



Topic Seven A: Encouraging Dialectical Discussion

Structured Academic Controversy: Black Power

Was Black Power a more realistic strategy than the Beloved Community for achieving full equality for black citizens in the late 1960s?

Reading 1 – Side 1

Stokely Carmichael on Black Power

1 The concept of “black power” is not a recent or isolated phenomenon: It has grown out of
2 the ferment of agitation and activity by different people and organizations in many black
3 communities over the years. Our last year of work in Alabama added a new concrete
4 possibility. In Lowndes County, for example, black power will mean that if a Negro is
5 elected sheriff, he can end police brutality. If a black man is elected tax assessor, he can
6 collect and channel funds for the building of better roads and schools serving black people
7 – thus advancing the move from political power into the economic arena. In such areas as
8 Lowndes, where black men have a majority, they will attempt to use it to exercise control.
9 This is what they seek: control. Where Negroes lack a majority, black power means proper
10 representation and sharing of control. It means the creation of power bases from which
11 black people can work to change statewide or nationwide patterns of oppression through
12 pressure from strength – instead of weakness...

13
14 Ultimately, the economic foundations of this country must be shaken if black people are to
15 control their lives. Black people in the United States have a colonial relationship to the
16 larger society... Politically, decisions which affect black lives, have always been made by
17 white people... [Economically], exploiters come into the ghetto from outside, bleed it dry,
18 and leave it economically dependent on the larger society... [T]hese exploiters frequently
19 come as the “friend of the Negro,” pretending to offer worthwhile goods and services, when
20 their basic motivation is personal profit... The colonies of the United States – and this
21 includes the black ghettos within its borders, north and south – must be liberated... This
22 pattern must be broken. As its grip loosens here and there around the world, the hopes of
23 black Americans become more realistic. For racism to die, a totally different America must
24 be born.¹

25
26 White America will not face the problem of color, the reality of it. The well-intended say:
27 “We’re all human, everybody is really decent, we must forget color.” But color cannot be
28 “forgotten” until its weight is recognized and dealt with. White America will not
29 acknowledge that the ways in which this country sees itself are contradicted by being black
30 – and always have been... When the Lowndes County Freedom Organization chose the
31 black panther as its symbol, it was christened by the press “the Black Panther Party” – but
32 the Alabama Democratic Party, whose symbol is a rooster, has never been called the White
33 Cock Party. No one ever talked about “white power” because power in this country *is*
34 white. All this adds up to more than merely identifying a group phenomenon by some
35 catchy name or adjective... The furor over “black power” reveals how deep racism runs
36 and how great the fear which is attached to it. I have said that most liberal whites react to
37 “black power” with the question, What about me?, rather than saying: Tell me what you
38 want me to do and I’ll see if I can do it... One of the most disturbing things about all white

¹ For clarification purposes, portions of this paragraph are quoted from: Carmichael, S. & Hamilton, C. V. (1967). *Black power: The politics of liberation in America*. New York: Random House.

39 supporters of the movement has been that they are afraid to go into their own communities
40 – which is where the racism exists – and work to get rid of it. They want to run from
41 Berkeley to tell us what to do in Mississippi; let them look instead at Berkeley. They
42 admonish blacks to be nonviolent; let them preach nonviolence in the white community...

43
44 But our vision is not merely of a society in which all black men have enough to buy the
45 good things of life. When we urge that black money go into black pockets, we mean the
46 communal pocket. We want to see money go back into the community and used to benefit
47 it. We want to see the cooperative concept applied in business and banking. We want to
48 see black ghetto residents demand that an exploiting store keeper sell them, at minimal
49 cost, a building or a shop that they will own and improve cooperatively; they can back their
50 demand with a rent strike, or a boycott, and a community so unified behind them that no
51 one else will move into the building or buy at the store. The society we seek to build among
52 black people, then is not a capitalist one. It is a society in which the spirit of community
53 and humanistic love prevail...

54 - Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want," from New York Review of Books,
55 September 22, 1966
56

