Power using armed self-defence were too extremist and that liberation could have been achieved in a moderate tone. He admitted that, 'Perhaps some of our tactics at the time were extreme, perhaps we placed too much emphasis on military action [...] perhaps our military strategy was too much of "a great leap forward"'.⁸⁴²

Ebony continued to respond to Black Power at the turn of the 1960s decade. Immediately after the publication of 'The Black Revolution' special issue, *Ebony* declared, in strident rhetoric, that it would be committed to addressing the fight for liberation, 'We want, of course, to continue to chronicle the fight of the black man in this huge, rich and racist country'.⁸⁴³ The following chapter will show how *Ebony* kept its word and continued to cover

⁸⁴⁰ 'The Unity of Blackness', *Ebony*, August 1969, p. 42.

⁸⁴¹ Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 207.

⁸⁴² Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p.331.

⁸⁴³ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, September 1969, p.26.

Black Power, defying national white-owned newspapers and magazines which heralded Black Power as a dead movement in the 1970s and early 1980s. Against such a backdrop, *Ebony* cast Black Power as, “a living movement”.

Chapter 6: “*Some are Still Marching*”, *Ebony*, the Black Liberation Struggle, and the Long History of Black Power

‘Young America was alive, and active, and Ebony and I were both in the struggle’

Jesse Jackson, founder of PUSH organisation, 1995

By the mid-1970s, some white and black print outlets such as *The Star Press* and *The Miami Herald* believed that the black liberation struggle should have reached a conclusion as it had achieved a drastic change in politics, education, and economy.⁸⁴⁴ Indeed, by the 1990s, there would be over 8,000 black elected officers and more than 40 black congressmen and congresswomen. Over 400 black mayors and numerous state senators and state representatives.⁸⁴⁵

Ebony also seemed to follow suit as the magazine shifted from advocating the black struggle to celebrating black achievements in politics and economy in the 1970s while reflecting back to the 1950s and 1960s black struggle. Imbued with a nostalgic vision, the magazine paid an affectionate tribute to pivotal figures and martyrs of the black struggle such

⁸⁴⁴ Charles B. Rangel, 'The Black Movement', *The Star Press*, 3 August 1974, p.4; Shelia Payton, 'Jim Crowism' Gone, but What of Black Movement', *The Miami Herald*, 26 Novembre 1973, p. 6-B.

⁸⁴⁵ Conrad W. Worill, 'Developing a Black Political Strategy', *The Atlanta Voice*, 20 June 1998, p. 5A.

as Dr. King, often reminding its audience about his heyday while commemorating and honouring him through its pages.⁸⁴⁶

By contrast, its left-wing editors such as Lerone Bennett Jr. and Alex Poinsett opposed the magazine's nostalgic vision as they argued that the black struggle had not yet achieved all its goals and that black Americans still had to fight for total freedom. Bennett believed that gaining legal rights in politics while still grappling with social issues such as homelessness and job disparities was not full freedom. In January 1970, Bennett appeared at a forum organized by the Hungry Club in Georgia, where he delivered a speech on the future of black America in the 1970s. Bennett stressed that the black freedom movement was at a cross-roads and that black Americans had to take control and unite to transform their lives, 'It is time now to stop playing games' said Bennett, 'it is time now to face some unpleasant truths about our situation and about America.'⁸⁴⁷

In another speech in 1982 at the University of Mississippi, Bennett reiterated his declaration that total liberation was still ahead for black Americans. He advocated that a total liberation required the destruction of all forms of racism and achieving justice and equality not only at the political spectrum but also at the social and economic level.⁸⁴⁸ As such, Bennett lamentably admitted to his audience that black America had not yet overcome its social issues, 'And so, it is necessary to say' declared Bennett, 'that we have not yet started

⁸⁴⁶ James West, '*Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987*', p.30; See for e.g. Martin Luther King Jr., 'I have a Dream, the Martyr's Most Memorable Speech', *Ebony*, January 1986, pp.40-42; Renee D. Turner, Martin Luther King, the Private Side of a Public Man, *Ebony*, January 1991, pp. 30.-34; , 'Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.' *Ebony*, January 1994, pp. 36-40.

⁸⁴⁷ Hungry club, Bennett papers, box 7.

⁸⁴⁸ Have we Overcome? Bennett papers, box 4.

the process of grappling with the depth and the height of the dream [...] As a matter of fact, we haven't even defined what we must do in order to overcome'.⁸⁴⁹

Bennett's view of the black liberation struggle may have pushed *Ebony* to retract its optimistic vision in the early 1980s to become more serious about the future of black Americans. He warned his audience against perpetual racism and encouraged them to continue their fight for justice and equality. Therefore, while many white-owned outlets argued that Black Power had declined, *Ebony* sought to revive the latter and revitalise some of its activists. Profiles which featured former Black Power activists such as James Farmer and Angela Davis endorsed their sustained fight for liberation. Such efforts demonstrate that *Ebony* sought to situate Black Power within a broader context of the black freedom movement, which did not start with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama in 1956, nor did it end with the shutdown of the BPP's chapter in New York in 1982.

This chapter addresses the following questions: why would Bennett challenge *Ebony*'s optimistic vision by declaring that insufficient progress had been made since the call for Black Power in June 1966? How did *Ebony* reflect the change in the struggle for racial equality across the US? To what extent was *Ebony* distinctive in resurrecting Black Power in relation to the major black (and possibly white) owned media?

In seeking to address these questions, this chapter argues for *Ebony*'s efforts in reviving Black Power after its demise in the early 1980s. It takes as a starting point the apparent cleavages between Bennett's resentment on the slow progress of the black struggle and *Ebony*'s celebration of the achievement of the black liberation struggle in the mid and late 1970s. Against such a backdrop, Bennett declared that the black struggle had not yet achieved all its goals, and that black Americans should continue their fight for a meaningful liberation.

⁸⁴⁹ Have we overcome? Bennett papers.

However, during the decline of Black Power in the early 1980s, *Ebony* challenged the major white-owned outlets, which seemed exultant about its fadeaway from the social and political spotlight. By contrast, *Ebony*'s concern about the downfall of Black Power compelled the magazine to be at the forefront in reviving the movement by demonstrating to its audience that Black Power was still on the case as most of its exponents were still fighting to cultivate and improve black America.

“Have we Overcome?”

By the time Bobby Seale lost the electoral campaign as a mayor of Oakland in 1973, the excitement of a direct protest had subsided, and the call for conventional politics as a means for liberation intensified, as was noted by white owned Floridian newspaper *News Press*, which wrote that the struggle should then move into, ‘compromise, not confrontation.’⁸⁵⁰ In fact, many black leaders and activists followed in Seale’s wake by getting a foot in the doors of conventional politics. By the mid-1970, 281 blacks became officeholders in state legislative or executive offices, 135 were mayors, 305 were county executives, and 1,438 people were holding other elected positions in municipal government.⁸⁵¹

Historian Alton Hornsby, Jr. notes that if Black Power of the 1960s was heard across the land, then Black Power of the 1970s resonated, ‘in the popularity of the Afro style, in African dashiki and denim clothing.’⁸⁵² Indeed, black America saw unprecedented trends in the 1970s compared to the 1960s. Black culture sparked a renaissance in black arts and films, such as

⁸⁵⁰ Ray Weiss, 'What Happened to Black Power', *News-Press*, 15 February 1981, p. 1D.

⁸⁵¹ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire*, p. 348.

⁸⁵² Marcellus C. Barksdale and Samuel T. Livingston, "'Race Rebels": from Indigenous Insurgency to Hip-Hop Mania', in *A Companion to African American History*, ed. by Alton Hornsby, Jr. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 518.

Blaxploitation.⁸⁵³ The Black is Beautiful movement instilled in black Americans a sentiment of self-presentation and a newly-expressed appreciation of dark skin, tightly curled hair, and race pride.⁸⁵⁴ Black women made up a fast-growing share of the U.S labour force in the 1970s, whereas black studies and black college enrolment protests overwhelmingly transformed white campuses into multiracial learning environments.⁸⁵⁵

As black America made impressive strides in politics, culture, and academia, and while the direct confrontation of the black struggle defused, some major and regional white-oriented media began to shift towards a more reflective description of the outcomes of the black struggle in the early and mid-1970s. *The Star Press*, a white owned newspaper in Indiana, contrasted the black liberation movement of the 1970s with its counterpart a decade earlier, declaring that the latter's tactics of sit-ins, riots, and marches had led to a dramatic change in the nature of the movement in the 1970s, with more opportunities for black people at the political level.⁸⁵⁶ *Miami Herald*, a white-owned newspaper in Miami admitted that due to the efforts of the black struggle in the 1950s and 1960s, 'BLACKS no longer are virtually confined to domestic construction and teaching jobs [...] Blacks have moved into white collar and administrative jobs in government and industry, and their economic level has improved [...]'.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵³ Mike Phillips, *How Sweet it was* (2005) <<https://www.theguardian.com/>> [accessed 4 May 2021].

