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(Neo) liberal Re-writings of Black Radical Memory in Television Documentary: 1989-1995

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Visual Studies

by

Mary C. Schmitt

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Allison Perlman, Chair
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2019

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DEDICATION

To

All the Freedom Fighters of the past, present, and future.

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Friends, old and new, deserve special acknowledgement for the sustaining and myriad types of support they've provided. Maggie Dethloff has been an amazing confidante and dissertation-writing partner; I cannot thank her enough for the caring and thoughtful conversations we've had about our work and our lives. My new friend and family member, Jim Gaszynski, deserves special mention for his role in keeping me connected to family throughout this process and for always being curious and ready for spirited conversations. A shout-out to my core group of Chicago women who always had my back throughout my life and encouraged me to pursue my dreams. Heather Watts is the reason I even went to college. Becky Schramm's confidence in me warded off my doubts and fears. Christy Nguyen inspired me to always learn, evolve, and push beyond myself. Lisa Clark (and Tommy) have shown me love and joy that rejuvenate me. Finally, I'd like to also acknowledge my union comrades and thank them for teaching me the beauty and struggle of grassroots organizing and the strength of collective power.

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Through it all, and in every way, there is one person whose love, generosity, and spirit has sustained me through the process of writing the dissertation and eight years of graduate school. Richard Gaszynski, my partner in life, has been there day-in, day-out to listen to my struggles and experience my triumphs. He has lent me his ear and mind to work through the most critical arguments of my research. He has supported my political, educational, and spiritual transformations. All the while, he has made life more fun and more beautiful than I've ever imagined. This dissertation is as much his as it is mine.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

(Neo) liberal Re-writings of Black Radical Memory in Television Documentary: 1989-1995

By

Mary C. Schmitt

Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Studies

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Associate Professor Allison Perlman, Chair

This dissertation examines the operations and impact of racial liberalism on popular memory texts of Black liberation history of the 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, I investigate the ways liberal racial discoursces from the late-1980s to mid-1990s depoliticize the most radical elements of the Black Freedom Struggle and refashion this history to fit within liberal narratives of American progress and exceptionalism. The central ideological sites analyzed in this dissertation are broadcast television documentaries that aired from the years 1987 to 1995. The first chapter analyzes the Black Freedom Struggle more broadly as it is portrayed in the PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*. Then, in chapters two and three, I look more specifically at portrayals of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. In all three chapters, I carefully track the ways liberal frameworks operate through close analysis of narrative structure, editing, sound, and cinematography, while attending to the specific historical and material conditions that require this liberal re-writing. I illustrate how these cultural sources imagine using the past to put forward a kind of antiracist politic in their present, but I also expose how

liberal forms of antiracism actually enable and conceal the continued and worsening racial violence and inequity that are systemic to US global capitalism.

INTRODUCTION

What most of us don't always challenge is the assertion that Obama's election represents the Civil Rights Movement's crowning achievement. What secured Obama's election, however, was the very collapse of the movement. It's retreat from the radical agenda of SNNC, of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, of the New American Labor Council, of the Civil Rights Congress, as well as the Black Panther Party …Obama's election and the emergence of a Black neoliberal political class…represents a betrayal of the principles basic to the Black Freedom Movement, to the anti-war movement, to Left feminist movements.

The original evidence…that we've reached a post-Civil Rights and post-racial era was not Obama's election, but the ruling class's embrace of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion—that is the language of racial liberalism from the 1970s until now. We often think of this as a victory, when it could be argued that it was part of a defeat of the movement. Multiculturalism policies and discourse do not disrupt white supremacy. The point of liberal multiculturalism was not to address the historical legacies of racism, dispossession and injustice, but to bring some people into the fold of a society no longer seen as racially unjust. What are the results: you get Black elected officials and Black CEOs who help manage the great transfer of wealth to the rich, who oversee the continued erosion of the welfare state and the environment, the displacement and deterioration of Black and Brown communities and mass incarceration, and wage war on the planet…We're talking about breaking glass ceilings in corporate America while building more jail cells for the rest.