57 Now several people have been upset because we've said that integration was irrelevant
58 when initiated by blacks and that in fact it was a subterfuge, an insidious subterfuge for the
59 maintenance of white supremacy. We maintain that in the past six years or so this country
60 has been feeding us a thalidomide drug of integration, and that some Negroes have been
61 walking down a dream street talking about sitting next to white people, and that that does
62 not begin to solve the problem... When we went to Mississippi, ...we went to get [white
63 supremacists] out of our way, and people ought to understand that. We were never
64 fighting for the right to integrate, we were fighting against white supremacy... According to
65 [the advocates of integration], social justice will be accomplished by "integrating the Negro
66 into the mainstream institutions of the society from which he has been traditionally
67 excluded." This concept is based on the assumption that there is nothing of value in the
68 black community... The thing to do is siphon off the "acceptable" black people into the
69 surrounding middle-class white community. The goals of integrationists are middle-class
70 goals, articulated primarily by a small group of Negroes with middle class aspirations...
71 Such people will state that they would prefer to be treated "only as individuals, not as
72 Negroes"; that they "are not and should not be preoccupied with race." This is a totally
73 unrealistic position... [B]lack people have not suffered as individuals but as members of a
74 group; therefore, their liberation lies in group action... [T]he concept of Black Power
75 affirms that helping individual black people to solve their problems on an individual basis
76 does little to alleviate the mass of black people.²
77

78 We are not gonna wait for white people to sanction black power. We're tired of waiting.
79 Every time black people move in this country, they're forced to defend their position before
80 they move. It's time that the people who're supposed to be defending their position do

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² For clarification purposes, portions of this paragraph are quoted from: Carmichael, S. & Hamilton, C. V. (1967). *Black power: The politics of liberation in America*. New York: Random House.

81 that. That's white people. They ought to start defending themselves, as to why they have
82 oppressed and exploited us... In order for America to really live on a basic principle of
83 human relationships, a new society must be born. Racism must die, and the economic
84 exploitation of this country, of non-white people around the world, must also die.

85
86 We've been saying that we cannot have white people working in the black community and
87 we've based it on psychological grounds. The fact is that all black people often question
88 whether or not they are equal to whites because every time they start to do something
89 white people are around showing them how to do it. If we are going to eliminate that for
90 the generations that come after us, then black people must be seen in positions of power
91 doing and articulating for themselves... We have taken all the myths of this country and
92 we've found them to be nothing but downright lies. This country told us that if we worked
93 hard we would succeed, and if that were true we would own this country lock, stock and
94 barrel. It is we who have picked the cotton for nothing; it is we who are the maids in the
95 kitchens of liberal white people; ...it is we who sweep up your college floors; yes, it is we
96 who are the hardest working and the lowest paid... Black people are economically
97 insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you begin an economic coalition?
98 Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure black people
99 who they so much love? Then if you're not, are you willing to start building new
100 institutions that will provide economic security for black people? That's the question we
101 want to deal with...

102
103 We are never going to get caught up with questions about power. This country knows what
104 power is and knows it very well. And knows what black power is because it's deprived
105 black people of it for 400 years. So it knows what black power is. But the question is, why
106 do white people in this country associate black power with violence? Because of their own
107 inability to deal with blackness. If we had said Negro power, nobody would get scared.
108 Everybody would support it. And if we said power for colored people, everybody would be
109 for that. But it is the word "black," it is the word "black" that bothers people in this country,
110 and that's their problem, not mine...

111
112 It is ironic to talk about civilization in this country. This country is uncivilized. It needs to
113 be civilized. We must begin to raise those questions of civilization. What it is, and we'll do
114 it... We are on the move for our liberation. We have been tired of trying to prove things to
115 white people. We are tired of trying to explain to white people that we're not going to hurt
116 them. We are concerned with getting the things we want, the things that we have to have
117 to be able to function. The question is, can white people allow for that in this country? The
118 question is, will white people overcome their racism and allow for that to happen in this
119 country? If that does not happen, brothers and sisters, we have no choice, but to say very
120 clearly, move on over, or we're going to move on over you.

121 - Stokely Carmichael, "Black Power" speech at Berkeley, November 19, 1966

Reading 1 – Side 2

Bayard Rustin on “Black Power” and Coalition Politics

1 There are two Americas - black and white - and nothing has more clearly revealed the
2 divisions between them than the debate currently raging around the slogan of "black
3 power." Despite-or perhaps because of the fact that this slogan lacks any clear definition, it
4 has succeeded in galvanizing emotions on all sides, with many whites seeing it as the
5 expression of a new racism and many Negroes taking it as a warning to white people that
6 Negroes will no longer tolerate brutality and violence. But even within the Negro
7 community itself, "black power" has touched off a major debate...and one which threatens
8 to ravage the entire civil rights movement...