⁸⁵⁴ Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.23.

⁸⁵⁵ 'Women, Blacks, Gaining in Labor Force', *The Herald-Palladium*, 6 August 1976, p.22; Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁶ Charles B. Rangel, 'The Black Movement', *The Star Press*, 3 August 1974.

⁸⁵⁷ Shelia Payton, 'Jim Crowism' Gone, but What of Black Movement', *The Miami Herald*, 26 Novembre 1973.

Other popular white newspapers were doubtful about the impact of the black liberation struggle on black communities in the 1970s. *The Los Angeles Times* noted that the ideological shift and the apparent hostility between some Black Power organisations, such as Us and BPP, was an ominous sign that the struggle would soon shatter into different sectors.⁸⁵⁸ Similarly, the Florida outlet *The Tampa Times* wrote that the black liberation movement saw a new turn in the 1970s due to the dissension which occurred between the black veterans of the Civil Rights Movement and the new leaders of Black Power over the directions and the strategies of the black freedom movement.⁸⁵⁹

In fact, this serious split was clearly manifested by Black Power activists such as Roy Innis, national director of CORE, who lamented the progress and the direction of the black liberation movement. Innis declared that Black Power was on a treadmill in the early 1970s, noting that for the movement to gather strength, it needed a new definition, reorganisation, strategies, and coalition between the integrationists and the nationalists.⁸⁶⁰

By contrast, the black radical magazines and journals venerated the accomplishments of the black struggle. The quarterly journal *Joint Issue* revered its progress and its effects at the political level, honouring the ordinary black women, prisoners, students, and working-class activists as the vanguard of the 1960s black liberation movement who helped to advance the fight for justice and equality in the 1970s.⁸⁶¹ *Helix* magazine, however, emphasised that analysing the 1960s black struggle without mentioning Watts, Detroit, Newark, or the Black

⁸⁵⁸ Francis Ward, 'Black Struggle Now Split in Many Sectors', *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1974, p.72.

⁸⁵⁹ Charles V. Hamilton, 'Civil Rights Movement Takes New Turn in '70s', *The Tampa Times*, 4 August 1973, p.7A.

⁸⁶⁰ Jack Jones, 'The Legacy of America's Protest Movements', *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 1973, p.86.

⁸⁶¹ 'Black Struggle in the U.S Unique', *Joint Issue*, 04.01, (1973), pp.1-24 (p. 12), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 7 April 2021].

Panther Party was ‘an example of reactionary myopia’. *Freedomways*, on the other hands, declared that it would remain, ‘a faithful chronicle’ to the Black struggle ‘[...] that struggle is with us today to a greater degree perhaps than any other time in the past’ declared the magazine.⁸⁶²

At the JPC, *Ebony* also began to move away from analysing the sustained efforts of the black liberation struggle at the social level to focus more broadly on discussing conventional politics as an alternative method to achieve equality for black Americans. Articles such as ‘Black Power in State Government’ emphasised the importance of black representation in politics (or state government) as a cutting-edge of Black Power in the early and mid-1970s.⁸⁶³ The magazine also devoted some space to commemorating the black freedom movement and its former activists and martyrs. This could be seen through special features such as ‘Whatever Happened to’, which was introduced to profile the pivotal figures and their political and social activism during the Civil Rights and Black Power era in relation to the present time.⁸⁶⁴ The bicentennial special issue printed in August 1975 was also dedicated to commemorating, ‘200 years of Black Trials and Triumphs’.⁸⁶⁵

From a different perspective, *Ebony* sought to consider how the past might have shaped the present. In other words, the magazine sought to provide its audience with an opportunity to reflect on the 1960s black freedom movement to consider the progress made since that era.

⁸⁶² ‘More Let’, *Helix*, 11.06, (1970), pp.1-24 (p. 21), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 7 April 2021]; Coleman A. Young, ‘Crisis of the Cities, A National Crisis’, *Freedomways*, 16.03, (1976), pp.148-208 (p. 152), in <<https://voices.revealdigital.org/>> [accessed 7 April 2021].

⁸⁶³ Alex Poinsett, ‘Black Power in State Governments’, *Ebony*, April 1972, pp. 94-103.

⁸⁶⁴ James West, ‘*Ebony Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987*’, p.204; ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, June 1971, p. 30.

⁸⁶⁵ E. James West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr. Popular History in PostWar America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), p. 107.

From its perspective, *Ebony* considered that Black Power and “the Freedom Now” quest had produced mixed results in employment, education, and politics, and that enough progress had been made, affirming that ‘blacks are much better off today than they were a decade ago despite some deterioration [...]’.⁸⁶⁶ This sentiment was also reiterated in May 1975 when *Ebony* noted that those who strived to improve their conditions in the 1960s had resulted in guaranteed full and equal treatment by their white counterparts in the 1970s, ‘Perhaps this is a sign that blacks are reaching full equality in this country’ wondered *Ebony*.⁸⁶⁷

Despite *Ebony*’s optimism, its audience remained doubtful about the future of black Americans. In August 1978, *Ebony* conducted a survey to determine if blacks had the potential for future leadership. The survey involved 50 black figures who ranged from high school graduates to black representatives in local, state, and national governments. The participants’ responses surprised *Ebony* as the majority voiced their scepticism over the American system and their frustration with black Americans’ social problems, such as unemployment and the lack of quality education. They declared that racism and the social issues would still be ingrained to the point that blacks, ‘will be challenging racist acts well beyond the year 2000’.⁸⁶⁸

Ebony’s concern was shared by its editorial left-wing such as Lerone Bennett and Alex Poinsett, who seemed pessimistic about the trajectories of the black freedom movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Following *Ebony*’s poll, Bennett appeared at a talk show at the University of Mississippi, where he addressed the progress of the black liberation struggle. Despite the many victories of the Civil Rights Movement at the political level, Bennett lamented the slow

⁸⁶⁶ ‘Progress Report: 1964-1974, A Decade of Struggle’, *Ebony*, January 1975, p. 25.

⁸⁶⁷ ‘The Right to be Oneself’, *Ebony*, May 1975, p. 132.

⁸⁶⁸ ‘50 Leaders of the Future’, *Ebony*, August 1978, p.101; ‘Indecision, Skepticism among Young Blacks, Say, Leaders of the Future’, *Ebony*, December 1978, pp.156-160.

progress of the black freedom movement, arguing that total liberation had not been fully achieved and highlighting that black Americans were still grappling with many racial issues. ‘Have we overcome? Bennett asked his audience, ‘No, a thousand times no [...] we are nowhere near the end of our journey, and we have miles to go before we sleep’.⁸⁶⁹

Poinsett also articulated his dissatisfaction regarding the progress of the black struggle, declaring that the gains which were won by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s continued to be eroded in the late 1970s. Poinsett attributed this erosion partly to whites, who felt that, ‘Blacks had gained too much, and whites had become victims of “reverse discrimination.”’⁸⁷⁰ Bennett’s and Poinsett’s views were also supported by Civil Rights activists such as Coretta Scott King, who declared that not enough progress had been made since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.⁸⁷¹ Likewise, Vernon Jordan, leader of the National Urban League (NUL), warned his audience, in a speech in Florida in 1979, that there was no reason for complacency as some major issues such as unemployment and job cuts were still prevailing. Vernon hailed the black progress of the 1970s as an illusion, noting that, ‘there is wide-spread, mistaken belief that blacks have made progress, but in the 1970s, the gains of the 60s were eroded’⁸⁷²

Similarly, Bennett also believed that black Americans were still a long way from achieving total liberation, arguing that the struggle could take years to achieve small gains.⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁹ Have we Overcome, Bennett papers, box 4; Ted Ownby, *Lerone Bennett, Jr. (1928–2018) Activist and Author* (2018) < <http://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/lerone-bennett-jr/> > [accessed 15 April 2021].

⁸⁷⁰ Alex Poinsett, ‘1977: Year of Hope and Despair’, *Ebony*, January 1978, p.25.

⁸⁷¹ Scott, Coretta, *My Life, My Love, My Legacy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017), p. 242 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 4 November 2020].

⁸⁷² Julie Brenton, ‘Black Leader Raps ‘New Negativism’’, *Wisconsin State Journal*, 10 May 1979, p.29.

