Violent or Non-Violent? What Difference Does it Make in 1960’s Civil Rights Activism and the State?

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University of San Francisco

Violent or Non-Violent?
What Difference Does it Make in 1960’s Civil Rights Activism and the State?

An honors thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the distinction of Honors in the Politics Department in the College of Arts and Science

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December 2022
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Abstract

In this essay, I research the differences between violent and non-violent actors during the civil rights movement and how their methods changed their interactions with the state. For my case study, I chose two violent and two non-violent subjects, as well as two individuals, and two organizations. Those being Martin Luther King Jr. and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee for my nonviolent actors, and Malcolm X and The Black Panther Party as my violent actors. I examine how their methods as individuals and groups changed the way they interacted with Police, The FBI, and the Federal Government such as presidents and congress.

Introduction

The year 2020 was a tumultuous year for civil rights and protests in the United States. Millions of people across the country and the world flocked to the streets to march for the continued struggle for civil rights for Black people, and their equal treatment under the law. Many of these protests were emulative of those during the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in the 1950s and 60s. There were cries for justice for those killed by police, and white and Black people alike marched together in all 50 states for equal rights. There were calls back to the CRM from news and media reminiscing on the last major movement in the U.S. to emphasize its historical significance. There were references to the violent and non-violent methods of those who also flocked to the streets more than 50 years ago. The contemporary methods of protests were mostly non-violent marches in city centers demanding equal rights and equal protection under the law. However, others chose more violent methods such as destroying businesses and stores under the guise of fighting for justice. This massive call back to the CRM brings up many of the struggles similar activists faced decades before.

During the civil rights movement, there was a major divide between violent and non-violent activists. While they may have been fighting for similar things, the liberation of Black Americans from systems of oppression, they chose very different methods. While Martin Luther King may have chosen to lead protestors through the streets of Alabama, The Black Panthers chose to brandish weapons on the steps of the Sacramento capitol building in California. Additionally, contemporary media characterized these two methods as being similarly disruptive if not the same. Looking back to the past for answers to today’s issues provides a framework for the modern day.

This project will examine the different ways that violent and non-violent actors during the civil rights movement interacted with the state based on their violent or non-violent methods, and how this can better inform the modern-day civil rights struggles in the U.S.

Literature Review

There is a diverse range of opinions and literature surrounding the civil rights movement and even more specifically the various organizations that controlled the political landscape of the US between 1950
and 1970. When searching for journals, articles, and books that spoke specifically about violent versus nonviolent movements, it is striking to see that there is plenty of discourse comparing the two that often takes over the literature on the subject in terms of both efficacy and legitimacy. When specifically studying Malcolm X, and The Black Panther Party, and comparing them to SNCC and Martin Luther King Jr., there is much to be said in terms of the diversity of thought around this topic. These pieces offer a very general overview of current academic sources and writings.

**Literature on Civil Rights Movement Opinions and Research**

In an opinion piece by Penial E. Joseph, he offers a perspective on the Black Power Movement from the vantage point that the study of this area of the civil rights movement was not being considered properly, and he outlines reasons as to why this might be. He goes on to give context to the Black Power movement, and why they chose the methods that they did. Joseph gave the example of Richard Wright's famous novel Native Son, which portrays Bigger Thomas, a young black boy, as the personification of America’s fears of the black man. This, writes Joeseph, is a good metaphor for the MO of the BPP and other black liberation movements. This speaks directly to the motivations of the BPP and why they may have chosen the methods that they did. In addition to being distrustful of the moderate whites, the Panthers were also plagued by bias and racism in ways that went beyond skin color. Parallel to Joseph, in an article entitled *The Fight for Equality Continues* Christopher Stickland, at the University of Georgia, describes the goals of the civil rights movement as trying to “achieve new systems for Black social support and wellness” (Christopher Strickland 71). Strickland also notes that the overarching goals of the Civil Rights Movement or CRM (when using CRM this specifically refers to the self-identified non-violent agents of the movement), had to do overall with political and legal recognition of Black people. In summary of their motivations he writes “The 60’s nonviolent movement for civil rights sought equality in the eyes of the law and its agents; equitable distributions of material resources by the state, and political autonomy.” (Stickland 73). What Strickland is doing in this essay is outlining the key pieces of the CRM as it was broadly defined by its leaders which I will analyze in this essay such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior, and a key movement led by the young revolutionaries of the time, The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Strickland identifies “Collective Identity, Social Cohesion, and Solidarity” as key themes of the CRM. There was a network of Black Churches, spearheaded by King’s leadership that translated the anger, and frustration of their patrons into “concentrated collective conscious conducive to ushering social change” (cited in Strickland 74). In other words, the religious branch of the CRM could connect its constituents in productive and healthy ways. This capacity allowed them to organize around their church communities, and create change at a local level that eventually reverberated nationwide.
**Violent Movements**

Donna Murch in *Black Liberation 1968* details her first-hand accounts of experiencing life after the founding of the Black Panther Party. As she describes, this powerful movement was started just a short distance away from where she attended college, by students of that same university. Motivated by the prominence and premises of Malcolm Little, known prominently as Malcolm X, the BPP was created in Oakland in 1966. As young black revolutionaries watched as their mentors and heroes were being killed in other countries such as Patrice Lumumba in Congo, the call for their services as liberators was taken and they sprung into action. As Murch details the genesis of the Black Panther Party, she combines their history with a collective historical truth she calls “the good sixties vs. the bad sixties.” (Murch 718). “The Bad” is the assassination of King and Kennedy, and the tragedies that followed, but “The Good” contrasts with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, and Stokely Carmichael in the leadership of SNCC. The declensionist narrative at the time according to Murch was that it placed “black radicals as the cause rather than the victims of state repression.” (Murch 719). This most definitely contributed to the violence that would befall the BPP as they continued their efforts. It was also in 1968 that J. Edgar Hoover declared the BPP to be the “greatest threat to the internal security of the country”. This resulted in nearly 750 Panthers being arrested and $5 million in bail being paid on their behalf by the party. (Murch). The state violence that Murch describes in this essay details the swift and violent actions taken against specifically the black panther party and their comrades. The violence came from all levels of government including city, state, and federal.