9
10 I would contend that "black power" not only lacks any real value for the civil-rights
11 movement, but that its propagation is positively harmful. It diverts the movement from a
12 meaningful debate over strategy and tactics, it isolates the Negro community, and it
13 encourages the growth of anti-Negro forces. In its simplest and most innocent guise, "black
14 power" merely means the effort to elect Negroes to office in proportion to Negro strength
15 within the population. There is, of course, nothing wrong with such an objective in itself,
16 and nothing inherently radical in the idea of pursuing it. But in Stokely Carmichael's
17 extravagant rhetoric about "taking over" in districts of the South where Negroes are in the
18 majority, it is important to recognize that Southern Negroes are only in a position to win a
19 maximum of two congressional seats and control of eighty local counties... [and] obviously
20 they could do nothing by themselves to reconstruct the face of America... [We must
21 instead make] the Democratic party truly responsive to the aspirations of the poor,
22 and...develop support for programs aimed at the reconstruction of American society in the
23 interests of greater social justice. The advocates of "black power" have no such programs
24 in mind; what they are in fact arguing for (perhaps unconsciously) is the creation of a *new*
25 *black establishment*.

26
27 Proponents of "black power" – accepting a historical myth perpetrated by moderates – like
28 to say that the Irish and the Jews and the Italians, by sticking together and demanding their
29 share, finally won enough power to overcome their initial disabilities. But the truth is that it
30 was through alliances with other groups (in political machines or as part of the trade-union
31 movement) that the Irish and the Jews and the Italians acquired the power to win their
32 rightful place in American society. They did not "pull themselves up by their own
33 bootstraps"-no group in American society has ever done so; and they most certainly did not
34 make isolation their primary tactic.

35
36 In some quarters, "black power" connotes not an effort to increase the number of Negroes
37 in elective office but rather a repudiation of nonviolence in favor of Negro "self-defense."
38 Actually this is a false issue, since no one has ever argued that Negroes should not defend
39 themselves as individuals from attack. Non-violence has been advocated as a *tactic* for
40 organized demonstrations in a society where Negroes are a minority and where the

majority controls the police. Proponents of non-violence do not, for example, deny that James Meredith has the right to carry a gun for protection when he visits his mother in Mississippi; what they question is the wisdom of his carrying a gun while participating in a demonstration. There is, as well, a tactical side to the new emphasis on "self-defense" and the suggestion that non-violence be abandoned. The reasoning here is that turning the other cheek is not the way to win respect, and that only if the Negro succeeds in frightening the white man will the white man begin taking him seriously. The trouble with this reasoning is that it fails to recognize that fear is more likely to bring hostility to the surface than respect; and far from prodding the "white power structure" into action, the new militant leadership, by raising the slogan of black power and lowering the banner of non-violence, has obscured the moral issue facing this nation, and permitted the President...to lecture us about "racism in reverse" instead of proposing more meaningful programs for dealing with the problems of unemployment, housing, and education.

It is, in short, the growing conviction that the Negroes cannot win - a conviction with much grounding in experience - which accounts for the new popularity of "black power." So far as the ghetto Negro is concerned, this conviction expresses itself in hostility first toward the people closest to him who have held out the most promise and failed to deliver, then toward those who have proclaimed themselves his friends (the liberals and the labor movement), and finally toward the only oppressors he can see (the local storekeeper and the policeman on the corner). On the leadership level, the conviction that the Negroes cannot win takes other forms, principally the adoption of what I have called a "no-win" policy. Why bother with programs when their enactment results only in "sham"? Why concern ourselves with the image of the movement when nothing significant has been gained for all the sacrifices made by SNCC and CORE? Why compromise with reluctant white allies when nothing of consequence can be achieved anyway? Why indeed have anything to do with whites at all?

But again: however understandable all this may be as a response to objective conditions and to the seeming irrelevance of so many hard-won victories to the day-to-day life of the mass of Negroes, the fact remains that the quasi-nationalist sentiments and "no-win" policy lying behind the slogan of "black power" do no service to the Negro. Some nationalist emotion is, of course, inevitable, and "black power" must be seen as part of the psychological rejection of white supremacy, part of the rebellion against the stereotypes which have been ascribed to Negroes for three hundred years. Nevertheless, pride, confidence, and a new identity cannot be won by glorifying blackness or attacking whites; they can only come from meaningful action, from good jobs, and from real victories such as were achieved on the streets of Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma. When SNCC and CORE went into the South, they awakened the country, but now they emerge isolated and demoralized, shouting a slogan that may afford a momentary satisfaction but that is calculated to destroy them and their movement. Already their frustrated call is being answered with counterdemands for law and order and with opposition to police-review boards. Already they have diverted the entire civil-rights movement from the hard task of developing strategies to realign the major parties of this country, and embroiled it in a debate that can only lead more and more to politics by frustration.