--Robin D.G. Kelley, "Challenging White Supremacy" *Reclaiming Our Future: The Black Radical Tradition in Our Time* (2016)[1]

Most of the countries who were colonial powers were capitalist countries, and the last bulwark of capitalism today is America, and it's impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism and not believe in racism. Yes. You can't have capitalism without racism. And if you find one and you happened to get that person into a conversation and they have a philosophy that makes you sure they don't have this racism in their outlook, usually they're socialists or their political philosophy is socialism.

--Malcolm X, "The Harlem Hate Gang Scare" *The Militant Labor Forum* (1964)[2]

The first, extended quote above came from a talk given by radical scholar and activist Robin D.G. Kelley at a conference at Temple University in 2016. The conference was especially

[1] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Challenging White Supremacy," *Reclaiming Our Future: The Black Radical Tradition in Our Time*, Conference at Temple University, Philadelphia, January 8th-10th 2016.
[2] Malcolm X, "The Harlem Hate Gang Scare," *The Militant Labor Forum*, New York City, May 29th 1964.

interested in using the history of Black radical thought and political praxis to inform present and future conditions of struggle and resistance. Kelley's talk, in particular, was dedicated to exposing the political work of racial liberalism in co-opting the Black radical past to help in maintaining white supremacist capitalism. He provoked his audience with the notion that Obama's election could be argued as "the defeat" and as "a betrayal" of the Black Freedom Movement, rather than one of its victories on the "long road to progress".[3] His point, however, was also to illustrate how the narrative that celebrates Obama's election is part of a longer history of the hegemony of racial liberalism—or, in other words, the re-scripting and embrace of antiracism by the ruling classes—that works to cover over the more "radically democratic visions" that underwrote the Black Freedom Movement.[4]

This re-scripting, as Kelley informs us, has provided ideological cover for massive inequality and uneven development, the loss of the social wage and un-ending cuts to social welfare programs, massive investment in prison development and the carceral industrial complex, planetary destruction and un-ending wars. It is all of these developments within a society that is now ostensibly "no longer seen as racially unjust" or, at the least, is still working towards the righteous path of racial progress. These liberal narratives of racial progress help to make conditions of violence seem as if they are not rooted in the historical relationship between race and capitalism, and a radical analysis of race, one that prioritizes the complete transformation of the social order, becomes buried or inscrutable.

This radical analysis of race was one that guided the political thought and praxis of Malcolm X. In the second quote above, he connects racism to the history of colonialism and the

[3] Ibid., "Challenging".
[4] Ibid., "Challenging".

continuation of these systems under American capitalism. These historical links expose the way US racism is part of the longer project of Pan-European domination and exploitation, and illuminate Malcolm's call for not just an end to US racism, but an end to white world supremacy. As he makes clear here, this world ordering system is based in the political economy of capitalism that has and always will require racism in order to operate. He understood that race and capitalism are co-constitutive, and that white identity, under capitalism, emerges out of the violent processes required for capitalism's growth and sustainability (conquest, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, austerity, divestment). Thus, white people who believe in capitalism are embedded within the white supremacist logic that undergirds the system, and the system requires this commitment from white people, not only in order to operate, but also to control white peoples' behavior and manage their discontent. As Malcolm points out here, white people *could perceive* the world without a racist lens through an alternative political, economic structure, such as socialism; under capitalism, this racist worldview is all that is possible.

These types of Black radical critique that get to the roots of oppression are those most distorted, or altogether omitted, when re-fashioned to fit within a politics of racial liberalism. This re-fashioning finds a particularly salient site of operation and contention within popular culture and, especially, within popular media memory. Popular media memories of Black liberation history are particularly powerful sites to educate and control permissible forms of antiracist knowledge and political possibility, while they also open a space for negotiation and, sometimes, creative resistance. In this dissertation, I examine the liberal re-fashioning of Black radicalism in television broadcast documentaries from the years 1989 to 1995. Specifically, I investigate the ways liberal racial discourses depoliticize the most radical elements of Black liberation history in the PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*,

and in broadcast television documentaries on Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. My dissertation asks and answers the following questions: Why are narratives of racial liberalism so dominant in the popular media memory of Black liberation history? What are the social, political, and economic conditions that require this liberal re-writing in popular culture? What is at stake when the language of racial liberalism is used, specifically, to revise or co-opt Black radical history? What are the common tropes, rhetorical conventions, and visual mechanisms in broadcast television documentary that are used to contain Black radical memory within a liberal framework? And, finally, when do liberal frameworks breakdown in these media objects, and what can we learn from these moments of rupture?