In the book, *The Big Easy Was Anything But for the Panthers*, Judson Jeffries and Orissa Arend detail accounts of violence against the Black Panther party in chapters across the country. One chapter specifically focuses on the Black Panthers of New Orleans who decided it was time to speed up civil rights progress in this uniquely diverse city. They received much backlash and anguish from citizens and the New Orleans Police, who made strong efforts to thwart any potential violent protests the Panthers were planning. New Orleans had experienced very few violent protests according to Orissa and Jeffries, which they were incredibly proud of. The Panthers, while being self-identified as militant often focussed their attention on community building and service before any rifles and other arms were taken up. The image of the Panther with a rifle stood in front of many people’s understanding of their movement as a whole. This is the fate that befell many other Panther chapters as well, many people, specifically the police, couldn’t see past the guns, to see the community dedication and emotional labor being put forth to attempt to undo centuries of oppression and violence.
Non-Violent Movements

In his piece entitled *Black Liberation and the Foundations of Social Control*, Andrew Gavin Marshall details the foundations of social control through corporations as relevant to the CRM insofar as they helped to influence the policies that were eventually born out of these organizations. Marshall details accounts of the Ford Foundation, The Rockafeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation as key contributors. This is incredibly important because their money was often used to control the narrative and actions of their monetary recipients. This allowed major “moderate” civil rights organizations to flourish, with the stipulation that they operated around the wishes of their donors. This is not to say that these movements didn’t spark instrumental change, only to illustrate the intentionality behind who was asked to the white house, and who was surveyed by COINTELPRO. These organizations were of course very careful about who they gave their money to. They avoided anything associated with the “Black Power Movement” and the “Black Liberation Movement” and only focused on organizations with conservative goals according to their interpretation. One of the movements they (The Ford Foundation specifically) deemed “moderate” and “responsible” was The Congress of Racial Equality or CORE. Their modest goals and disapproval of the many violent riots that were happening across the country made CORE an attractive benefactor. They deemed SNCC to be a more radical movement, and even though their methods were entirely peaceful, the ideals behind their leader Stokley Carmichael of “Black Power” thwarted any potential funding from corporations such as Ford. Their motivations behind this were to “organize the ghetto” through “the creation of indigenous, grassroots leaders who could organize and control the urban black masses and with whom it could broker” (Marshall 788)

In addition to Marshall, Francis Shor describes the utopian aspirations of SNCC and the black freedom movement in *Utopian Aspirations in the Black Freedom Movement: SNCC and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1960-1965*. Shor argues through many other Utopian scholars, that SNCC was led by a utopian view of the world to transform it through their actions. An activist within the organization is quoted as saying “When we talk about growing up in a better world, a new world, we mean changing the world to a different place” (cited in Shor 175). SNCC had big dreams for the future and the sit-ins were just the beginning of their work. Charles Sherrod an early leader of SNCC is quoted as saying “We are the last Negros and Liberals; if we are victorious over the system, human beings will be our posterity” (cited in Shor 176). This utopian view of SNCC is what led them to come face to face with their governments. They threatened the institution of power, rather than trying to operate within it to a certain extent. It’s also worth noting that SNCC didn’t necessarily disapprove of the direction of change that was being made, just the speed it was progressing (Shor 176). They wanted things to move faster, so they staged the sitings and bus boycotts that shocked the country into shape.
While there were many well-orchestrated campaigns of sit-ins and marches taking place during the civil rights movement, the NAACP was simultaneously fighting a lengthy legal battle against the many segregationist laws that tortured Black Americans. Coupled with the Black Lawyers Networks, they fought laws from the “separate but equal clause” of Plessy to Brown v. Board. This strategy, which falls into the non-violent category of resistance, serves as a perfect example of how operating within the system of power, allows for the success of movements led by Black Americans. Also seen as, beating them at their own game. These incredible freedom fighters developed the equalization strategy that would help to usher in school desegregation. All while moving the CRM forward. This method, while not approved by many modern whites and government officials, has allowed the NAACP to continue to thrive to this day. While they also adopted non-violent strategies like SNCC, their main difference was how they did it. The methodology of the NAACP and the Black Lawyers Network proved to be successful because of their concise and articulate criticisms of the laws on the books. Whereas SNCC challenged these laws in a more disruptive way. Leading them down a different path than the NAACP.

In an essay entitled The Use of Passive Resistance During the Civil Rights Movement by Konstantinos D. Karatzas, the author explored the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance in achieving the goals of the CRM. This perspective helps to analyze the actions of Dr. King, their effectiveness, and why he chose nonviolence as his method of communication for the movement. According to this essay, King wasn’t always a proponent of nonviolent resistance. In fact in his early days as a young college student, even after reading Gandhi’s famous teachings that he would eventually grow to embody and adopt, proposed that the path to liberation could only be won through “armed revolt” (cited in Karatzas 43). Initially, he didn’t think that non-violent direct action could lead to success in the south the same way it had for Gandhi in India, especially as King saw it, where in the South, armed self-defense was the norm. King used a unique tactic: coercion. He was known to have pointed out that a lot of the Black Americans living in the south at the time would not have been enough to push the movement forward. Rather, through non-violent direct action, King was able to coerce the government into intervening in their demonstrations. “The federal government reacts to events more quickly when a situation cries out for its intervention” (cited in Karatzas 45) preached King, and that’s exactly what he did. Like a bull to a red cape, King used the Bus Boycotts and sit-ins to lure the government’s nasty side of hatred out from its hiding place and entice it to spring into action. King and his delegates “…would force their oppressor to commit brutality openly <...> while the rest of the world looking on” (cited in Karatzas 45). King and the SCLC showed the world the nasty head of segregation through their efforts and forced the rest of white America to wake up to the realities of life under the iron fist of Jim Crow. This is why King’s methods eventually worked in passing the voting rights act, he knew people needed to see what was going on to make a change, and he especially knew, he couldn’t do it alone.
“The focus of this study is to test for temporal variations in the effects of Black protest, and segregationalist killings on passage of voting rights legislation” (Santoro 1392). A study entitled, The Civil Rights Movement and the Right to Vote: Black Protest, Segregationalist violence, and the Audience, by Wayne Santoro, offers the perspective that the CRM was as successful as the audience deemed it to be. He cites major research studies famously done by William Gamson who came to a similar conclusion. He argues that before the 1960’s White Americans not only didn’t pay attention to civil rights actions but advocated for segregation more. This, he believes, should have helped violent civil rights activists who used that method during this time, because the audience who would have been most opposed to it wasn’t paying attention. Santoro openly criticizes previous significant research on how little they considered external factors such as the audience when determining the success of a movement. He argues that the audience, the supporters, the protestors, the affected community, as well as groups who have a vested interest in the success of a movement, do shape what their success looks like. Most notably in this piece in relationship to my research, is that Santoro makes the argument that violence inflicted on peaceful protestors is and should be considered when looking at violent actors during the civil rights movement. Shockingly, it was a tactical strategy used by many civil rights groups to do things, peacefully, that would likely garner a response in the form of white violence. He argues that the public violent outbursts of racist whites helped the movement by showcasing the reality of segregation in the Southern United States. By highlighting what was going on, their protests were able to gain support, and in turn, a larger, whiter, and more sympathetic audience.