87 It may, in the light of many...victories which have been achieved in the past few years, seem
88 strange that despair should be so widespread among Negroes today... [D]espite these
89 victories Negroes today are in worse economic shape, live in worse slums, and attend more
90 highly segregated schools than in 1954... [T]he truth is that it need only take ten years to
91 eliminate poverty – ten years and the \$100 billion Freedom Budget recently proposed by A.
92 Philip Randolph...³ Let me interject a word here to those who say that Negroes are asking
93 for another handout and are refusing to help themselves. From the end of the 19th century
94 up to the last generation, the United States absorbed and provided economic opportunity
95 for tens of millions of immigrants... [T]hey were able to find jobs, and as industrialization
96 proceeded, they were gradually able to move up the ladder to greater skills. Negroes who
97 have been driven off the farm into a city life...cannot be compared with these immigrants
98 of old... [T]he ghettos of today have become dead-ends of despair... [T]he Negro of today is
99 struggling to go beyond the gains of the past and, in alliance with liberals and labor, to
100 guarantee full and fair employment to all Americans... In 1947, the Marshall Plan was put
101 into effect and 3 per cent of the gross national product was spent in foreign aid. If we were
102 to allocate a similar proportion of our GNP to destroy the economic and social
103 consequences of racism and poverty at home today, it might mean spending [\$100
104 billion]...although I think it quite possible that we can fulfill these goals with a much
105 smaller sum. It would be intolerable, however, if our plan for domestic social reform were
106 less audacious and less far-reaching than our international programs of a generation ago.

107
108 We must see, therefore, in the current debate over "black power," a fantastic challenge to
109 American society to live up to its proclaimed principles in the area of race by transforming
110 itself so that all men may live equally and under justice. We must see to it that in rejecting
111 "black power," we do not also reject the principle of Negro equality...

112 - "Black Power and Coalition Politics," Commentary Magazine, September 1966.

112

³ The Freedom Budget was a proposal for spending \$185 billion over a ten year period to attack the causes of poverty. It included plans for housing, education, guaranteed annual income, expanded medical care and social insurance, and the creation of jobs to eliminate unemployment.

Reading 2 – Side 1

John Hulett on the Lowndes County Freedom Party

1 ...Some time ago, we organized a political group of our own known as the Lowndes
2 County Freedom Organization, whose emblem is the Black Panther. We were criticized, we
3 were called communists, we were called everything else, black nationalists and what not,
4 because we did this. Any group which starts at a time like this to speak out for what is right
5 – they are going to be ridiculed. The people of Lowndes County realized this. Today we are
6 moving further. Too long Negroes have been begging, especially in the South, for things
7 they should be working for. So the people in Lowndes County decided to organize
8 themselves – to go out and work for things we wanted in life – not only for the people in
9 Lowndes County, but for every county in the state of Alabama, in the Southern states, and
10 even in California... No person can be free while other people are still slaves, nobody.

11 In Lowndes County, there is a committee in the Democratic Party. This committee
12 not only controls the courthouse, it controls the entire county. When they found out that
13 the Negroes were going to run candidates in the primary of the Democratic Party...they
14 assembled themselves together and began to talk about what they were going to do.
15 Knowing this is one of the poorest counties in the nation, what they decided to do was
16 change the registration fees in the county.

17 Two years ago, if a person wanted to run for sheriff, tax collector, or tax assessor, all
18 he had to do was pay \$50 and then he qualified to be the candidate. This year, the entrance
19 fee is about \$900. If a person wants to run, he has to pay \$500 to run for office. In the
20 primary, when they get through cheating and stealing, then the candidate is eliminated. So
21 we decided that we wouldn't get into such a primary because we were tired of being
22 tricked by the Southern whites. After forming our own political group today, we feel real
23 strong. We feel that we are doing the right thing in Lowndes County.

24 We have listened to everybody who wanted to talk, we listened to them speak, but
25 one thing we had to learn for ourselves. As a group of people, we must think for ourselves
26 and act on our own accord. And this we have done. Through the years, Negroes in the
27 South have been going for the bones while whites have been going for the meat. The
28 Negroes of Lowndes County today are tired of the bones – we are going to have some of the
29 meat too...

30 In Lowndes County, the sheriff is the custodian of the courthouse... After talking to
31 the sheriff about having the use of the courthouse lawn for our mass nominating
32 meeting...he refused to give the Negroes permission. We reminded him that last year...that
33 one of the biggest Klan rallies that has ever been held in the state of Alabama was held on
34 this lawn... And he gave them permission...