⁸⁷³ Quote speech, Bennett papers, box 4.

In contrast to *Ebony*, which declared that enough progress had been made, Bennett predicted that racism, unemployment, and joblessness would increase and that the white resistance against the fight for justice and equality would still persist.⁸⁷⁴ As such, he emphasised that a real change was subject to a fundamental transformation of institutional structures. In other words, Bennett suggested that complete liberation required black Americans to eradicate the so-called ‘white problems’ and strive for a fundamental transformation of American society.⁸⁷⁵ His statement received accolades from some of his readers, who shared his belief that complacency and apathy were still ahead of black Americans.⁸⁷⁶

Bennett argued for the long history of Black Power and the continued struggle for justice and equality. In his Black Power series printed in *Ebony* in 1965, Bennett solidified the historic precedent to the Black Power Movement in the post-Civil War era, arguing that the first Reconstruction era was “remarkably similar” to the 1960s Black Power era and that understanding the First Reconstruction era was ‘indispensable for an understanding of the Second Reconstruction of the 1960s.’⁸⁷⁷ In the same vein, he also believed that the struggle had not yet run its course in the late 1970s, for the last 25 years of struggle was, ‘a vast and a leaping wave in a continuous flow of energy that started with the first revolt on the first slave ship and will not end until America deals with its revolutionary mandate of its birth.’⁸⁷⁸

This sentiment was also reiterated in his influential article published in *Ebony* in August 1970, where Bennett contended that full liberation required clarity of the situation and then unity, organisation, mobilisation of people, study groups, and political parties, emphasising

⁸⁷⁴ Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘Have we Overcome?’, *Ebony*, November 1979, p. 38.

⁸⁷⁵ Bennett, ‘Have we Overcome’, p. 42.

⁸⁷⁶ ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, January 1980, p.16; ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Ebony*, February 1980, p. 16.

⁸⁷⁷ West, *Ebony Magazine and Lerone Bennett Jr.*, p.58; West, *Our Kind of Historian*, p. 110.

⁸⁷⁸ Bennett, ‘Have We Overcome?’, *Ebony*, p. 40.

that ‘Our task is to prepare for 10, 15, 40 years of struggle.’⁸⁷⁹ However, other *Ebony*’s left-wing editors, such as Alex Poinsett, were, not only pessimistic about the outcomes of the black struggle but also worried about the downfall of Black Power organisations and the dispersal of its exponents.

***Ebony*, the Print Media, and the Decline of Black Power**

By the mid-1970s, Black Power became less focused on militant and revolutionary approaches. This new orientation was partly due to the rapid increase of black representation in governmental positions. Internal and external causes, on the other hand, were other factors that caused Black Power to recede from the political and social spotlight.

The Black Panther Party, which was the vanguard of the black liberation movement in the 1970s, suffered from internal dissension, which created growing rifts between its major leaders. Structural problems compounded this within the party as several members fostered undesirable behaviour, which encouraged criminal activities and tactical use of violence within the framework of a long-term strategy, making the party more susceptible to government repression.⁸⁸⁰

As a result, the major leaders began to scatter, leaving the party in disarray. Huey Newton fled to Cuba in 1973 to escape prosecution on charges of murder and assault, whereas Eldridge Cleaver and his wife Kathleen Cleaver escaped, as stated in the previous chapter, to Algeria following a charge of an attempted murder. Even at the party, rank-and-file members began to disperse, imprisoned, or otherwise die. Political repression, arrests, and detention

⁸⁷⁹ Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘*Liberation*’, *Ebony*, August 1970, p.43.

⁸⁸⁰ Chris Booker, Lumpenization: A Critical Error of the Black Panther Party, in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005), pp. 357-358, in <<https://book.cc/>> [accessed 30 September 2021].

distracted the party's survival programs from developing, and repeatedly raising bails caused its financial resources to deplete.⁸⁸¹

Although Elaine Brown saved the BPP from disintegration by assuming the role of chairwoman and attempting to unite all the party's members, a small number of male members remained at the party or were dedicated to their tasks for the BPP.⁸⁸² By the time Newton returned to the U.S and Brown left the party in June 1977, the BPP became seriously shattered as it was left with no key leader. This was further compounded by financial problems as funds were heavily invested in Newton's previous criminal trials and on drug addiction.⁸⁸³

Historian Peniel E. Joseph argues that in the second half of the 1970s, Black Power activists would emerge significantly less idealistic and politically unified than the first half.⁸⁸⁴ However, except for NOI, which was at the time efficiently run, other Black Power organisations suffered from an imminent downfall.⁸⁸⁵ SNCC, which was at the forefront of the Black Power Movement in the mid-1960s and which acted as an antecedent to its approaches of radicalism and militancy, also began to decline in the early 1970s due to a

⁸⁸¹ Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), in, <<https://www.vlebooks.com/>> [accessed 25 April 2021], pp. 156-159, 165, 168; Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire*, p. 372; Winston A. Grady Willis, the Black Panther Party: State Repression and Political Prisoners, in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005), p.363, in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 30 September 2021].

⁸⁸² Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come*, p. 173.

⁸⁸³ Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come*, pp. 181-186, 199-200; Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire*, pp. 383-385; Olli A. Johnson, Explaining the Demise of the Black Panther Party: the Role of Internal Factors, p. 392, in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. by Charles E. Jones.

⁸⁸⁴ Joseph, Peniel E., *Waiting till the Midnight Hour*, p. 294.

⁸⁸⁵ Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power*, p. 201.

reduction in financial contributions and internal disputes and the continued FBI repression.⁸⁸⁶ John Lewis, who chaired the SNCC between 1963 and 1966, declared that by the early 1970s, the organisation became, '[...] dead and all intents and purposes' adding, 'though there is probably a membership on paper, it [SNCC] hasn't been active since Carmichael left the country for Africa'.⁸⁸⁷

Other Black Power organisations, such as CORE, also suffered from internal fractures, which signalled the organisation's demise. Journalists such as Betsey Kennedy described CORE as 'a shadow of its former self'.⁸⁸⁸ Indeed, the group's members and chapters had dwindled in the late 1970s, and there were almost no activities except fund-raising programs. Internal disputes and dissidents often emerged, and accusations of illegal fund-raising were repeatedly levelled at the organisation.⁸⁸⁹

The white-owned print media applauded the demise of Black Power. *The Tampa Times*, a white-owned newspaper based in Florida, headlined, 'The Black Power Movement is Dead'. The newspaper quoted from various Civil Rights and Black Power activists such as Wallace D. Muhammad, son of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (leader of the Nation of Islam), and

⁸⁸⁶ Ted Simmons, 'The Evolution of Julian Bond', *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 May 1970, p.2; Clayborne Carson, *In struggle*, pp. 287, 298.

⁸⁸⁷ Dean Jones, 'No Room for Violence, Fort Pierce Students Told', *The Palm Beach Post*, 19 February 1971, p.48.

⁸⁸⁸ Betsey Kennedy, 'Congress of Racial Equality is a Shadow of Former Self', *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 1 March 1981, p.14.

⁸⁸⁹ Betsey Kennedy, 'Congress of Racial Equality is a Shadow of Former Self', *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 1 March 1981, p.14; L.E.J. Rachell, *Why the Congress of Racial Equality Has Been Forgotten – And Why It Still Matters Today* (2019) <<https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/171193>> [accessed 5 May 2021].

Gloster B. Current, national administrator of the NAACP, to instil in its readers the sentiment that Black Power had declined.⁸⁹⁰

Popular white-oriented newspapers such as *The Washington Post* criticised the achievements of Black Power, claiming that the movement was, 'in eclipse for a decade or more'.⁸⁹¹ In fact, *The Washington Post* printed several articles which called into question the political gains of Black Power, often casting it as, '[...] self-defeating, divisive and unrealistic'.⁸⁹² Florida white-oriented newspaper *News Press* attributed its decline partly to the apathy that many black leaders and mass communities felt at the political and economic level and the impotence of Separatism and Nationalism in steering the black masses towards a violent revolution.⁸⁹³

The white readers were also hostile to Black Power, even when the movement was in decline. Throughout the early 1970s, the popular white-owned magazine *Life* received a deluge of letters from its white readers who denounced the Black Panthers and their program. For example, John Malaitzian from Boston described the Panthers, 'a host of criminals' while Indiana resident John F. Schmutz declared that if the Panthers did not pick up the guns, there would be no raids on them. Brian M. Hennesey made clear that he would not stand with the Panthers, declaring that supporting them or their struggle was not rational.⁸⁹⁴

⁸⁹⁰ Walter Morrison, 'Many Civil Rights Now Agree: The Black Power Movement is Dead', *The Tampa Times*, 5 May 1977, p.5A.