In Martin Luther King Jr. on Democratic Propaganda, Shame, and Moral Transformation Meena Krishnamurthy, argues that King’s famous “Letter from the Birmingham Jail, was a piece of democratic propaganda aimed at the inactive white moderates who his efforts greatly depended on persuading. King’s letter emphasized shame, argues Krishnamurthy, which becomes a much more effective tactic than trying to reason directly with white moderates which were highly unlikely to yield the kind of results King and the SCLC were hoping to achieve. She cites King’s speech directly with one of the most outright criticisms of the white moderate when King writes “Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection” (King 1963). There is much to unpack in just these two sentences about the pure and utter disappointment King is expressing towards whites at the time. He is begging them to act now and join the movement for Black liberation, through what Krishnamurty argues is a clear form of democratic propaganda.

Non-violence doesn’t just mean marching in the streets and participating in sit-ins and bus boycotts, there already existed a radical understanding of healing our communities that accompanied King’s ideas of freedom from persecution. In Joshua Inwood’s piece Performing the Spadework of Civil
Rights: SNCC’s free southern theater as radical place-making and epistemic justice, he outlines the ways that SNCC (The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) promoted its mission and expressed its values through a free theater. While seemingly random and irrelevant, the actions that SNCC took to achieve their overall goals that came along with being a non-violent protest and civil rights organization, they needed to get creative with their methods! It was integral to the movement that they worked on community building as a part of their methods and that’s exactly what they did here. There weren’t just any plays however, they were specifically written by Black playwrights, that focussed on “the moral and political dilemmas of race and rights,” (Inwood). While SNCC is most famously known for their lunch counter sits ins, and other boycotts, they dedicated a significant amount of time, emotion, and labor to try to enrich the lives, both socially and intellectually, of rural oppressed Black communities throughout the Southern United States (Inwood).

Many scholars and writers have given their opinions and findings on the matter of violent and non-violent civil rights actions. However, none of them have answered the question of how it affects their interactions with the state. Many people would think and agree that the method of your movement, ie how you conduct your activism, makes a profound difference in how your actions are perceived, and how the state might approach a system of reasoning with those entities. Which brings to mind a key question, what difference does being violent or non-violent make?

Methods

The question this project seeks to answer is, how does the classification of a Civil Rights Movement as violent or non-violent influence one’s interactions with the state? To answer that central question, this paper focuses on two civil rights groups and two iconic leaders of the civil rights movement in the United States. Within the categories of violent and non-violent, one organization and one individual were selected. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) and Malcolm X represent movements that did not disavow violence as a means of seeking change. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Revered Dr. Martin Luther King represent nonviolent participants.

Given the selection of groups, the research concentrates on the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) era is defined to be between 1954 and 1975. This gives ample time and room to examine the events both before and after major civil rights legislation, and major landmark events in the CRM. This era in time for American history is crowded with significant events that changed the future of this country forever. From uprisings to protests, to marches, to the foundation of some of the major civil rights organizations we know today. Limiting the study to these four entities enables the research to examine some of the most high-profile individuals of the time which then helps to inform how other people in the movement could have interacted with the state. This limitation however does have its downsides. By cutting off the study
in 1975, the research is unable to explore how these groups connect to other historical periods that preceded or followed the civil rights movement such as the war on drugs. Focussing on this period and people, though not perfect, does enable the project to address the research question directly and succinctly.

To assess the civil rights entities, this project will focus on the actions and steps that they took to actualize their vision. Whether or not they chose to protest in the streets, write for a newspaper, or sit-in at a lunch counter, their actions in conjunction with how the state reacted will be analyzed.

The data used for the investigation include testimonials, biographies, other research, and incident reports such as FBI documents and court transcripts, and more. This project will analyze the way that these groups and people were treated by different elements of government, including local police, the FBI, and the Federal Government. Each level of government represents different types of interactions with the state. For the police, I will look at the events surrounding arrests and convictions for my subjects, and their overall treatment by law enforcement. With the FBI, I will look into the perceptions placed on my subjects, and whether they were under FBI surveillance. The FBI specifically established a counterintelligence agency to combat the vast spreading of ideas from the four groups/entities in this project and others. Looking at how and why they were surveyed will help differentiate their treatment based on violent or non-violent perceptions and self-proclamations. Lastly, for the Federal government, the research looks to see whether and how these groups had an impact on legislation passed. It also explores whether they interacted with the federal government on a personal level and if it was a positive or negative experience.

The Civil Rights Movement during this period

To understand how these subjects interacted with the state during the civil rights movement, it is imperative to understand the context in which they functioned.

The Black Panther Party (BPP), Malcolm X, The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and Dr. Martin Luther King, are some of the most prolific, and influential entities of the CRM. All of whom reached national prominence and recognition, both positive and negative for their organization.

The BPP and Malcolm X are two of the most influential entities in the history of the Black Power Movement.\- a period in American history defined by Black Americans’ heightened self-confidence, self-sufficiency, and demand for better treatment from the state. Some participants, X and BPP included, opted to tear away from the dependency they had on the US government to provide them with rights and fair treatment. They instead turned inwards and relied on their communities alone for support and stability. It is well known that they both had a large distrust of the police and didn’t accept that the
purpose of law enforcement was to protect and serve, but that instead, their mission was to terrorize Black communities across the US through intimidation, violence, and even murder. They are defined as violent movements both from the external interpretation and internal definition. Malcolm X is famously quoted as saying that he will achieve “freedom, justice, and equality” for Black people “by any means necessary” (Little, 1964). Some may argue that this statement coupled with his famous photo where X is holding a large gun standing at a window while he states out of it to the street below, equates to his advocacy of violence. However, X never did advocate random acts of violence against white Americans, or even the police like he is thought to have done, he simply advocated for self-defense against the threat of racial torture. Because X was not entirely opposed to violent resistance, he has been categorized as a violent actor of the CRM, a label which he may have disagreed with.