This study emerges out of the field of Black Freedom Studies and media memory. In this field, many scholars have focused more on the Civil Rights Movement and the way it has been remembered in popular culture. Visual media has played a central role in this, as visual media was crucial to shaping the meaning of the Civil Rights Movement concurrent with its own present and becomes the dominant site, especially for younger generations, to gain access to this history. As such, scholars have paid particular attention to the ways this history has been shaped and moblized for the needs—cultural, political, economic or otherwise—of the present. In particular, these scholars have shown how the memory of the Civil Rights Movement has been used to deliver stories of racial progress and racial reconciliation that can often cover over the continuation of racial violence in the present and serve, instead, as proof that the US has succeeded in dismantling Jim Crow and creating unfettered opportunity and full inclusion for African Americans in US society. According to scholars Rene C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, the Civil Rights Movement has been "held up as a shining example of the success of American democracy…proof of the vitality of America's legal and political institutions, and evidence of

the nation's ongoing quest to live up to its founding ideals of egalitarianism and justice".[5] In particular, this dominant Civil Rights narrative has had a cultural currency that claims US capitalism and the US political process, especially the electoral system, are the most natural and efficient ways to achieve racial justice and equality.[6]

What I found in my particular studies of Black radical memory in popular media is that something similar is happening. Black radical figures and organizations are being folded into this same dominant narrative and that Black radical history has also become 'usable' to celebrate stories of American progress and exceptionalism. Historically, Black radicalism has been predominantly demonized, especially in mass visual media, and framed as extreme, violent, and un-American. Yet, I have found contemporary media memory objects embracing this history and including and recognizing Black radical figures and organizations within liberal media outlets. As this dissertation will demonstrate, this recognition and inclusion demonstrates the hegemony of racial liberalism and its work to contain Black radical memory, to cover over the violent histories that continue to underwrite the US nationalist project, and to provide America with an image of expanding democracy.

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[5] Renee Christine Romano and Leigh Raiford, Eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens: U of Georgia, 2006), xvii.

[6] For more on Civil Rights memory and media scholarship see: Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: U of Illinois, 2012); Bruce R. Brasell, "From Evidentiary Presentation to Artful Re-Presentation: Media Images, Civil Rights Documentaries, and the Audiovisual Writing of History," *Journal of Film and Video* 56 (2004): 3-16; Jennifer Fuller, "Dangerous Fictions: Race, History, and King", *Cinema Journal*, 49, no. 2 (Winter, 2010), 40-62; Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001); Herman Gray, "Remembering Civil Rights: Television, Memory, and the 1960s," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised: Sixties Television and Social Conflict*, Ed. Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin (New York: Routledge, 1997): 349-359; Kristin Hoerl, "Remembering and Forgetting in Mississippi Burning," in *Uncovering Hidden Rhetorics: Social Issues in Disguise,* Ed. Barry Brummet (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 13-30; Allison Perlman, "The Strange Career of Madmen: Race, Paratexts, and Civil Rights Memory," in *Mad Men: Dreams Come True TV*, Ed. Gary Edgerton (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 209-225; Renee Christine Romano and Leigh Raiford, Eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens: U of Georgia, 2006); Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003); Brian Ward, Ed., *Media, Culture, and the modern African American Freedom Struggle* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

This is especially significant since many Black radicals and organizations posed the greatest challenge to these liberal narratives in their own day. Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and many others were the greatest critics of liberal integrationist politics, as they understood there could be no real freedom or equality without a complete transformation of the capitalist order, a radical redistribution of economic wealth and political power, reparations for centuries of free and superexploited labor, and socialist programs that served the needs and humanity of the people over the profiteering of private wealth accumulation. They understood the links between US capitalism, militarism, and racism and called for an end to US imperial wars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They knew the histories of colonialism and slavery were the foundations for the rise of US global power, and that this global system of capital continued to link their lives and destinies with the world's oppressed, as forms of racism and sexism determined who received the blunt of capitalism's worse blows. This is why internationalism, meaning international solidarities and struggle, was so central to their analysis and movements. They critiqued the decisions made by mainstream Civil Rights leaders to abandon these international solidarities, to support US wars abroad, and to integrate into this US system of capital. These radical critiques, the call for a complete transformation of the capitalist system, and radical imaginings for a more just world are those elements that are mostly obscured or omitted in the liberal re-writing of Black radical memory.[7]