⁸⁹¹ William Raspberry, 'A New Day for Black Power', *The Washington Post*, 10 September 1982, p.27.

⁸⁹² Alvin Rosenbaum, 'Black Power - Now?', *The Washington Post*, 8 April 1983, p.24.

⁸⁹³ Ray Weiss, 'What Happened to Black Power', *News-Press*, 15 February 1981, p. 6D.

⁸⁹⁴ Letters to the editors, *Life*, 14 May 1971, p. 27; Letters to the editors, *Life*, 27 February 1970, 20A; Letters to the editors, *Life*, 16 April 1971, p.27.

At the JPC, *Ebony* reversed its optimistic vision of the black struggle in the 1980s as it articulated its concern about the Black Power exponents. In its *Photo-editorial* section published in January 1976, *Ebony* declared that the Civil Rights and Black Power organisations such as SCLC, NAACP, CORE, and the BPP were suffering from financial problems that could lead to their downfall. The magazine headlined that, ‘if they fail, it’s our fault’. *Ebony* reminded its audience that the victories they had achieved in the mid-1970s resulted from an uphill struggle waged by these organisations.

As a staunch defender of the black struggle, the magazine affirmed its complete commitment to supporting these organisations, calling upon its black audience to unite to financially help them to avert their downfall, ‘it boils down to us’, *Ebony* told its audience, ‘not as a duty, but as a sacred trust.’⁸⁹⁵ In fact, the magazine was probably aware of the financial crisis that hit the Black Power organisations, notably the BPP. In late 1976, *Ebony* reiterated its deep concern over the Civil Rights and Black Power organisations. It underscored that the Civil Rights and Black Power organisations were in severe financial trouble and that Blacks and other organisations needed to donate or raise funds for them urgently.⁸⁹⁶

Ebony’s concern continued to be reflected in the magazine’s pages. In less than a month following its *Photo-editorial* statement, Alex Poinsett printed an influential article on the future of Black Power. His article, titled: ‘Where Are the Revolutionaries?’ highlighted the zenith and the nadir of their fight for liberation in the 1960s in comparison with their social and political activities in the 1970s. Poinsett articulated that Black Power had been “cooled, gone, or otherwise muted”, illustrating that if Black Power activists were still determined to

⁸⁹⁵ ‘If They Fail, it’s Our Fault’, *Ebony*, January 1976, p. 116.

⁸⁹⁶ ‘Steps in the Right Direction’, *Ebony*, December 1976, p. 116.

sustain the struggle, '[...] they are stubbornly clutching the shreds of a seemingly unrealizable dream'.⁸⁹⁷

Historian E. James West contends that Poinsett's article marked, 'an end of an era' and that the black liberation movement, 'had perished by the mid-1970s.'⁸⁹⁸ Moreover, Poinsett's article demonstrates how he, along with his left-wing editorial peers, was concerned about the fall of Black Power. Though he informed his readers on the state of the 1960s Black Power activists and what they were doing in the 1970s, he seemed pessimistic, affirming that the black struggle of the 1960s had failed. Poinsett ascribed its decline to the FBI's campaign, the growing dissension within the Black Power organisations, '[...] and largely because blacks in general were not ready for armed confrontation [...]' declared Poinsett.⁸⁹⁹

Nonetheless, many of *Ebony's* readers disagreed with Poinsett as they seemed hopeful about Black Power and its future, aligning themselves to its leaders and their cause. Los Angeles resident Perry Ross hoped that the black revolutionaries would linger until all black Americans' issues would be resolved. Likewise, Michigan reader Sekou Kenyatta declared that no matter what would happen to Black Power and its exponents, '[...] "their" dreams are my dreams, "their" tears are my tears, and "their" life is my life.'⁹⁰⁰

The decline of Black Power became evident at the turn of the 1970s, with the Floridian white-owned newspaper *News-press* reprinting Poinsett's statement under the headline, 'What Happened to Black Power?'. While the newspaper stated that it could not provide an answer,

⁸⁹⁷ Alex Poinsett, 'Where Are the Revolutionaries?', *Ebony*, February 1976, p.84.

⁸⁹⁸ James E. West, 'A Hero to Be Remembered, p.510.

⁸⁹⁹ Poinsett, 'Where Are the Revolutionaries?', p. 92.

⁹⁰⁰ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, May 1976, p. 16; 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, April 1976, p. 15.

it did agree that Black Power was, 'merely a memory'.⁹⁰¹ By contrast, *Ebony* challenged Poinsett and the major white-owned media by casting Black Power as a living movement.

'Some Are Still Marching'

Historian Rhonda Y. Williams points out that the FBI's repression and the rise of the new liberal and conservative policies in early 1980s signalled the eventual decline of Black Power.⁹⁰² Moreover, the BPP went into total bankruptcy, and most of its chapters were shut down, with the final chapter closing in 1982. Its community school, the backbone of the BPP, also shut down. This decline was further compounded by Newton facing charges of embezzling federal money from the school and later serving time for illegal drug possession.⁹⁰³

The NOI, which was thriving in the 1970s, began to shy away from the ideologies of Black Power in the early 1980s. In the late 1970s, its leader Elijah Muhammed declared that the organisation should accept whites as allies or members, preaching to his followers to move away from the notion of universal white deviltry. After Muhammed's passing, serious disputes between the major leaders led to some members breaking with the NOI to build their own organisation to carry on Muhammed's message of black nationalism.⁹⁰⁴

Other major leaders of Black Power turned away from the 1960s revolutionary tactics to begin integrating into American mainstream society. Bobby Seale, the former leader of the

⁹⁰¹ 'What Happened to Black Power?', *News-Press*, 15 February 1981, p.D1.

⁹⁰² Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 261.

⁹⁰³ Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power*, p. 200; Ollie A. Johnson, 'Explaining the Demise of the Black Panther Party: the Role of Internal Factors', in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005), p. 408.

⁹⁰⁴ Ogbar, *Black Power*, pp. 202-203.

BPP, dropped out of the social protests to become a student and culinary author.⁹⁰⁵ Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Ture) was living in Guinea, but he regularly visited the U.S to preach the merits of Pan-Africanism and scientific socialism. Eldridge Cleaver, however, was moving into a more conservative persona while running as an independent for the Berkeley, California, city council.⁹⁰⁶

As such, Black Power was no longer the turbulent movement it had been two decades before, as was noted by *News Press*, which wrote that, ‘No longer the Panthers making headlines, the Dashiki were replaced by disco fashion [...] Many militant leaders were either in jail or in foreign countries. Others [...] turned toward capitalism and God [...]’⁹⁰⁷ Journalist Karen Grigsby Bates declared that even though some Black Power activists such as Kwame Ture were still preaching the ethos of Black Power or addressing their audience, ‘People listened — but not in the same numbers as they had in the early days’.⁹⁰⁸

The major white-owned print media became certain that the frantic call for revolution had come to rest. As such, they began to hark back to Black Power of the 60s and 70s to discuss its outcomes in the 1980s and 1990s era. The Indiana white-owned newspaper *The Times* admitted that Black Power’s repeated call for pride, unity, and black consciousness in the 1960s had fed into a fundamental transformation in the 1980s black America, in society, politics, arts, and religion. The newspaper relied on some testimonies made by some white and black scholars such as Aldon Morris, who noted that Black Power had an impact on

⁹⁰⁵ Cristina Rovalis, 'Revolution's Evolution', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 29 January 1988, pp.1,3.

⁹⁰⁶ Karen Grigsby Bates, *Stokely Carmichael, A Philosopher Behind the Black Power Movement* (2014) <<https://www.nhpr.org/>> [accessed 29 April 2021]; Howard Kleinberg, 'Eldridge Cleaver: Soul Survivor to the GOP', *The Miami News*, 24 August 1984, p.8.

⁹⁰⁷ Ray Weiss, 'What Happened to Black Power', *News-Press*, 15 February 1981, p. 1D.