The BPP, on the other hand, takes an entirely different approach to their violent action. The Black Panther Party for self-defense (BPP) was founded by Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale on October 15th, 1966 in Oakland California. The two former college associates founded this movement to combat police brutality against the Black community, provide community resources such as food security, and educate Black folks across the country on their rights as Americans which included how to use certain weapons. The Panthers, in their foundation, made clear their demands of the state. Among them were housing, equal education, and the release of all Black persons from incarceration in prisons. The Panthers are known to have been confrontational, loyal to their cause, and infamous for their demonstrations. Their philosophy included the open and frequent use of weapons, at their meetings, and out in the community, the BPP focussed keenly on the threat of state violence against Black people, and it was crucial to them to be able to defend themselves from any of said violence. In one of their most notable demonstrations, the Panthers donned their uniform, a black beret, and black leather jacket, and organized themselves on the California State Capitol steps in protest. It is important to note, that they all openly carried large rifles during this demonstration. Previous behavior would suggest that should they need to defend themselves, they would indeed use the weapons they were brandishing. From the Panther’s perspective, they were fighting in self-defense against the state and the violence they were inflicting on Black communities across America. Huey P Newton, one of the founders of the BPP, equated the struggle for freedom with the War in Vietnam. He saw the barrage of violence against the Vietnamese during the height of the Vietnam war to be the same as the war happening on American soil to Black Americans. This comparison helps to answer why the BPP may have chosen the methods they adopted.

In contrast, Dr. King and the SNCC adopted a significantly different approach to pursue their shared dream of freedom and equality. Dr. King was a well-educated and personable man who was well-liked in his community, even though he was seen as radical by other Southern faith leaders. King was famously criticized for his marches by his colleagues of fellow southern clergymen. His response to
these criticisms was the main focus of his very famous, letter from the Birmingham Jail. While Dr. King is a contemporary hero of the civil rights movement, in his times, King was incredibly controversial. Even though King preached non-violence, cross-cultural communication, solidarity, and love, his colleagues heavily criticized him for challenging the status quo and disrupting the social order in a manner they felt was too hasty. It likely helped his cause that he was a supporter of non-violence, but he was treated by fellow clergymen as though that wasn't the case. Needless to say, King is a decorated hero of the civil rights movement in modern times, but between 1954 and his death in 1968, King was controversial.

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, along with King, was one of the most notable organizations during the CRM. These young students from across the Southern United States are credited with organizing the famous lunch counter sit-ins, where young Black students are taunted with violent threats and racial slurs to protest segregation, for simply sitting at the counter in a diner. They adopted the strategy of “nonviolent direct action” in their methods to enact change. This meant that they put themselves into situations to protest, like physically sitting at a lunch counter, but never interacting with physical violence. It was direct and present, but non-violent in its entirety. Along with the lunch counter sit-ins, the students are also credited with organizing the Freedom Rides and voter registration drives (National Archives). SNCC was a very close-knit organization of passionate activists who operated on a strong sense of solidarity (Stoper, 1977). Their mission statement is as follows: “We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from the Judaeo-Christian tradition seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society. Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overcomes injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality. Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by which God binds man to himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even amid hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love. By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.” (SNCC, Founding Documents) Their collective agreement on non-violent, direct action proved to be successful which united the group even further. According to many scholars, Stoper among them, it was incredibly infrequent for a member of SNCC to stray away from this mission. They were bound by their passion for change and were willing to go to incredible lengths to enact the peace they desired. What began as a group of college students coming together to make small changes within the civil rights movement blossomed into an interstate operation of non-violent protests with an incredible
impact. They stood strong within their values and had a collective agreement not to stray from them at any point. From an organizational perspective, SNCC didn’t believe in a traditional bureaucratic hierarchy of leadership. For example, they had a central leader or executive officer, that would assist in orchestrating their demonstrations, but was also an equal member in the end. They saw all members as equivalent and valued participants in a larger movement for social change. This distinguished them from their counterparts, which often operated under more traditional structures. The BPP, in contrast, had a smaller group of people make major decisions for the rest of the organization. This makes them comparable to the BPP in the same way that they also tried to operate under a non-traditional method of leadership which also proved to keep their organization successful.

Findings

The Black Panther Party

The BPP made it a part of their brand to brandish weapons as a form of protest and intimidation. The Panthers wielded these weapons to symbolize the protection of the Black lives in their community, and the need to fight back against oppression both metaphorically and literally. The BPP expressed their demands for a better society for Black Americans in the form of a 10-point plan, The 10-Point Plan and Platform. The plan stated its objectives:

1. We want freedom.
2. We want the power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
3. We want full employment for our people.
4. We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.
5. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.
6. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society.
7. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society.
8. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
9. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and the MURDER of Black people.
   [emphasis original]
10. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails.
11. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
12. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. (Newton, Seale 1966).
The plan devised by Newton and Seale spread quickly from its foundation, and at the party’s height, they had Panther chapters in every U.S. state. This message resonated with thousands of Black Americans which inspired them to join this movement. The BPP organized itself in many ways, both violently and non-violently. For example, they offered services directly to their community. These included free breakfast in the mornings for school children all across the country where their chapters were located, adult education and trade school programs, and even healthcare screenings. They also organized protests and marches where they toted rifles which taunted local police. In one of their most notable demonstrations, the Panthers donned their uniform, a black beret, and black leather jacket, and organized themselves on the California State Capitol steps in protest. It is important to note, that they all openly carried large rifles during this demonstration. Previous behavior would suggest that should they need to defend themselves, they would indeed use the weapons they were brandishing. From the Panther’s perspective, they were fighting in self-defense against the state and the violence they were inflicting on Black communities across America.

**Police**

A central and ongoing challenge that the Panthers faced, was the treatment of Black Americans by the Police. They felt that the police were overstepping and taking advantage of their power to the point of killing many members of the Black community. The panthers did not trust or recognize the police as adequate protectors of the Black community, in fact, they argued the opposite. The BPP believed that the police were notorious perpetrators of violence in the Black community and spent a lot of time at odds with them in the cities where their chapters were located and over the years they were active. They saw the police as protectors of government interests, at the expense of Black people. As outlined in their 10-point Platform where they noted “We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and the MURDER of Black people”, the police were a hot issue with the panthers. The majority of the interactions the panthers had with the state, were with the police, and they were seldom positive. An extreme example of this is when BPP co-founder, Huey Newton, was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in 1967 for the death of Officer John Frey of the Oakland Police Department. This case is a prime example of the treatment received by members of the party, their experiences in court, and their overall interactions with law enforcement. The BPP in many instances worked to disprove the legitimacy of both the police and the justice system, while simultaneously exposing miscarriages of justice that befell them. While driving through Oakland, California in the early hours of the morning, Huey Newton and one of his associates, Gene McKinney, were pulled over by two Oakland police officers because of outstanding tickets associated with the car. After several exchanges between Newton and law
enforcement, the situation became aggressive, and both officers and Newton were wounded in the course of the altercation. One casualty of the incident was officer John Frey, whose death led to Newton being charged with voluntary manslaughter and assault (People v. Newton, 8 Cal. App. 3d 359). At the beginning of the stop, Newton was asked to step out of the vehicle and was promptly searched. Newton claims that during the search Officer Frey called him the N-word (Dreyfus et al., ) and told Newton that he could “take that book and stick it up your ass” referring to a constitutional law book that Newton was holding after Officer Frey used force against him, and Newton informed him of the illegality of the search. During the trial, Newton fought tirelessly to ensure he was given a fair trial, but he was eventually convicted of voluntary manslaughter. In July of 1970, Newton and his lawyers filed for an appeal because the jury was not given all the proper facts of the case. It was later declined, and after two additional mistrials, the District Attorney of Alameda county dismissed the case against Newton. The disarray of this legal battle all started because of an inappropriate interaction between law enforcement and Newton. Members of the BPP were continually harassed by law enforcement and promptly removed from police custody because of the legal connections the party had.