[7] References for Black radical history and social movements, see: Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Pub., 2007); Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: U of California, 2013); Roderick D. Bush, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2009); Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon the Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2012); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1992); Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).

Conceptual and Historical Foundations: *Racial Capitalism, Racial Liberalism, Counterinsurgencies, and Conservatives*

This dissertation approaches the study of Black radical memory through a critical, historical analysis of race, culling from scholars across mulitple disciplines. Two critical race scholars who have centrally aided this dissertation's understanding of racial capitalism and the hegemony of racial liberalism are Cedric Robinson and Jodi Melamed. Racial capitalism, as theorized by Cedric Robinson in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, defines the economic system and the social relations that have organized what we now know as the generalizable idea of capitalism. According to Robinson, "[t]he development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force. . .racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism."[8] As Robinson's work explains, capitalism is fundamentally based on the unequal relations between human beings, and race has been the dominant mode for organizing these unequal relations. Race has been constructed as a form of human difference that has been mobilized to naturalize and legitimize hierarchies of labor, wealth, and power. Racialization, however, has also been creative in its construction of distinct "social types" that are made flexible and transform according to the needs and changes of capitalism.[9]

A seismic change in racial capitalism happens with the emergence of racial liberalism in the post-war period. Melamed critically analyzes this new racial formation in her book *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* and tracks the ways a race-

[8] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1983), 2.
[9] I use the term "social types" in accordance with its use by Marxist theorist Harry Chang and political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr. Quote derives from essay published posthumously in Paul Liem and Eric Montague, eds., "Toward a Marxist Theory of Racism: Two Essays by Harry Chang," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17, no. 3 (1985): 43. See also Adolph Reed, Jr., "Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism," *New Labor Forum* 22, no. 1 (2013).

liberal order shifts and reconfigures itself in Keynesian, Post-Keynesian, and neoliberal capitalist developments.[10] According to Melamed, the emergence of racial liberalism is situated in the aftermath of WWII and the crisis in white supremacy, or what critical race scholars Michael Omi and Howard Winant call "the racial break"[11], where the fight against 'master race philosophy' made the contradictions of racial inequality, within the United States and beyond, untenable. Concurrently, this crisis was fueled by the decolonization efforts taking place in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, and Black soldiers and activists were gaining a more global understanding of white world supremacy and building a deeper identification with anti-colonial movements.

Prior to the emergence of racial liberalism, the racial formation of white supremacy, its logics, its policies and laws, its cultural and intellectual production, was the dominant world-ordering structure through its shifting terrains of racial slavery, colonialism, and Pan-European imperialism. However, following the crisis of white supremacy, the emergence of a new racial formation was required. This seismic shift coincided with the Cold War rise of US power globally, where the US was expanding its power and influence within these newly decolonized nations and thus needed to transform the American racial image. The US would need to win the hearts and minds of decolonizing nations in its anti-Communist crusades and thus would project itself as racially progressive. New liberal narratives arose to proclaim Black people as part of the American story, and images of Black freedom were mobilized to project America as the exceptional nation to lead the "free" world. This new racial formation was both useful for and compatible with the expansion of US imperialism and new forms of transnational capitalist

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[10] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
[11] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1986).

development, while simultaneously shifting antiracist struggle away from its radical, internationalist principles.[12]

In many ways, this post-WWII shift was the moment in which the Civil Rights Movement emerged and there was a split between the anti-imperialist, socialist Black Left and liberal, integrationist Civil Rights leaders. This strategic decision on the part of Civil Rights leaders allowed their movement to use US anti-communism to their advantage in order to gain more access to US political power and pass important legal protections, such as an anti-lynching law and interstate desegregation. Yet, in order to make these gains, they also had to make certain concessions. This 'Cold War Compromise' for many Black activists meant that they would need to distance themselves from the Black Left and silence their critiques on American foreign policies.[13] This split ultimately fractured international solidarities and allowed the focus of Black struggle to shift away from the global, white supremacist capitalist system to a domesticated fight for entrance and access to the American system.