⁹⁰⁸ Karen Grigsby Bates, *Stokely Carmichael*.

almost every facet of black America, from black politicians through black students' protests on campus to black popular culture. Morris declared that, 'the fact that we have Afro-American studies, that's because of black power [...] the fact that we are called blacks instead of Negroes, that's part of the black power movement. The mobilization of the black vote is related to the black power movement'.⁹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, not all the white outlets acknowledged the outcomes of Black Power. In 1992, *Time* magazine published an article titled, 'The Limits of Black Power'. The article, which was published in the wake of the bloody Los Angeles riot, declared that although poverty had deteriorated in almost all the cities that blacks controlled politically, other issues such as drugs and homelessness, 'made it difficult for black politicians to fulfil the promise of the 1960s'.⁹¹⁰ *Time's* statement was shared by the black-owned newspapers such as *The Atlanta Voice*, which declared that Black Power of the 1960s had produced some reforms in black politics in the 1980s, but blacks still had to strive for self-determination and call for an effective and independent political posture.⁹¹¹

Time's article could be manifested as a direct response to the many white and black outlets, including *Ebony*, which believed that the political gains of Black Power had done much to ease the social plight of black America. Regardless, other white-owned newspapers also turned their lenses to the Black Power major leaders, with the majority seeming friendly in featuring them due to the Black Power advocates' metamorphosis or shift from the radical or revolutionary aspects to the conventional approaches.

⁹⁰⁹ Sharon Cohen, 'Black Power Hopes Fulfilled', *The Times*, 3 April 1988, p.15.

⁹¹⁰ Jack E. White, 'The Limits of Black Power', *Time*, 11 May 1992, p.38.

⁹¹¹ Manning Marable, 'The Road toward Effective Black Power', *The Atlanta Voice*, 26 April 1980, p.8.

The idea that the Black Power leaders turned away from the radical and revolutionary perspectives prompted the popular white-owned media to be exultant. The West Coast white print media paid more attention to Eldridge Cleaver. *The Los Angeles Times* offered a space to his wife Kathleen Cleaver, (who was also a communication secretary at the BPP and who lived in Algeria in 1969 with her husband) to recount and explain her husband's decision to return to U.S. soil.⁹¹² *The San Francisco Examiner*, however, was pleased about Cleaver's shift, 'from a Panther to a preacher of patriotism'.⁹¹³

Other outlets also devoted close attention to other Black Power advocates, articulating their relief that Black Power had moved into a moderate phenomenon. In fact, Seale's metamorphosis into a political persona was due to internal factors at the party. When he left prison in 1972 and returned to Oakland, he found the party in disarray, with many members killed or thrown in jail. In 1974, he decided to leave the party, declaring dissension weariness and loss of motivation to continue the struggle as the party membership had dwindled, which he believed was a sign of the revolutionary movement's imminent downfall.⁹¹⁴

The Miami Herald and the Pennsylvanian white oriented outlet *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* welcomed Seale's shift, 'from guns to books, protest to podium'.⁹¹⁵ Other popular white outlets such as *The Washington Post* and *Sacramento Bee* also ran excellent articles on

⁹¹² Kathleen Cleaver, 'Why Eldridge Cleaver Has Come Home', *The Los Angeles Times*, 1 December 1975, p.39.

⁹¹³ Nathan Cobb, 'From Panther to Preacher of Patriotism', *The San Francisco Examiner*, 25 November 1982, pp.50-51.

⁹¹⁴ Interview with Bobby Seale, interviewed by Ron Scott, *American Black Journal*, 1979, <https://abj.matrix.msu.edu/videofull.php?id=198-733-395>; Kitty Bennett, "Bobby Seale, Black Panther leader was one of the "Chicago Eight"", August 27, 2010, *Aarp.Org* <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/history/info-08-2010/where_are_they_now_bobby_seale.html> [accessed 21 October 2021].

⁹¹⁵ Cristina Rovalis, 'Revolution's Evolution', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*; Bob Sanders, 'Grill, Baby, Grill', *The Miami Herald*, 22 August 1984, p.14A.

Carmichael (who was at the time in Guinea), remembering his heyday back in 1966 and revealing his sustained fight for the liberation of black people across the globe.⁹¹⁶

At the JPC, *Ebony* also devoted space to hark back to the 1960s struggle. This was reflected through special articles and issues which eulogised, commemorated, and endorsed the legacy of the Civil Rights and Black Power martyrs such as Dr. King and Malcolm X, declaring that ‘they are gone, but not forgotten’.⁹¹⁷ More tellingly, the magazine was also motivated to see how the black struggle had pushed for more reforms in the 1980s and how far black Americans had progressed in politics, economy, and the welfare state.

Yet, the magazine was increasingly concerned about the progress of the black liberation as well as the race relations in America in the early 1980s, warning that if blacks and whites did not work together to overcome the racial issues, ‘the ‘80s will be an age of perilous social upheaval’.⁹¹⁸ The idea that *Ebony* fully endorsed the individual uplift or supported the black positive life in the 1980s was not mutually exclusive.⁹¹⁹ Since the rise of Black Power and black consciousness in the mid-1960s, the magazine continued to act as a serious and critical outlet.

⁹¹⁶ Jonathan C. Randal, ‘Stokely Carmichael Carries on Struggle for United Africa’, *The Washington Post*, 24 May 1984, p.E6; Kathryn Eaker Perkins, ‘Get Rid of Capitalism, Achieve Justice, Former Stokely Carmichael Still Says’, *The Sacramento Bee*, 21 November 1984, p.B5.

⁹¹⁷ West, *A Hero to be Remembered*, p. 519; *Ebony*, ‘the Legacy of Malcolm X’, *Ebony*, May 1989, pp.156-161; ‘Remembering the Martyrs of the Movement’, *Ebony*, February 1990, pp. 58-62; Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘Martin or Malcolm? The Hero in Black History’, *Ebony*, February 1994, pp. 68-76.

⁹¹⁸ ‘The 80s: what Ahead for Blacks’, *Ebony*, January 1980, p.28.

⁹¹⁹ The Black positive life was a term used by *Ebony* in some of its issues to refer to those black Americans who were happy with their lives. It refers to those who accumulated wealth, run their own business, or had a good annual income. It also refers to those who had no part in the black struggle, or had no intention to change or improve their social conditions.

During the years leading up to the 1980s, the magazine often articulated its concern and pessimism over the status of the Civil Rights Movement. A few months prior to the 20th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington in 1983, *Ebony* sought to keep abreast of the status of the Civil Rights struggle. As such, it sought to pay close attention to several prominent figures who served as Dr. King's associates or peers, such as his widow Coretta Scott King (who was probably the most featured black female activist in *Ebony*), Ralph Abernathy, and Andrew Young. Though *Ebony* noted that some of them were determined to carry Dr. King's struggle forward, such as Scott who built the Martin Luther King, Jr. Centre for Nonviolent Social Change in 1968, the magazine went on to blame his associates who had scattered in various direction, disappointedly asking its audience, 'Where are they today – these men and women who once braved the wilds of a racially torn America'.⁹²⁰

Ebony did not reveal the reason behind its sombre tone concerning the Civil Rights struggle. Nonetheless, it could be attributed in many ways to its frustration with Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, who seemed less concerned about the racial issues in America and intent on rolling back the victories made by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. In fact, throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration weakened the Civil Rights Movement by implying that the 1960s Civil Rights campaigners had won 'their great battle' and that further Civil Rights protection was not required.⁹²¹ As such, while it noticed that the Civil Rights was on Reagan's back burner, *Ebony* could probably turn to Dr. King's associates and followers as, 'The Keepers of Dr. King's Dream' who should strive

⁹²⁰ 'The Keepers of the King Dream', *Ebony*, April 1983, p. 31.

⁹²¹ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 194; Bostdorff, Denise M., and Steven R. Goldzwig, 'History, collective memory, and the appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan's rhetorical legacy', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35.04, (2005), pp.661-690 (p. 662-663, 669-670), in <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>> [accessed 22 April 2021].

to carry on his call for integration and non-violence and to sustain the struggle for the Civil Rights.⁹²²

As such, *Ebony* invited Coretta Scott King to discuss her outlook on the gains made by her husband and her concern over the social conditions of black Americans in the 1980s. In her article, printed in *Ebony*'s 1986 special issue, Scott noted that although blacks had achieved more substantive reforms in conventional politics, 'the dramatic increase in the black elected officials is only a partial victory over discrimination at the polls'. Scott made it clear that discrimination, poverty, and unemployment still prevailed, noting that in order for the struggle for social and economic equality to progress, black Americans must carry on Dr. King's call for non-violent action.⁹²³

Ebony was aware that Scott was dissatisfied with the gains being made as the latter delivered different speeches in which she addressed and urged her audience to continue fighting against racism and racial discrimination.⁹²⁴ Political-science professor Jeanne Theoharis notes that her activism, 'started before her marriage, then complemented and influenced her husband's political work, and continued long after his assassination'.⁹²⁵

Ebony was also motivated by Scott's intent on carrying her husband's struggle forward, casting her as the keeper of Dr. King's dream.⁹²⁶ More tellingly, the magazine also turned its lenses to Black Power. But, if *Ebony* was concerned and despondent about the status of the

⁹²² 'The Keepers of the King Dream', *Ebony*, p. 31.