**FBI**

In 1967 J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, initiated the Black Nationalist Hate Group (BNHG) sector of COINTELPRO, a counter-intelligence program founded in 1956 by Hoover to combat the rise of communism in the United States. The BNHG sector specifically targeted civil rights groups and individuals who were either 1) Black themselves, or 2) represented an interest in aiding the black community during the Civil Rights Movement. He instructed his field agents and other operations personnel to identify imaginative actions designed to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities” of Black activist organizations (Director to All Offices, August 25, 1967). The Black Panther Party, along with the Nation of Islam, SNCC, Dr. King, and several more. Hoover told the New York Times that the Panthers were the “greatest threat to the internal security of the country” (Book III, 1976, p. 188). Between 1967 and 1971, the FBI launched 295 counterintelligence operations against Black activists under the COINTELPRO-BNHG program; 233 of them were directed toward the Panthers (Self, 2006, p. 45). Hoover was vehemently opposed to the BPP and saw them as a priority for the FBI to investigate, and then eventually infiltrate. They were viewed as a hate group due to their anti-police rhetoric, and open disapproval of the U.S. government’s treatment of Black Americans. The BNHG of the FBI was founded just a year after the BPP was founded, additionally, over 75% of their intelligence operations were against the Panthers, making them the most investigated entity under this sect of the FBI. These intelligence operations eventually led to the demise of the party, however, their ideas and visions for a strong Black American Community are still present.
Federal Government

The BPP’s interaction with the federal government is very limited. The majority of interactions that they had were through the House Committee for Un-American Activities. The Panthers were in open opposition to the U.S. government and spread this message widely. This was cause for concern for the committee whose main function was to investigate (1) the extent, character, and objects of un-American activities in the United States, (2) the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution, and (3) all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation. (National Archives). The Black Panthers fell into this category to a tee. Hoover, of the FBI, brought his concerns to this committee to convince them of the immense threat that the panthers posed to American society. The Panthers were on the radar of the HUAC and were investigated by them.

Beyond the HUAC, the Panther’s interaction with the federal government was limited. None of their members were invited to the white house for a sit-down invited on the house floor to speak on their issues and perspectives, nor were they interested in any meetings. The Panthers wanted to create a life for Black people outside of the dependence on the government to relinquish their complete freedom to them, the Panthers wanted to do things themselves. It’s no surprise that their leaders weren’t invited to speak with national government officials, it was antithetical to their movement.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X, Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, lends himself to be a very complex individual during the CRM, and until his death by assassination in 1968. Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little, in Omaha Nebraska in 1925, would become one of America's most notorious civil rights activists and Black Nationalists. Malcolm's life was defined by his transformative ideologies both politically and religiously, as well as his tumultuous relationships with fellow contemporary activists. Little was subject to years of scrutiny and sabotage from the Nation of Islam (Hussein, 2020), which he eventually departed from, and from the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO), the Black Nationalist Hate Group (BNHG) branch which investigated Malcolm. Malcolm’s young life was characterized by his father’s sermons as a baptist preacher which included ideologies from Marcus Garvey. In his autobiography, co-authored by Alex Haley, he writes "The teachings of Marcus Garvey stressed becoming independent of the white man" (Alex Haley, 1965). Throughout his life, Malcolm X interacted with many different civil rights organizations that transformed his ideology. During his time with the Nation of Islam, an extremist Black Nationalist Group, Malcolm X adopted a militant approach to his activism, which he later departed from, but this period in his life is how government entities defined him. His
famous words "By any means necessary" accompanied by the arguably more infamous photograph of X holding a rifle while staring out of a window, helped the FBI and other areas of government define Malcolm as "militant" or "violent". Malcolm, along with the Black Panthers, viewed any violent resistance that they acted on, to be in self-defense. To clarify, Malcolm X was not for random acts of violence, but rather violence in defense of violence. He ascribed to the idea that if someone attacks you, you have a right to defend yourself from them “by any means necessary”. These attacks can range from physical attacks to economic and systemic attacks against Black people. Malcolm X was only for violence if violence was done against him. This was enough for the FBI and other government entities to label him as a violent threat which is why he is included in this project.

Malcolm X became a member of the NOI while he was in prison for robbery from 1946 to 1952. When he was released he quickly moved up the ranks in the organization, became second in command to the head of the NOI, Elijah Muhammed, and was appointed minister of Temple No. 7 in Harlem, a large and prestigious temple for the organization. Along with his position as Minister, he was also a journalist and writer, which led him to start the Muhammad speaks newspaper. Malcolm printed the newspapers from his home and made it a requirement for every man in the NOI to sell the papers for fundraising purposes. The major theme of the paper dealt with “Nation’s racial doctrines on the inherent evil of whites and the natural superiority of Blacks.”(Mamiya, 2022). This became a cause for concern for the Police and FBI when the NOI rhetoric became widespread, and more and more black Americans became supporters of the NOI.

Police

Malcolm X was not afraid of, nor did he back down the New York Police Department (NYPD) which often harassed and tormented members of the Black community where he lived, during the height of his career. There was a situation in which X interacted with the police in 1957 in Harlem, New York. Two police officers were beating a man named Reese Poe with their nightsticks. X and his associates witnessed this attack and quickly alerted the community of the assault. Thousands of Harlemites flocked to the streets to demand Justice for Poe, and Malcolm X was called in to ease the tension and appease the mob. Poe was severely beaten and needed immediate medical attention, which he was denied. When Malcolm X stepped in to try and ease the situation, he scolded the police for denying Poe medical attention and claimed there was nothing he could do about the mob, that they were demanding justice, and justice they should see (Evanzz, 2017). Malcolm X had just “challenged the authority of the New York Police Department and survived without a scratch” (Johnson & Weitzman, 2017). He was seen as a hero.