35 But he would not permit Negroes to have the use of the courthouse. For one thing
36 he realized that we would build a party – and if he could keep us from forming our own
37 political group then we would always stand at the feet of the Southern whites... So we told
38 him that we were going to have this meeting... And we wouldn't let anybody scare us off.
39 We told him, we won't expect you to protect us, and if you don't, Negroes will protect
40 themselves... [W]e reminded him that according to the law of the state of Alabama, that

41 this mass meeting which was set up to nominate our candidates must be held in or around
42 a voters' polling place. And if we decide to hold it a half a mile away from the courthouse,
43 some individual would...protest our mass meeting. And our election would be thrown out.

44 So we wrote the Justice Department and told them what was going to happen... All
45 of a sudden the Justice Department started coming in fast into the county... [The Justice
46 Department man] wanted to know, if shooting takes place, what are we going to do. And I
47 said, that we are going to stay out here and everybody die together... I said to him, through
48 the years in the South, Negroes have never had any protection, and today we aren't looking
49 to anybody to protect us. We are going to protect ourselves... [Some time later], he said to
50 me, John, I've done all I can do, and I don't know what else I can do, and now it looks like
51 you'll have to call this meeting off at the courthouse. And I said, We're going to have it...
52 [That night], the Justice Department came walking up the aisle of the church and said to me,
53 Listen. I've talked to the Attorney General of the state of Alabama, and he said you can go
54 ahead and have a mass meeting at the church and it will be legal...

55 To me, this showed strength. When people are together, they can do a lot of things,
56 but when you are alone you cannot do anything. There are 600 Negroes in the county who
57 did not trust themselves and who joined the Democratic Party. We warned the entire state
58 of Alabama that running on the Democratic ticket could not do them any good, because this
59 party is controlled by people like [George] Wallace; and whoever won would have to do
60 what these people said to do.

61 I would like to let people here tonight know why we chose this black panther as our
62 emblem... [T]his black panther is a vicious animal, as you know. He never bothers
63 anything, but when you start pushing him, he moves backwards, backwards, and
64 backwards into his corner, and then he comes out to destroy everything that's before him.
65 Negroes in Lowndes County have been pushed back through the years. We have been
66 deprived of our rights to speak, to move, and to do whatever we want to do at all times.
67 And now we are going to start moving... We decided to stop begging. We've decided to
68 stop asking for integration. Once we control the courthouse, once we control the board of
69 education, we can build our school system where our boys and girls can get an education in
70 Lowndes County... We aren't asking any longer for protection – we won't need it – or for
71 anyone to come from outside to speak to us, because we're going to speak for ourselves
72 now and from now on. And I think not only in Lowndes County, not only in the state of
73 Alabama, not only in the South, but in the North – I hope they too will start thinking for
74 themselves. And that they will move and join us in this fight for freedom.

75 - John Hulett, "How the Black Panther Party was Organized," May 22, 1966

Malcolm X on Power

76 **Interviewer:** What is the ambition of the Black Muslims?
77

78 The white man has taught the black people in this country to hate themselves as inferior, to
79 hate each other, to be divided against each other. Messenger Muhammad⁴ restores our love

79

⁴ Elijah Muhammad – prophet to Black Muslims; Malcolm served as one of Muhammad's
chief ministers within the Nation of Islam

80 for our own kind, which enables us to work together in unity and harmony. He shows us
81 how to pool our financial resources and our talents, then to work together toward a
82 common objective. Among other things, we have small businesses in most major cities in
83 this country, and we want to create many more... [I]t is very important to improve the
84 black man's economy, and his thrift. But to do this, we must have land of our own. The
85 brainwashed black man can never learn to stand on his own two feet until he is on his own.
86 We must learn to become our own producers, manufacturers and traders; we must have
87 industry of our own, to employ our own. The white man resists this because he wants to
88 keep the black man under his thumb and jurisdiction in white society. He wants to keep the
89 black man always dependent and begging--for jobs, food, clothes, shelter, education...

90
91 **Interviewer:** Many white religious leaders have also gone on record against the Black
92 Muslims. B'nai B'rith⁵ has accused you of being not only anti-Christian but anti-Semitic. Do
93 you consider this true?

94
95 **Malcolm X:** ...Let me say just a word about the Jew and the black man. The Jew is always
96 anxious to advise the black man. But they never advise him how to solve his problem the
97 way the Jews solved their problem. The Jew never went sitting-in and crawling-in and
98 sliding-in and freedom-riding, like he teaches and helps Negroes to do. The Jews stood up,
99 and stood together, and they used their ultimate power, the economic weapon... The Jews
100 pooled their money and bought the hotels that barred them. They bought Atlantic City and
101 Miami Beach and anything else they wanted. But the Jew that's advising the Negro joins the
102 NAACP, CORE, the Urban League, and others. With money donations, the Jew gains control,
103 then he sends the black man doing all this wading-in, boring-in, even burying-in--
104 everything but buying-in. Never shows him how to set up factories and hotels. Never
105 advises him how to own what he wants. No, when there's something worth owning, the
106 Jew's got it. Walk up and down in any Negro ghetto in America. Ninety percent of the
107 worthwhile businesses you see are Jew-owned. Every night they take the money out. This
108 helps the black man's community stay a ghetto.