As Melamed's study details, it is within this new racial formation where the question of racial inequality becomes a central concern for the nation and part of the dominant discourse for organizing US state and global power from the post-war moment until today. It becomes necessary to consistently make and re-make race to appear as a contradiction to the development of capitalist modernity "rather than one of its structuring conditions".[14] Therefore, race and racial inequality have to be addressed, explained and resolved in ways that obscure capitalism's roots

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[12] For more on this history, see: Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2011); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Harvard University Press, 2003); Daulatzai, ""You Remember Dien Bien Phu!" Malcolm X and the Third World Rising," in *Black Star Crescent Moon*.

[13] For more on this split and the Long Civil Rights Movement, see Jacquelyn Dowd-Hall, "The Long Civil Rights History and The Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 9, no. 1 (2005): 1233-1263.

[14] Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 9.

and routes through race. Thus, racial liberal discourses continue to creatively shape-shift as they become inadequate to address and manage the inevitable contradictions and human suffering capitalism necessitates. According to Melamed, these shifts in liberal-capitalist modernity in the 1970s, along with the massive crisis of legitimacy social justice movements had created, it became necessary to usher in new forms of race-liberal discourse, such as liberal multiculturalism, and produce a multicultural, professional-managerial class that would help to justify the larger abandonment of a majority of minorities to the worse effects of neoliberal restructuring. The rise in "diversity", in other words, would then work to rationalize this abandonment and serve as proof for its ostensible fairness. It would serve as the counterpoint to the construction of "the black underclass", which, according to African American Studies scholar Clarence Lang, "became the key social category that legitimized neoliberal policy in the United States" (xvi). In other words, the turn towards neoliberal economics and governance were made possible and rationalized through the privileging of proper, (neo) liberal multicultural subjects and stigmatizing poor Black and Brown communities.

Some of the dominant discourses of racial liberalism, that have their historical roots in immediate post-war moment and continue today, include the following: racism is centrally perceived in terms of racial prejudice, based in questions of attitudes, feelings, and moral character; rather than in terms of historical or structural systems of domination. This definition of racism then opens opportunities for moral redemption and reconciliation narratives, especially for white people. Moreover, racism is understood as contradictory to the national ethos and the nation's founding, buttressing mythologies about America's innate qualities of freedom and

equality and reifying the assumption that America was and always is a force for good.[15] Racial equality is best be addressed through racial reforms that integrate Black Americans into the US capitalist system, and freedom and equality is understood through capitalist rationalities of equal access to the market and to possessive individualism, prioritizing individual property rights over collective goals of self-determination. Finally, race is no longer understood as a mechanism of social control, but more simply as a form of cultural identity that is recognized and represented within US capitalist culture. US culture, thus, becomes "a mosaic vision of multicultural inclusiveness and equal recognition" (109). What all of these forms of racial liberalism do is to erase the historical relationship between race and capitalism and help the US, its political, economic, and social institutions, to appear as neutral to race or even as antiracist.

The narrative I have traced around racial capitalism and racial liberalism serve to explain the central historical and conceptual frameworks through which I read my media memory objects on Black liberation history. In many ways, popular media texts become central cultural technologies for shaping and disseminating liberal discourses about race and what is permissible for thinking about antiracism. All of the television documentaries under study are, for the most part, liberal celebrations of Black liberation history, and all are deeply shaped by these liberal discourses laid out here. They also all struggle within their liberal frameworks to contain both the contradictions racial capitalism necessitates in society and the radical lessons Black liberation history has to offer contemporary audiences. As this discussion of racial liberalism demonstrates, liberal discourses offer dematerialized responses to the violence of racial capitalism. I proceed in

[15] For more on American exceptionalist mythologies and the role of the racial liberalism, see "Introduction: Civil Rights, Civic Myths" and "Chapter One: Rethinking Race and Nation" in Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) and Singh, "Racial Formation in the Age of Permanent War," *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, Eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 276-301.

my chapters with the goal to expose how these liberal frameworks operate and how they obscure materially transformative politics.