Malcolm himself, as well as his family, were also subject to the invasive and tyrannical practices of the police. In May of 1957, NYPD detectives and a federal postal inspector trespassed into X’s home in
search of a woman named Margaret Dorsey. This government personnel had not received a search warrant to enter X’s New York home, and when he demanded they present one, the situation grew hostile. Shortly after, shots were fired into the home, and while no one was injured, X decided to press charges. Within minutes of the attack, the tight-knit Black community of Harlem was looking for the detectives and officials and they were subsequently beaten by the mob. X, his wife Betty, and Dorsey were taken into police custody for resisting arrest. X later filed a $24 Million lawsuit against the transgressors which was settled out of court in 1958 (Evanzz, 2017).

Malcolm was often harassed by police, and at times they attempted to take advantage of their power and abuse it to conduct searches and torment the Black community in Harlem where X lived with his family. While X never committed any violent acts himself, he was treated as a threat to American society for his political ideologies. The police often came to Malcolm to seek an arrest, however, Malcolm was a law-abiding citizen, who viciously fought back against the police’s frequent harassment.

**FBI**

Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam were closely monitored by the Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and the Black Nationalist Hate Group (BNHG) extension of the bureau. They were perceived as a national terrorist threat and were treated as such. J. Edgar Hoover made it a point in his career as the head of the FBI to highlight the importance of dispersing “Black Nationalist Hate Groups” like the NOI. The FBI had a consistent plan they used to infiltrate who they deemed to be threats and dissolve them from the inside. Part of the FBI’s plan was to gain intel on organizations like the NOI to learn how to best quell their efforts. Unfortunately for them, they were successful in many places. According to John Weitzman in the FBI and Religion, the FBI had a vested interest in the NOI because of their alleged connection to communism, specifically Malcolm X as a known communist. Hoover even went too far as to publish a book entitled, Masters of Deceit where he accuses communism of infiltrating Black Muslim communities and Black communal leadership. This heavily influenced the interactions between the FBI and X because of this added layer of his connection to communism. Malcolm X during this time around the mid-'50s was also gaining popularity with middle-class Black Americans.

But Malcolm X and other high-profile members of the NOI were placed under investigation and surveillance before the official foundation of the program. In 1952, Malcolm X and NOI leader Elijah Mohammad were placed on the FBI’s security index. This meant that they were subject to warrantless arrests and detention after any indication of a threat to national security. In late December of 1956, Hoover requested an increase in technical surveillance, and wiretapping, to be conducted on the NOI. He wrote in his request to the justice department that “Members fanatically follow the teachings of Allah as interpreted by Muhammad; they disavow allegiance to the United States, and they are taught they need
not obey the laws of the United States. . . . It is believed that a technical surveillance . . . will furnish not only data concerning the fanatical and violent nature of the organization but also data regarding the current plans of the NOI to expand its activities throughout the United States.” (Evanzz, 2017) cited in Evanzz, 2017). Hoover feared that Malcolm X and the NOI were creating an ideological radical army of communist, anti-white Muslims in America who hated America. There were also the supposed commandments of the NOI: “Two main NOI tenets were seen as cause for concern. The Nation of Islam still taught that a member needed to kill at least four “devils” (Caucasians) before he could wear the small metal “button of Islam” on his lapel. The other belief took on an ominous hue in the aftermath of the Holocaust: the earth rightfully belonged to the Black man and all White races must be exterminated” (cited in Evanzz, 2017). Malcolm X himself purported this ideology which made him a target for the FBI. This extremist rhetoric that the NOI purported and X wrote about in his magazine Mohammad Speaks, made for a strong case against them for the FBI.

**Federal Government**

Much like the FBI, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) heavily monitored X and other members of the Nation of Islam under the assumption that they were a “Black Nationalist Hate Group” as defined by J. Edgar Hoover in his book Masters of Deceit which was released in 1958. Hoover was concerned that the activism of X and members of the NOI would inspire a Black Messiah from their membership, and encourage X and the NOI’s followers to disavow the United States and revolt against the government. Along with HUAC, before its official surveillance of X and the NOI, Hoover worked closely with the Justice Department to secure funding for wiretaps for this organization. The FBI and upper divisions of the federal government worked closely together to ensure the demise of the NOI and X.

Lucius Mendel Rivers, an extreme segregationist who represented Charleston, South Carolina, was intolerant and angered by the NOI’s expansive and pervasive growth. He requested that Francis E. Walter, chairperson of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) at the time, use his influence to launch a probe of the NOI because the sect was “subversive.” This was after X and Elijah Muhammad were placed under surveillance about 10 years prior. “We must dissect this organization and open up its unsavory history so that the people can see and know it for what it is,” Rivers told the HUAC rules committee on August 1st, 1962 (cited in Evanzz, 2017).

The FBI and HUAC worked together for years to delegitimize and infiltrate the NOI and by association Malcolm X as their most popular member and chief minister of the Harlem Temple. They worked tirelessly to disband this organization and spread the message that the NOI was a violent threat to Americans based on the two tenants aforementioned. This did not stop X or the NOI from exercising their first amendment rights of freedom of expression and religion. Malcolm X would continue his partnership
until his spiritual pilgrimage in 1963, where he witnessed white and Black Muslims praying together and disavowed the white hatred that the NOI was spreading. He continued to be under FBI and HUAC surveillance until he died in 1965.

SNCC

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was founded in 1960 by a group of college students with the collective mission of executing sit-in movements in the deep south to protect against racial segregation. As tensions heightened across the country with the rise of Dr. King as a prominent figure for the CRM, many people across the United States were inspired to take action, and the founding members of SNCC were among them. During the height of their success in 1966, their chairman, Stokely Carmichael produced the phrase “Black Power” which would go on to inspire a movement in and of itself.