⁹²³ Coretta Scott King, 'Martin's Legacy', *Ebony*, January 1986, pp. 105-108.

⁹²⁴ Carol Cleaveland, 'Muhlenberg Class Urged to Fight Racism', *The Morning Call*, 23 May 1988, p.8; Herb Michelson, 'Coretta Scott King's Energy Keeps a Dream Alive', *The Sacramento Bee*, 18 January 1986, p.A20.

⁹²⁵ Jeanne Theoharis, *Coretta Scott King and the Civil-Rights Movement's Hidden Women* () <<https://www.theatlantic.com/>> [accessed 8 May 2021].

⁹²⁶ 'Keepers of the Dream', *Ebony*, January 1987, p. 25.

Civil Rights Movement in the 1980s, then it had a different vision about Black Power as it sought to revitalise the movement to keep it alive. This could be seen in its left-wing editor Bennett having sought to re-invigorate Carmichael's approach in *Ebony*. Carmichael went to Guinea where he intensified his call for Pan-Africanism, abandoning his tactics of self-help, self-interest, and self-determination that he called for in 1966. Yet, Bennett remained a staunch advocate for his approaches.

Historian E. James West argues that Bennett continued to advocate and call for liberation, 'by any means necessary'.⁹²⁷ In fact, Bennett had even opposed the integrationist approach and called his audience not to hold on to it. Bennett made it clear that black Americans were left with no choice but to pursue the self-help and self-determination approaches to liberate themselves, declaring that the integrationist approach would not achieve total liberation for black people.⁹²⁸

The black-owned outlets also shared Bennett's endeavours to reinvigorate Carmichael's approach. *The Atlanta Voice* noted that while Carmichael and Malcolm X's approach of electing black representatives to speak on behalf of the black masses seemed to pay off as black representatives had increased, from a handful members in the 1960s to thousands in the 1970s, Black Power still did not achieve all its promises as joblessness, crime, and drug issues was still an endemic among black Americans. The newspaper suggested that the only way for black Americans to achieve the real Black Power was to build their own independent politics or their political parties.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁷ West, *A Hero to be Remembered*, p. 511.

⁹²⁸ 'Civil Rights Activist Seeks Integration', *The Springfield News-Leader*, 20 August 2021, p.2A; Bennett, 'Martin or Malcolm', *Ebony*, p. 74.

⁹²⁹ Manning Marable, 'The Road Toward Effective Black Power', *The Atlanta Voice*, 26 April 1980, p.8.

The backdrop of endorsing Black Power and its approach of liberation had become more apparent in *Ebony*'s pages in the early 1990s, with the magazine attempting to revive the movement and its advocates, especially those previously featured by the magazine. In March 1988, *Ebony* featured Eldridge Cleaver, the former minister of information at the BPP. While Cleaver had turned away from the image of a defiant protest to adopt a more political, conservative and religious philosophy, *Ebony* nevertheless depicted him as a figure who aspired to resume his struggle politically as he intended to become a politician or to run for the U.S presidency.⁹³⁰

Moreover, *Ebony* looked to revitalise his public image that was previously distorted by the white print media. The magazine deliberately provided pictures from the 1960s era which showed Cleaver going into exile or displaying FBI posters along with contradictory photos showing him living in tranquillity in the 1980s, cooking, painting, and reading. As it had done with Carmichael, Bobby Seale, Gloria Richardson, and many other Black Power advocates, *Ebony* once again tapped into an imagery of Black Power as a democratic phenomenon by evoking in its audience the sentiment that although white Americans as well as the white-owned media distressed Cleaver, 'he has grown and changed [...] Cleaver is still optimistic and eager about his future'.⁹³¹

Shortly after featuring Cleaver, *Ebony* turned its lenses to Angela Davis, the popular black political activist who was previously backed up by the magazine, with an article which paid more attention to her activism and activities, revealing that Davis was, 'still on front line'.⁹³² In fact, Davis was determined to carry on the struggle for black liberation, declaring that even

⁹³⁰ 'Whatever Happened to...Eldridge Cleaver?', *Ebony*, March 1988, pp. 66-68.

⁹³¹ 'Whatever Happened to...Eldridge Cleaver?', *Ebony*, pp. 66-68.

⁹³² 'Angela Davis: Still on the Front Line', *Ebony*, July 1990, pp.56-58.

though blacks had achieved victories at the political level, ‘There is suffering. There is oppression. There is terrifying racism’. Davis made it clear, in a speech in Harlem in 1994, that blacks needed new ideas and strategies that could take them into the twenty-first century, ‘The struggle must go on’ declared Davis, ‘Transformed circumstances require new theories and practices.’⁹³³

In *Ebony*, the feature applauded her ongoing activism and her struggle for liberation of black people and other minorities in the U.S and worldwide. *Ebony* described her, ‘the self-avowed soldier for freedom’ due to her efforts to endorse the women’s movement and promote a multi-cultural coalition with other minorities across the globe to fight racism and oppression.⁹³⁴

Ebony’s efforts in revitalising Black Power and its exponents had expanded more broadly in the mid-1990s. In August 1996, *Ebony* printed an influential article titled, ‘Where Are the Civil Rights Icons of the 60s’, which featured a number of prominent former Civil Rights and Black Power activists. At first glance, the title seemed to articulate the magazine’s concern for the Civil Rights activists, yet by looking closely at the photographs, one can argue that the feature illustrated the sustained struggle of the Black Power activists and their continuing quest for total liberation. *Ebony* provided striking photographs showing Black Power activists such as Davis and James Farmer protesting, delivering speeches, and sitting with President Bill Clinton. This visual imagery instilled in its audience a sentiment that Black Power was still active and vibrant as its advocates were still on the case, ‘refusing to hand over the torch to a younger generation that seems to be less insistent, less organised [...]’, wrote *Ebony*.⁹³⁵

⁹³³ Angela Y. Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2012), p. 14 in, <<https://b-ok.cc/>> [accessed 14 November 2020].

⁹³⁴ ‘Angela Davis: Still on the Front Line’, *Ebony*, pp.56-58.

⁹³⁵ Kevin Chappell, ‘Where are the Civil Rights Icons’, *Ebony*, August 1996, p. 114.

Through its articles, *Ebony* again challenged the major white outlets, which supported the idea that Black Power was brought to its demise in the early 1980s. By contrast, *Ebony* cast the Black Power Movement as a living movement in the 1990s, still thriving in politics, in academics, in the arts, and in the streets, ‘Julian Bond, Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis [...] are among the icons of the movement’ declared *Ebony*, ‘[...] some are still marching, and some are advising the president’.⁹³⁶

Ebony again proved itself to be a unique magazine due to the ways it engaged with Black Power. Its efforts in reviving the movement and reinvigorating its advocates also demonstrates that the magazine was a barometer of Black Power, proving to its audience and the established white print media that Black Power was still alive as its activists were still on the front line at the turn of the 20th century, still fighting for justice and equality for black Americans.

Conclusion

In her edited book published in 1985, Mary Schmidt Campbell, an American author and curator, illustrated the artistic achievements of black artists from the March on Washington to the United States' departure from the Vietnam War. The exhibition defined the impact of this period on black artists and its contribution to the black arts. In her book, Bennett contributed with an essay which again underscored his steadfast belief that the black liberation movement had not yet fully achieved its goals and that blacks should continue striving to cultivate their social lives, culture, and economy. He wrote, ‘There are Black mayors in Chicago and Philadelphia, but the battle is far from won’.⁹³⁷

⁹³⁶ Kevin Chappell, ‘Where are the Civil Rights Icons’, p. 108.

⁹³⁷ Art of Rebellion, box 2, Bennett papers.

Bennett was among the left-wing editors at the JPC who was dissatisfied by the outcomes of Black Power and the black struggle, often repeating his statement that the black liberation struggle had to go on. By contrast, while *Ebony* seemed broadly satisfied with the progress of the black freedom movement and its effects at the political level in the 1970s, this sentiment was reversed in the 1980s in the wake of Reagan's election, his attitudes towards Civil Rights, and the downfall of Black Power and its organisations. As such, *Ebony* shifted from an optimistic account into a pessimistic outlet, announcing its unwavering commitment to supporting them and calling its audience to financially back them up.