109
110 **Interviewer:** Isn't it true that many Gentiles have also labored with dedication to advance
111 integration and economic improvement for the Negro, as volunteer workers for the NAACP,
112 CORE and many other interracial agencies?

113
114 **MALCOLM X:** A man who tosses worms in the river isn't necessarily a friend of the fish. All
115 the fish who take him for a friend, who think the worm's got no hook in it, usually end up in
116 the frying pan. All these things dangled before us by the white liberal posing as a friend and
117 benefactor have turned out to be nothing but bait to make us think we're making progress.

118 - Malcolm X, Playboy Interview, May 1963

118

⁵ **B'nai B'rith** is the oldest continually operating Jewish service organization in the world. It was founded in New York City by Henry Jones and 11 others on October 13, 1843.

Reading 2 – Side 2

The New Racism – Time Magazine

The Supreme Court in 1954 changed many of the underlying conditions of life in the U.S. by decreeing that the old “separate but equal” doctrine was antithetical to American democracy. Today, a dozen years later, many militant ideologues are impatient with what they consider the glacial pace of progress in civil rights. They espouse instead a racist philosophy that could ultimately perpetuate the very separatism against which Negroes have fought so successfully. Oddly, they are not white men but black, and their slogan is “Black Power!”

...On the face of it, “black power” ...seems nothing more than an appeal to the long-submerged racial pride of Negroes... Indeed, as applied by the young demagogues of SNCC and CORE, the notion of black power is inching dangerously toward a philosophy of black separatism and perhaps ultimately of black Jacobinism... Along Mississippi’s highways, the cries of “black power!” soon turned to cries of “we gonna get white blood!”⁶ Already, Negro hotheads have set up a political party in Alabama (the “Black Panthers”) that spurns whites. In Los Angeles’ Watts ghetto, some embittered Negroes want to disincorporate the entire area and re-establish it as “Freedom City,” with its own officials and police.

In this context, the Gandhian doctrine of nonviolence espoused by Martin Luther King is in danger of crumbling... More levelheaded Negro leaders – and white civil rights advocates – are appalled by the implications of the black-power mentality. Accusing SNCC of adopting a “black racist” course, NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins adds that it is ominously similar to South Africa’s apartheid policy, only turned topsy-turvy... Mississippi’s NAACP Field Director Charles Evers, whose brother Medgar was assassinated three years ago as a result of his civil rights activities [has said]: “If we are marching these roads for black supremacy, we’re doomed. I never will be anti-white. I would be just as guilty of the racism and bigotry we’ve been fighting all these years.”

...Precisely what impact the whole argument will have on the mass of America’s 20 million Negroes is something else... In the long run, to most Negroes freedom and power are abstractions, easily mouthed slogans for their deepest desires. For what they realistically and rightly crave is a more generous slice of what they are beginning to taste: more and better jobs, better housing, better education for their children, the means and access to the forms as well as the places of leisure that the white man affords... Black power is a ringing slogan in the summer of 1966 – one that may well see all the counsel of well-meant moderation choked in Mississippi dust.

- “The New Racism, *Time*, 1 July 1966

36

⁶ Following the attempted assassination and wounding of James Meredith who was making a solitary march across Mississippi for voting rights, other activists took up his march and continued it.

Roy Wilkins (NAACP) on Black Power

37 ...There has now emerged...a strident and threatening challenge to a strategy widely
38 employed by civil rights groups, namely, nonviolence... We [the NAACP] never signed a
39 pact either on paper or in our hearts to turn the other cheek forever and ever when we
40 were assaulted. But neither have we couched a policy of manly resistance in such a way
41 that our members and supporters felt compelled to maintain themselves in an armed state,
42 ready to retaliate instantly and in kind whenever attacked. We venture the observation
43 that such a publicized posture could serve to stir counterplanning, counter-action, and
44 possible conflict... Moreover, in attempting to substitute for derelict law enforcement
45 machinery, the policy [of violence] entails the risk of a broader, more indiscriminate
46 crackdown by law officers, under the ready made excuse of restoring law and order.⁷

47 ...[T]he more serious division in the civil rights movement is the one posed by a
48 word formulation that implies clearly a difference in goals. No matter how endlessly they
49 try to explain it, the term “black power” means anti-white power. In a racially pluralistic
50 society, the concept, the formation and the exercise of an ethnically-tagged power, means
51 opposition to other ethnic powers, just as the term “white supremacy” means subjection of
52 all non-white people. In the black-white relationship, it has to mean that every other ethnic
53 power is the rival and the antagonist of “black power.” It has to mean “going-it-alone.” It
54 has to mean separatism.