Police

The members of SNCC during their time as a well-known organization had significant run-ins with the police. One of the most notable being, when the police disbanded a meeting SNCC members, were having on the steps of the Alabama Capitol Building. Approximately 400 SNCC members gathered on the steps for a “prayer meeting” (Downs 2010), and police spent more time restraining the white mob of onlookers than interacting with members of the SNCC. Another notable event was when SNCC members and faculty at Alabama State staged an on-campus demonstration, which resulted in 35 students and one faculty member being taken into police custody (Downs, 2010). They faced incredible backlash for their peaceful protests from former Alabama governor, John Patterson, and police commissioner L.B. Sullivan. Much of SNCC’s interactions with the state police in Alabama, were ordered by the governor and then carried out by law enforcement. Though law enforcement believed they were creating a deterrent, the arrests only helped SNCC’s cause and grew their movements. Each time members were arrested or threatened with legal action, they only came back stronger in both numbers and values. SNCC’s inspirational mission and values drew many students to their direct action movement which continued to supply the people they needed to carry out their vision. Charles L. Taylor, from Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute, observed at the time "This is something that cannot be stopped.... We may be arrested and even taken from jail and lynched, but other students will take our place." (Downs, 2010). Members of SNCC didn't shy away from attacking the issues of segregation and racial discrimination at the source. Many members of SNCC believed that Mississippi was the “linchpin” of the movement and that segregation was at its worst. They chose to focus on Mississippi and centralize their efforts for voter registration there. If they could make a change in Mississippi, it would reverberate to other areas of the country.
FBI

Surprisingly, SNCC was strongly associated and grouped with other violent movements during the CRM. Hoover’s COINTELPRO targeted a variety of civil rights and Black Power organizations with different and often competing ideologies, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), Deacons for Defense and Justice, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Nation of Islam (NOI), US Organization, and the Black Panther Party (BPP). These groups were not selected based on their violent behavior but on their potential for provoking violence within the Black community. However, this perceived threat was based on concerns about the rhetoric of the Black left, not on evidence of planned attempts to engage in violence or overthrow the government.

Within an extensive catalog of records concerning a man named James Rufus Forman, lay the smoking gun against SNCC and its members. James R. Forman became involved with SNCC in 1961, and from then until 1966 he served as the executive secretary, then from 1967 to 1969 the Internal Affairs Director. Forman was a strict non-violent actor during his involvement with SNCC, and after. However, in a collection of FBI documents that were released after "the subject's activities were no longer considered to be a threat to the internal security of the United States. ", the FBI tells a different story. Among thousands of pages of documents, there is seemingly incriminating evidence against Forman as a violent actor. Among them seemed to be an intake file to register Forman on the FBI’s security index. The security index, as aforementioned in previous sections, meant that Forman, and potentially additional members of SNCC, were subject to unwarranted searches and seizures, as well as detentions for undetermined amounts of time. Despite being an entirely non-violent actor, Forman was labeled on said intake form as having “Actions of strong or violent, anti-US sentiment, prior acts (including arrest or convictions) or conduct or statements, indicating a propensity for violence, and an anti-path he toward good order and government” signed “very truly yours” from the Executive director of the FBI, James Edgar Hoover (Series I: James Forman, 1967). This is a direct example of the kind of surveillance that was placed on non-violent actors of SNCC. Despite being a famously non-violent organization, their actions and their intentions were surpassed by grossly exaggerated and imaginative fear from members of the FBI and COINTELPRO.

Much like The BPP and Malcolm X, SNCC was heavily surveilled by the FBI as well. According to the FBI, whether the groups had violent or nonviolent methods made little difference in how they were handled. They posed the same kind of threats to national security according to Hoover.
Federal Government

The Department of Justice, the FBI, and President Kennedy then Johnson, all worked closely together to monitor the behavior of SNCC, and other CRM organizations they perceived to cause civil unrest. Like X, the NOI, and the Black Panther Party, Hoover looked to the more senior government organizations for support and funding. The interactions that SNCC had with the federal government were not dissimilar to the endeavors with X and the BPP, however, they were much slighter. The FBI essentially took care of most of the interface between SNCC members and placed them on their security index. The federal government and SNCC had very few direct interactions, with the Justice Department or the President for instance. Significantly, SNCC had protested in front of the White House Several times, but beyond this, their main interactions were with the police and FBI.

Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) was one of the most influential and prolific figures of the 20th century. From his humble beginnings in Atlanta Georgia, to become an internationally recognized symbol of hope, justice, and equality. Dr. King is famous for his demonstrations like the March on Washington for Jobs and Equality, and his speeches and literature such as his letter from the Birmingham Jail. All of his methods fell under the category of nonviolence, and he emphasized this heavily in his actions, and his writings. He was able to bring together people from all walks of life to create a more just and peaceful future for America. But his life was not without conflict or deterrents, King was very controversial during his time and faced a plethora of backlash from those who opposed him, and those who supported him.

Police

King was famously arrested in April of 1963 for protesting without a permit. This comes after King and his allies violated an Alabama Law against mass public demonstrations. Following his arrest, he wrote a letter entitled From the Birmingham Jail, which sparked a discussion in itself. But this was not the first, nor the only time King would be unfairly detained. In January of 1956, King, on his way home from working at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, stopped to give a few of the Montgomery Bus boycotters a ride. During this time, the bus boycotters were in full effect and many Black citizens of Montgomery were refusing to ride the busses in an act of non-violent protest. When King picked up the young activists, he was immediately trailed by an officer, arrested, and sent to jail for speeding. (Maclin & Savarese, 2018) All for allegedly driving 30 miles per hour in a 25-mile-per-hour zone. King was just 27 at the time and would have run-ins with the police until he died in 1968. It was very typical of police to harass and arrest Black people who were participating in the Bus Boycotts or
other non-violent demonstrations for miscellaneous offenses like loitering or public disturbances. MLK was not immune from these interactions as well. The police would very often harass King and even his family within the scope or outside of his actions as a civil rights activist. King had had his home searched, and was treated like a dangerous criminal for leading large non-violent protests. King disrupted the status quo to protest segregationalist laws and was treated the same as Malcolm X or members of the Black Panther Party years later.

**FBI**

Like, the BPP, Malcolm X, and members of SNCC, Dr. King was heavily surveyed by the FBI. For over 10 years, King was the target of extensive investigations into his life in an attempt to ‘neutralize’ him as a civil rights leader (Boykoff, 2007). King came onto the FBI’s radar in 1957 when there was a concern that he and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were somehow connected to the communist movement. J G Kelly, an FBI agent at the time, wrote to director J Edgar Hoover that “Because of the stated purpose of the organization, you should remain alert for public source information concerning it in connection with the racial situation” (cited in BoyKoff, 2007). This is what likely sparked the FBI’s interest in King and was the motivation behind their continuous investigations. After Hoover ordered this investigation into King and the SCLC, his Atlanta field office reported they “had no information regarding any communist infiltration of the SCLC” (cited in BoyKoff, 2007). At best, King had had brief conversations with other communist leaders such as Benjamin Davis and acknowledged the Socialist Workers Party for their support with the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, but there was no hard evidence King was connected to them beyond this. But the FBI’s interest in King and the SCLC did not end there. The FBI decided to wiretap a man named Stanley Levison’s phone, and his conversation with King. Levinson had minuscule affiliation as best with the communist party, but this was enough for Hoover to get permission from former Attorney General Robert Kennedy to place him under surveillance, and wiretap his phones. During this time, the transcripts of the recordings were shared with Robert Kennedy, Vice President Lindon B Johnson, and others to which no evidence of a communist connection existed. King later said that “there are about as many communists in this freedom struggle as there are Eskimos in Florida” (cited in BoyKoff, 2007). King knew that he was under heavy pressure and surveillance, but refused to follow blind orders even from President Kennedy who was concerned that a potential communist connection could put the Voting Rights Act in danger.