Another side of this story, however, is how these dematerialized forms of antiracism, and the inherent paradoxes of racial liberalism, also help to fuel conservative backlashes and punitive counterinsurgency efforts shared by conservatives and liberals alike. In many ways, the language of racial liberalism has been useful for the kind of re-branding and 'color-blinding' of deeply racialized structures and systems that have sought to directly attack and criminalize social justice movements, their memory, and those Black and Brown populations most associated with them. The media memory objects under study are, then, responding to this massive backlash that especially takes hold in the 1980s with election of Reagan, and contending with the massive expansion of the prison industrial complex. As these media productions imagine putting forward an alternative vision to combat these direct attacks, they also, at points, participate in their criminalizing discourses.

As radical scholar and sociologist Jordan T. Camp argues, a bipartisan counterinsurgency, whose roots also began in the early years of the Cold War, "produced a revanchist common sense that saw as its historic mission the undoing of the historic gains of Black Freedom, radical labor, feminist, and socialist movements between the 1930s and 1970s".[16] Camp mobilizes historian Ranajit Guha's idea of "prose of counterinsurgency"[17] to explain the repressive discourses of 'law and order' and 'security' that were developed to create a consensus around mass prison development, police militarization, and the building of an urban police state. Camp explains how this counterinsurgency "located the source of social problems in

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[16] Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 16.
[17] Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1988) 45-86.

the culture and behavior of the racialized poor" and in the "social movements [who were characterized as] enemies of the nation".[18] These criminalization efforts of social movements were carried out most directly, concurrent with their own moment, through the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which sought to destroy social justice movements, especially Black radical movements, through covert operations of infiltration, surveillance, and murder. Yet, they would also have enduring and devastating effects in the post-Civil Rights era, as mass criminalization and incarceration served to help manage the growing inequalities and insecurities of neoliberal restructuring, especially on the most vulnerable populations. State funds were diverted away from education, infrastructure, and other social programs to finance the building and expansion of, what Camp calls "the neoliberal carceral state", and what Angela Davis refers to as "the punishment industry".[19]

Part and parcel to this counterinsurgency was the rise of the conservative movement and its particular brand of cultural politics. As social and cultural scholar Craig S. Watkins writes, "social conservatives deployed their rhetorical devices, vast resources, and political imagination to create sharp and decisive symbolic boundaries that constructed an image of society under siege from a number of subversive forces—feminists, gays and lesbians, liberals, racial "minorities", and labor unions—waging war on traditional American values, beliefs, and identity structures".[20] One of the most significant, "decisive symbolic boundaries" was that constructed between Blackness and whiteness. Watkins explains,

> "Implicit in popular discourses about blackness are claims that reproduce and struggle to sustain whiteness as the norm and dominant center of American life. Take, for example, the term *Middle America*, which circulates as though it were race-neutral and

[18] Camp, 10, 11.
[19] Angela Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex," *Colorlines*, September 10, 1998. https://www.colorlines.com/articles/masked-racism-reflections-prison-industrial-complex
[20] Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 30.

> ideologically neutral…The construction of this new political identity enabled conservatives to reposition themselves politically by maneuvering around serious class divisions within the larger white community in order to build an unlikely electoral alliance between members of the corporate elite and lower-middle and working-class Americans".[21]