In the aftermath of the shutdown of the BPP's chapter in New York in 1982, the major white (and even black) print media solidified the notion that Black Power was brought to its demise. As such, some black-owned newspapers went on to hark back to the 1960s Black Power era, whereas the white-owned media such as *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Tampa Times* became either friendly with its former activists or exultant about their downfall. By contrast, *Ebony* challenged them as it stood out front and sought to revitalise its major leaders, demonstrating that they were still on the front line, fighting, teaching, preaching, and even marching. In so doing, *Ebony* proved again that its serious and distinctive engagement with Black Power could also be seen in its efforts to revive the movement.

Ebony kept in tune with the new trends in black America in the early 1990s. International readers such as Michael L. Crawley, an executive editor for *The Reporter* magazine in the West Indies, admired *Ebony's* role in updating its audience about the status of black politics, economy, the arts, and even the struggle. He told *Ebony*, 'thank you *Ebony* magazine [...]' for maintaining your commitments of keeping your reader abreast of key developments and personalities affecting the black community'.⁹³⁸

⁹³⁸ 'Letters to the Editors', *Ebony*, April 1993, p. 11.

At the turn of the 20th century, the magazine continued to endorse and encourage the fight for justice and equality, warning its audience against the perpetual racism in America and opening up its pages to many pivotal figures and black activists to recount and showcase their efforts and contribution to the black freedom movement. Its engagement, intervention, and response during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement were impressive, prompting President Bill Clinton himself to admire *Ebony*'s role and efforts during the modern black liberation struggle. In a special letter written to John Johnson on the 50th anniversary of *Ebony*, Clinton applauded the magazine, declaring that at the time when black Americans were fighting for liberation back in the 1950s and the 1960s, '*Ebony* was there to chronicle and interpret these historic moments – the tragedies, the triumph, and the miracles'.⁹³⁹ Clinton's message was a stark example that the president himself was aware of *Ebony*'s role as a serious outlet situating itself at the forefront of the modern black liberation struggle.

⁹³⁹ President Bill Clinton, *Ebony*, 'From Hope, Ark., with New Hope for a New America', *Ebony*, November 1995, p.39.

Conclusion: “‘*Ebony*’ A Proven Strong Voice”

Ebony's reputation as a staunch supporter of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement continued to receive wider acclaim at the turn of the 20th century. In 1995, *Ebony*'s publisher John H. Johnson was welcomed in Johannesburg, South Africa, to celebrate the launch of *Ebony South Africa*, a new magazine designed to cover news on black people in South Africa about politics, economy, and fashion. At the luncheon during the celebration, Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa, admitted that *Ebony* had been, from its inception, 'identified with struggles for liberation.'⁹⁴⁰

Mandela's statement demonstrates *Ebony*'s longstanding role during the fight for racial equality and justice not only in America, but also across the African diaspora. In August 1985, *Ebony* published a special feature in support of the fight of black people in South Africa. The magazine expressed optimism that the struggle in South Africa would succeed, and that black people would dominate and occupy the country's major sectors, such as economy and politics. The magazine included statements from well-known black American activists such as Jesse Jackson, the founder of People United to Save Humanity (PUSH), who predicted that the black struggle in South Africa would bring the Apartheid system down. It was due to its support that the magazine was banned in South Africa for thirty years before its reintroduction in the 1990s.⁹⁴¹

⁹⁴⁰ Remarks by Editor and Publisher, John H. Johnson, at the Johannesburg Luncheon *Ebony South Africa* 27 November 1995, Bennett papers, box 6.

⁹⁴¹ Remarks by Editor and Publisher.

As Malcolm X declared, *Ebony* garnered wide admiration among African black people by mid-1960s.⁹⁴² Indeed, *Ebony*'s role as a staunch supporter of the black liberation movement across the African diaspora further underlines how the magazine surpassed its reputation as a glossy magazine. Had it not been a serious magazine pertained to the struggle of black people across Africa, Africans themselves would never have been attuned to the magazine.

This thesis has argued that *Ebony*, an influential black magazine with a national readership, was actively engaged in the Civil Rights and Black Power campaigns. In doing so, this thesis reclaims the magazine and its politics from previous scholarly neglect. It moves beyond an assessment focused exclusively on the role and opinions of *Ebony*'s proprietor, John Johnson. The thesis identifies the crucial roles played by previously overlooked left-wing editors, demonstrating that *Ebony* was in fact far more radical than its glossy format and features might suggest. Overall, the thesis furthers our understanding of the role played by the black press in winning broad support for Civil Rights and Black Power.

From the inception of the Civil Rights Movement, *Ebony* was at the heart of the struggle, aligning itself with unsung Civil Rights activists. Dr. King, in his first days as a young activist, specifically reached out to *Ebony*, among all the black magazines in the U.S, to send reporters to record the historic milestone the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955.⁹⁴³ During his heyday as a pastor and a Civil Rights leader, the magazine backed up his activism, and had provided funds for his organisation, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).⁹⁴⁴ *Ebony* recruited him to become its regular contributor, writing a popular column to discuss and address issues for its wider black audience. King's wife, Coretta Scott King,

⁹⁴² 'Backstage', *Ebony*, February 1993.

⁹⁴³ 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1988, 'Backstage', *Ebony*, January 1990.

⁹⁴⁴ Carla Hall, 'Black Publisher Wrote Own Success Story', *News-Journal*, 12 October 1980, p. 5F; Margena Christian, *Empire*, p.xx.

was also endorsed by *Ebony*. The magazine supported her fight for the black women's cause more than did any other black or white outlet. *Ebony*'s unwavering support to Scott prompted the latter to privilege *Ebony* among all the major black-oriented newspapers and magazines in the U.S.⁹⁴⁵

The close relationship between *Ebony* and the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power extended further as the magazine also joined the struggle and became part of its crusade. Its editors and reporters went to the streets and protested alongside black activists. During the March on Washington in 1963, its publisher Johnson and his editorial staff marched arm in arm with the demonstrators. His reporters joined both popular and hardcore black activists during their protests, rode buses with the Freedom Riders, and participated in the sit in movement. The 1988 *Ebony*'s backstage reminded its audience, 'We were there, we told the story, and we were part of the story'.⁹⁴⁶ *Ebony*'s contributor Sherri Mitchell contends that when black Americans were fighting in the 1960s to bring about liberation to black America, '*Ebony* was there to capture the journey'.⁹⁴⁷

Ebony's solid support of Civil Rights activism captured the attention of the rising black militants and the radical black magazines and journals in the mid-1960s. As such, they sought to push the magazine into becoming a more militant black outlet. While Johnson often shied away from directing his magazine into a more serious pathway, *Ebony* gradually engaged with Black Power as young black militants were recruited as black editors for the magazine. The addition of A. Peter Bailey, David Llorens, and Phyl Garland into the editorial staff in the summer of 1965 made the focus on Black Power inevitable. This was further impacted by

⁹⁴⁵ 'Cover', *Ebony*, November 1970.

⁹⁴⁶ Backstage, *Ebony*, January 1988, p. 25.

⁹⁴⁷ Sherri Mitchell, *the Blacks of the 1960s*.

established editors, such as Lerone Bennett and Allan Morrison, who had metamorphosed into Black Power advocates in the mid-1966. This shift was evidenced in the first detailed profile on Stokely Carmichael and his clarion call for Black Power printed by *Ebony* in September 1966.

Johnson remained cautious not to turn the magazine into a more militant publication as he was not identified with the militant and radical camps of the black struggle. Yet, to financially profit from Black Power figures, he permitted his radical editors to feature them in *Ebony*.⁹⁴⁸ In fact, Johnson's pragmatism was evident during the rise of Black Power. He was aware that his readers had different ideological perspectives on Black Power, as he was also cognizant that they had become more serious about the black struggle. As a result, he provided his audience with news stories on Black Power, spanning from black radicals to Black Panthers to Black Power separatists. Articles such as 'SNCC, Rebels without a Cause', 'Stokely Carmichael, Architect of Black Power', 'The Rise of Black Power', to name a few, received strong reactions amongst white and black readership. Johnson did not hide the fact that he always sought to make *Ebony* a business magazine, even if it meant sacrificing elements of the black freedom. In its November 1971 backstage, *Ebony* noted that, 'we are proud that *Ebony* magazine is a financial success, we are even more proud that we can continue to keep it an editorial success'.⁹⁴⁹ Although the statement was anonymous, Johnson's rhetoric and his intention of profiting from the struggle were evident throughout.

While Johnson was trying to make *Ebony* a pragmatic and a business magazine, his left-wing editors, such as Bennett, were committed to making *Ebony* a trailblazer outlet among the national print media. Indeed, Bennett's profile on Carmichael prompted *Ebony* to pioneer

⁹⁴⁸ Todd Steven Burroughs, *The Revolution on Your Momma's Coffee Table*.