**Federal Government**

King had a very close relationship with President John F. Kennedy during his presidency as civil rights legislation was being proposed and eventually passed in congress into what is now known as the Voting
Rights Act of 1964. It was King’s connections to communism that almost delegitimized the Civil rights legislation he had worked for so tirelessly. In a meeting with Kennedy in 1962, it was alleged that former president Kennedy demanded that King relinquish all ties with anyone who could have something to do with the communist party lest the legislation is put in jeopardy. King refused and asked the president to provide proof of what he was alleging. “I assume you know you’re under very close surveillance” (cited in BoyKoff) President Kennedy told King during one of their many meetings. King had a close relationship with the White House which only helped his case for civil rights legislation. Kennedy and other members of his cabinet wouldn’t risk any connection to communism in the United States, and neither would King. King consulted and met with many members of the federal government for the voting rights act. His dream was heard up to the white house steps and to the floor of congress where the bill was ultimately brought forth. There was of course opposition to his movement and his methods, but King was persistent, and eventually, it paid off.

Comparison

Police

When looking for the differences in police interactions of these projects’ violent and non-violent subjects, there is little contrast found. One of the most significant examples this project found, was that of Huey Newton and Martin Luther King. When a young MLK and Huey Newton were both pulled over and harassed by police on unfounded charges, the similarities between the two could not have been more distinct. While these individuals ascribed to opposite methods of protest which consumed their very identities, police only saw them as activists and treated them as if they were both continually disturbing the peace.

Members of the Black Panther Party were also arrested similar to members of SNCC. A significant similarity is that members of both groups were emboldened after these arrests were made. As Panther members were arrested more came to take their place, and the same thing was true for SNCC. These events would only encourage them to fight harder, and legitimize their demands for change. Both groups were fighting for the equality and protection of Black people in society, and to the police, they were just a disruption.

There was no difference found between the violent and non-violent actors in this project and their interactions with the police. All subjects were harassed by the police and even arrested on artificial charges.
FBI

The FBI made no distinction between violent and non-violent actors when choosing who to place on surveillance, or who to place on the security index. Both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were either placed on the security index, placed under strict surveillance, or both. Both individuals were seen as violent threats to the country’s safety and security and were feared widely. Hoover, of the FBI, took a special interest in both leaders because of their alleged connection to communism. It was under this suspicion that he was able to garner permission for wiretapping and intense surveillance on both leaders. Years later, the house Church Committee found that these communist allegations were not only false but that they were baseless. It was fear that inspired a robust surveillance mechanism around X and King, that they would inspire the American public, but most importantly the Black community, to rise and cause widespread violent civil unrest. The distinction between their methods of violent and non-violent protest was never mentioned in any documents on their surveillance.

Both the Black Panther Party and SNCC were placed under surveillance but the FBI’s COINTELPRO BNHG (Black Nationalist Hate Group) sector. Without considering their methods of protest, these groups were also seen as violent threats to American security. This is because these groups worked to challenge the status quo of the country, and went against the grain when it came to the progress being made and the speed at which change was being made. Both groups were dissatisfied with how slow rights and advancement were being made to secure protection for Black Americans in society. This dissatisfaction translated to being a violent threat to the country. The FBI saw the sit-ins, and Panther Marches as being equally as disruptive and dangerous for their communities. Little to no attention was paid to the manifestos of each organization separately to assess their danger more accurately. But instead of focusing on each group, and assessing their risk individually, the FBI impeded civil rights progress by grouping violent and non-violent actors.

Federal Government

The federal government did little to distinguish its treatment of violent and non-violent subjects during the CRM. There was incredibly little contact made between members of the federal government and any of the subjects within this project. It is important to note, however, that each of these organizations wanted different things, from the government, if anything at all.

The classified violent actors, wanted little to do with the U.S. government. Instead of depending on the President or congress to guarantee their freedom, they decided to turn inwards and rely on their sacred communities for support. While the Black Panthers may have given demands for the release of Black men from prison and proper housing for all Black people, they didn’t exactly sit at the discussion table with members of the state or federal government to ensure this was actualized. The same thing was
true for Malcolm X, for the majority of his career, X did not trust white people or entities he believed to protect white interests. So he not only was not able to meet with any federal government administration, he had no interest in doing so either.

Alternatively, the classified non-violent actors had only a slightly different experience. SNCC members were not spoken to or consulted about legislation made on behalf of their movement or goals, but Martin Luther King was. Of all the subjects within this project, MLK is the only person to have a direct positive relationship with the white house or any person within the administration. He worked closely with former president John F Kennedy and was consulted for what would become the Voting Rights Act of 1964, both officially and unofficially. He also had a personal relationship with JFK beyond their political partnership.

Malcolm X, SNCC, and the BPP were all also under close watch from the HUAC, but King was not. King was at an advantage when it came to the federal government because of his connections to JFK. But other organizations such as the BPP and SNCC and then Malcolm X and his connections to the Nation of Islam were seen as un-American and were monitored by the Unamerican Activities Committee. There was no distinction between SNCC and the BPP or Malcolm X from this committee, especially since there were suspicions of these organizations and individuals’ connections to communism. It was the HUAC that worked with Hoover to allow for wiretapping and surveillance of these subjects, and it made no difference whether or not they were violent or non-violent.

**Conclusion**

The CRM was a time of great change and great turmoil. Some of the biggest challenges for civil rights legislation in the United States were made during this time, and some of the most influential people were catapulted to fame for their activism. While violent actors were admonished for their methods, so were non-violent actors for their disruption of the status quo. Across the board, there was little to no distinction between the treatment by the state of violent or non-violent actors. Members of both groups were arrested and harassed by police, placed under surveillance by the FBI, and had little to no interaction.

The implications that this had for the modern civil rights movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement become clearer. In the modern day, technology is far more advanced than in 1970, and the FBI and other state agencies have more access to the lives of American citizens than they ever have before. It is entirely possible that members of the Black Lives Matter movement and members of contemporary violent movements are being watched by the police, the FBI, and the federal government. For the modern-day civil rights movement, this should not stop current activists from acting in alignment with their non-violent ways. Although the past informs that there is little to no difference, a movement founded
on peace and reconciliation is better than a movement founded on violence.
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