55 Now, separatism, whether on the rarefied debate level of “black power” or on the
56 wishful level of a secessionist Freedom City in Watts⁸, offers a disadvantaged minority little
57 except the chance to shrivel and die.

58 The only possible dividend of “black power” is embodied in its offer to millions of
59 frustrated and deprived and persecuted black people of a solace, a tremendous
60 psychological lift, quite apart from its political and economic implications.

61 Ideologically, it dictates “up with black and down with white” in precisely the same
62 fashion that South Africa⁹ reverses that slogan.

63 It is a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan.

64 If these were even in our judgment, what virtue can be claimed for black over white?
65 If, as some proponents claim, this concept instills pride of race, cannot this pride be taught
66 without preaching hatred or supremacy based on race?

67 Though it be clarified and clarified again, “black power” in the quick, uncritical and
68 highly emotional adoption it has received from some segments of a beleaguered people can
69 mean in the end only black death. Even if, through some miracle, it should be enthroned
70 briefly in an isolated area, the human spirit, which knows no color or geography or time,
71 would die a little, leaving for wiser and stronger and more compassionate men the painful
72 beating back to the upward trail.

72

⁷ Wilkins is likely referencing violence in Mississippi and Louisiana, which resulted in the creation of the Deacons for Defense who accompanied the Meredith March in June 1966. In addition, the Watts riot in Los Angeles received significant media attention in August, 1965.

⁸ Although the Black Panther Party for Self Defense had not yet been established in Oakland, California, some blacks in Watts who were disgruntled with city government wanted to disincorporate the Watts ghetto from Los Angeles and to hire their own police force.

⁹ Apartheid was the policy of separatism or segregation imposed by the white minority in South Africa on the nation’s majority black population.

73 We of the NAACP will have none of this. We have fought it too long. It is the raging
74 of race against race on the irrelevant basis of skin color. It is the father of hatred and
75 mother of violence.

76 It is the wicked fanaticism which has swelled our tears, broken our bodies, squeezed
77 our hearts and taken the blood of our black and white loved ones. It shall not now poison
78 our forward march.

79 We seek, therefore, as we have sought these many years, the inclusion of Negro
80 Americans in the nation's life, not their exclusion. This is our land, as much so as it is any
81 American's – every square foot of every city and town and village. The task of winning our
82 share is not the easy one of disengagement and flight, but the hard one of work, of short as
83 well as long jumps, of disappointments, and of sweet successes...

84 - Keynote Address to the NAACP Annual Convention, Los Angeles, July 5, 1966

Name _____ Hour _____ Date _____

Was Black Power a more realistic strategy than the Beloved Community for achieving full equality for black citizens in the late 1960s?

Round 1

1. Working with your learning partner, use the reading you received to create 5 claims to support your side of the argument. Don't just use every reason you can think of—use the **5 best** claims from your own ideas and the article that **work well together**. An argument is compelling when multiple claims are made using different types of supporting evidence. It's important to make sure that none of your claims contradict each other. You're thinking like a lawyer preparing a case for court. Make the best case for your side that you can!

Claims and Evidence

2. Each team is ready to present. When the opposing team presents to you, briefly jot down some of the main ideas from their key points below.

Round 2: Switch Sides

3. It's time to think from the other perspective! With your learning partner, use your new reading to craft 5 reasons to support the side you're on now. Try to generate new claims.

Claims and Evidence

4. Each team is ready to present. When the opposing team presents to you, briefly jot down some of the main ideas from their key points below.

5. Small group discussion—you're free to represent your own personal view now! Discuss with your group whether you think Black Power a more realistic strategy than the Beloved Community for achieving full equality for black citizens in the late 1960s? Find one or more points from this activity that your whole group can agree on, and write them out here:

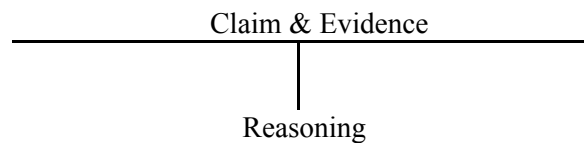
Name _____ Hour _____ Date _____

Making an Airtight Argument

When you want to persuade someone about something you use an “argument.” That doesn’t mean you have to fight with the person, though! An argument is a group of claims, or statements, used to convince someone. Claims are supported by evidence and reasoning—otherwise they aren’t very persuasive at all. For example, imagine that you want your parents or guardian to let you go on a road trip with a friend who has their license. You’ll need to come up with some really good claims to get them to let you go! For example, you might say:

Claim and evidence:	My friend is really responsible; her GPA is practically a 3.8!
Reasoning:	Getting a good GPA is an example or sign of responsibility

The evidence is usually a provable fact helps you make your claim. The reasoning supports the whole thing. It’s the “reason” your claim makes sense in the first place.