⁹⁴⁹ John Woodford, 'Messaging the Blackman', p.2; 'Backstage', *Ebony*, November 1971, p. 30.

the major print media as the first American publication to explore Carmichael and his call for Black Power in depth. Popular white-owned media outlets like *Florida Today* and *The Washington Post* praised *Ebony* for these remarkable efforts.⁹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Carmichael also received support from *Ebony's* left-wing editors outside the company. *Ebony's* editors Lerone Bennett and David Llorens marched in the streets with black protestors to exonerate him of charges levelled against him in the aftermath of the Atlanta unrest in September 1966. While trying to mainstream his image in *Ebony*, these attempts demonstrate that their radical attitude prompted *Ebony* to engage with Black Power.

Moreover, this thesis has established that Bennett, Llorens, and the other editorial left-wing were also activists and Black Power advocates. Bennett joined some Black Power organisations such as CORE (he was not officially a member) as he attended some of their meetings in 1967. On numerous occasions inside and outside the JPC, he praised and supported Carmichael's call for Black Power. Even after the fall of Black Power in the 1980s, he remained a supporter of Carmichael's self-help and self-determination tactics, urging his audience to follow suit and achieve liberation through self-interest and community control.⁹⁵¹

Bennett's radical colleagues also shared similar perspectives. Long-serving editor Allan Morrison and a coterie of young and recently hired editors used a radical tone at the JPC, helping to reroute *Ebony's* trajectories and orientations in the late 1960s. Their scepticism of Dr. King's approach to integration and their dissatisfaction with black Americans' social conditions led them to mimic Malcolm X's attitude of self-defence, and later Carmichael's call for unity and self-help. They also used similar radical orientations at the JPC,

⁹⁵⁰ Walter Morrison, 'Ebony: A History of U.S. Blacks Since 1945', *The Washington Post*, 5 November 1975; Walter Morrison, 'Ebony's Top Man Looks Back at 30 Years of Black History', *Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1975.

⁹⁵¹ Bennett, 'Martin or Malcolm', *Ebony*, February 1994, p. 74.

contributing to *Ebony* with pieces that argued in favour of Malcolm X's and Carmichael's radical tactics.

Historian E. James West argues that the visual embodiment of Black Power, such as Carmichael's *Black Power*, became an advertising campaign in *Ebony* magazine.⁹⁵² In fact, *Ebony* was not only a visual representation of Black Power but also a participant in it. When renowned Black Power leaders such as Stokely Carmichael and Angela Davis were imprisoned, *Ebony* backed them up and tried to raise funds for them. Such attempts had drawn the FBI's notice to the magazine, which attempted to neutralise it in the same way it did with the BPP.

Furthermore, the magazine proved to have a conspicuous impact on the movement. *Ebony* rebranded Black Power leaders such as Carmichael and Bobby Seale to its readers, introducing them as intellectual and democratic figures rather than violent or revolutionary individuals. The magazine reintroduced the concept of Black Power, which was seen by many white newspapers and even black popular activists as a dangerous phenomenon. By contrast, *Ebony* cast it as a democratic phenomenon, an endeavour to equalise opportunities between blacks and whites, with more emphasis on social and economic aspects such as jobs, education, and housing. In contrast to the dominant white-owned media, which presented Black Power as a dead movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, the magazine revitalised it during its demise by introducing it as a living movement.

Its influence, intervention, and contribution were lauded by Black Power activists. According to Bobby Seale, members of the rank and file were always interested in reading *Ebony* and were aware of the magazine's efforts to shape the black struggle. Gloria Richardson wrote to *Ebony* in which she praised the magazine for running a complimentary

⁹⁵² West, 'Black Power Print', p. 3.

profile on her. The magazine was also referenced in Huey Newton's book, 'Revolutionary Suicide', in which he stated that *Ebony* could assist him in shaping his views on the black struggle. In her autobiography, Angela Davis also referenced *Ebony*, stating that the magazine was a constant presence to raise the individual spirits of black Americans, including black activists.

It must be noted that *Ebony* was a magazine with a broad and growing circulation compared to other popular black magazines such as *The Crisis*, *Essence*, and *Black Enterprise*. In the early 1960s, *Ebony* had a readership of over four million (which equates to 1/5 of the total black Americans). By the 1970s, the magazine had an annual readership of almost seven million.⁹⁵³ Also, it should be noted that *Ebony*'s readers hailed from different regions in the U.S and came from different social classes. *Ebony*'s editor Margena A. Christian adds that Johnson attempted to engage with black people from different ages and different social classes and not only the educated or the black middle-class, 'Mr. Johnson wanted to reach people of all ages. It didn't matter if a person was sitting in the barbershop or chatting it up with girlfriends in a beauty shop [...] he especially wanted to touch upon those who were poor, ignored, and looked down upon [...]'.⁹⁵⁴

While *Ebony* sought to reach all black Americans in the U.S, its relationship with Black Power had a limit. One might wonder which orientation the magazine followed, for the Black Power Movement had different trajectories, each of which sought to bring freedom to black Americans. *Ebony* was not a revolutionary magazine, or a separatist outlet. It is true that *Ebony* responded to other camps of Black Power, such as the Black Panthers, or the separatists such as the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), but it was not in favour of them or

⁹⁵³ Brown 'SOULED OUT', p. 6; Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, p. 267.

⁹⁵⁴ Margena A. Christian, *Empire*, p. xiii.

their revolutionary or separatist tactics. In fact, its reaction was merely in response to some readers' requests. For example, its engagement with the Black Panthers was by virtue of its reader's demands while its coverage of the Huey Newton campaign was because Newton was thrust into the national limelight, which prompted the major print media to cover him and forced Johnson to follow suit.

By closely examining how *Ebony* engaged with Black Power, we can see that the magazine often endorsed black radicals who called black Americans to manage their institutions through self-help and self-interest. Among the black radicals was Carmichael, the SNCC's chairman. When the latter was touring the U.S to preach his new philosophy, *Ebony* was there to disseminate his message. Indeed, while *Ebony* did not clearly state its advocacy towards Carmichael's new orientations, many of its writings and articles point to considerable support of his tactics. In 1967, a few months after Carmichael popularised Black Power in Greenwood in South California, the magazine rejected the integrationist approaches of Dr. King and called its audience to harness the tactics of self-help and self-interest that Carmichael called for, declaring that they were the most viable, moderate, and realistic tactics to achieve liberation.

The magazine continued to endorse Carmichael and his tactics in the 1970s. In May 1976, *Ebony* renewed its support for Carmichael's call for black political representation, urging readers to elect blacks to speak on their behalf. Even when Carmichael flew to Guinea and became a Pan-Africanist, *Ebony* remained a supporter of his philosophy of self-help and self-interest, with senior editor Bennett attempting to revive the unity and self-determination methods that Carmichael advocated in the mid-1960s.

Ebony was undoubtedly at the centre of Black Power as it was still featuring Black Power at the turn of the twentieth century. In January 1998, the magazine visited Maulana Karenga,

a Black Power advocate and founder of Us organisation. The magazine also conducted a revealing interview with him, which focused on his activities as a chair of the black studies department at the University of California at Long Beach.⁹⁵⁵

Ebony's sustained support of the black struggle propelled the magazine to receive several accolades by white-owned newspapers. *The Orlando Sentinel* selected *Ebony* in its December 1985 issue and reminded its audience of the vital contribution that the magazine had during the black freedom movement, "'Ebony a Proven Strong Voice' wrote the newspaper. The newspaper had even blamed the black critics who once condemned the magazine for not taking part in the fight for liberation, 'They had forgotten' addressed the newspaper its audience, '[...] *Ebony* had a record of sticking its neck out, otherwise, it's unlikely that Dr. King would have relied so heavily on *Ebony* to get his message to blacks.'⁹⁵⁶

Ebony was a magazine which chronicled almost all facets of the modern black liberation struggle in America. It was a valuable and credible source that led many Civil Rights and Black Power activists to rely on it. It also deserved the highest commendation for its support and how it stood up for the black struggle and its leaders and activists. Its editor Margena A. Christian declared that *Ebony* was more than a magazine, 'it's a movement' said Christian, '[...] *Ebony* magazine fulfilled African American's yearning [...] Black is beautiful. Black is powerful. Black is mighty. Black is intelligent. Black is noble. Black is present.'⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ Maulana Karenga: the Man who Invented Kwanzaa, *Ebony*, January 1998, pp.116-120.

⁹⁵⁶ "'Ebony a Proven Strong Voice'", *The Orlando Sentinel*, 30 December 1985, p.A8.

⁹⁵⁷ Margena A. Christian, *Empire*, p. 83.

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