But if you really want to convince someone of something, you need to include several claims *and* several types of reasoning. That way even if your parent doesn’t agree that your friend’s grades have anything to do with whether or not you should get to go on the road trip, you have another strong claim you can use to support your argument. Here’s another claim you could use to support your case. It has a different type of evidence and a different type of reasoning than your last claim.

Claim and evidence:	My friend drives to Janesville to work three days a week, so she’s a really good driver.
Reasoning:	causal—a lot of experience driving will cause someone to become a better driver

As long as they don’t contradict each other, the more claims you can make with varied pieces of evidence and types of reasoning, the stronger your argument will be—and the more likely you are to go on that road trip!

Over

Types of Reasoning

Keep in mind that every type of reasoning has a *possible pitfall*—something that could make the whole claim collapse. That’s why it’s a good idea to include a number of claims with many types of reasoning in any argument. That way if someone can poke a hole in one of your claims, you can still support your point of view.

Moral values	<p>the evidence relates to a value or a ranking of values which you believe your audience shares</p> <p>Example: “protecting our freedoms is important than protecting our safety”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: the value or ranking of values isn’t really something your audience agrees with.</p>
Rule or principle	<p>the evidence is connected to some general rule or principle</p> <p>Example: “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: the rule isn’t always true or doesn’t apply in your case</p>
Causal	<p>x causes y</p> <p>Example: Increased carbon emissions have led to global warming.</p> <p>Possible pitfall: might not be true that x causes y</p>
Incompatibility	<p>x and y can’t both be true</p> <p>Example: “An honest reporter can’t leave out important facts”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: any time the two things can exist at the same time, e.g. an honest reporter might leave out the name of their secret sources.</p>
Authority	<p>the evidence is from an experts or important sources in a given field</p> <p>Example: “According to Harvard Physicist Richard Feynman . . .”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: the source or expert isn’t that good</p>
Example of or sign of	<p>The evidence is an example or sign of something where those features that are shared characterize the whole</p> <p>Example: “The loss of Louisa Small’s house is yet one more example of the problems caused by poor planning for Hurricane Katrina.”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: the part does not accurately represent the whole, e.g., Louisa’s house fell due to poor construction rather than poor hurricane planning</p>
Similar to	<p>The evidence is similar to another case in important and relevant ways, the differences are irrelevant to this case</p> <p>Example: “Saying that the U.S. should not send troops to protect innocent civilians in Darfour is like saying that we should not have fought in WWII.”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: the two things really aren’t all that similar, or have really important differences</p>
Category splitting	<p>separating one category into two, usually to question one and uphold the other</p> <p>Example: “the needy” split into the “deserving poor” and the “undeserving poor”</p> <p>Possible pitfall: it might not be valid to split the groups apart</p>

Questioning Guide for Black Power Closing Discussion

1. Opponents of Black Power argued that the Voting Rights Act would bring about political equality in the South if blacks could be patient long enough to let it work. Is political equality enough for blacks to truly be equal in the late 1960s or was more necessary?
 - a. Do Black Power advocates hold a realistic view of the America's free market economy?
 - b. Could the Beloved Community approach have accomplished Black Power's economic goals?
 - c. Which approach would most likely increase economic opportunities for black citizens?
2. The two sides have differing views of government and its role in the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s. How accurate were Black Power advocates' views of government? Should the advocates of Black Power have expected government to meet their needs?
 - a. What lessons were learned from the experience of the MFDP?
3. Roy Wilkins compares Black Power to apartheid in reverse and reduces it down to violence. First, is Wilkins' view accurate and second, can Black Power exist without violence?
4. In the Socratic seminar, we discussed whether SNCC's view of human nature was accurate. How does the Beloved Community view of human nature compare to the perspective of Black Power advocates on the issue? Within the Black Power debate over acceptable and effective change strategies, which side held a more defensible view of human nature? In light of your answer, which side had the best strategy for bringing about change?
5. Was Black Power a more realistic strategy than the Beloved Community for achieving full equality for black citizens in the late 1960s?