These ideological constructions of whiteness and Blackness were most effectively administered under the political regime of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Cultural scholar Herman Gray astutely analyzes the operations of these ideological constructions as they were transmitted and expressed through television. In his chapter "Reaganism and the Sign of Blackness", Gray effectively argues that the 1980s marked a political and cultural shift that poignantly mobilized the 'sign of blackness' to garner white resentment and fear, build an imagined white-middle class solidarity and lay blame for society's decline on the social liberalism of the 1960s.[22] Under Reaganism, political and cultural symbolic platforms were constructed to articulate an "aggressive discourse of whiteness", promising a return to "traditional values" and a more glorious time in "American national preeminence" that would reconnect (white) Americans to a more authentic (less Black, less Brown, less feminist, less sexually transgressive) United States.[23] This ideological work was done on and through the black body, which was staged, especially through the discursive power of popular media outlets, as a sign of menace, threat, erosion, and, therefore, as undeserving. Popular imagery of poor Black urban men and women were portrayed on the nightly news as pathological criminals, drug-users, indifferent to their irresponsible lifestyles. These (not-so) coded attacks on Black and Brown communities legitimized Reagan's "War on Crime" and "War on Drugs" that laid the foundation for the expanded development of prisons and growing financial coffers of the "punishment industry".

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[21] Ibid., 43.
[22] Herman Gray, "Reaganism and the Sign of Blackness," in *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 14-34.
[23] Ibid., 16.

Reagan simultaneously mobilized the colorblind rhetoric of racial liberalism, directly referencing the fictional TV program, *The Cosby Show*, to hold up middle-class and upper-class African Americans as proof that racial inequality had been overcome and failure to succeed in society rested solely with deviant individuals unwilling to work hard enough. This disavowal and erasure of structural and historical racism allowed Reagan to shift the blame of society's problems onto the most vulnerable and racially stigmatized populations. The years immediately following the end of Reagan's administration, in 1988, saw the proliferation of the kinds of media memory texts under study in this dissertation. This proliferation illustrates how this moment inspired cultural workers to respond to attacks on social justice movement memory and the not-so hidden efforts to reinvigorate and reconstruct whiteness; though, this reconstruction would be done strategically through racial dog-whistles and the appropriation of discourses of colorblindness. This manipulation of racial liberalism would prove it more difficult to respond effectively to this conservative backlash, especially as many of the popular media texts were limited under this same ideological language.

This becomes painfully clear under President Bill Clinton's administration, which also saw the proliferation of media memory texts on Black liberation history. In many ways, Clinton exemplifies how racial liberalism is not only an ineffective response, but also how it can carry forward, and even expand, the white supremacist, counterinsurgent formations associated with Reagan's far-right conservative regime; yet do so with a 'veneer of civility' that makes its operations even more difficult to see and resist.[24] Clinton would of course tap into the same racialized discourses as Reagan and, in many ways, outdo his Republican predecessors in

[24] See interview with Dylan Rodriguez, "Another Moment in the Long History of White Reconstruction," *The Real News Network*, August 28, 2017, https://therealnews.com/stories/drodriguez0824white. Rodriguez refers to this phenomenon as "periods of reform in which the white supremacist structures and systems of this nation state reconvene their clothing of civility, their veneers of respectability, and that's the danger here."

manipulating race to "end social welfare as we know it", expand neoliberal market fundamentalism, and oversee the largest increase in the prison population in US history. Yet Clinton's administration differentiated itself through its liberal stance on "social issues". This liberal stance, however, was not grounded in any materially, transformative politics or economics. Racism was posited as a problem of personal attitudes resolved through interpersonal exchange. This can be seen in Clinton's *One America* initiative in 1997, created especially in response to the racial turmoil so visible in the media, such as the O. J. Simpson Trial, the video recording of the police beating of Rodney King, the subsequent acquittal of the policemen in the attack, and the LA Rebellion that ensued thereafter. In his *One America* launching speech, he addressed the country's racial problems and his desire for resolution in these terms: "Money cannot buy this goal. Power cannot compel it. Technology cannot create it. This is something that can only come from the human spirit."[25] Here, Clinton makes clear that his support refuses to address the lack of political power and worsening economic conditions, especially among communities of color. Resolution, it seems, would only come from changing hearts and minds. This liberal framing not only displaces the inequities of structural racism onto personal feelings among individuals but helps to lend the Clinton administration a façade of moral legitimacy, making it more difficult to see repressive neoliberal policies as attacks on citizens, especially those most vulnerable.

Radical scholar Dylan Rodriguez offers important insights about the dangers of this 'veneer of civility', exemplified in both Clinton and Obama's administrations. He argues how this veneer helps to obscure and normalize the "violence of the American national project" and

[25] Bill Clinton, "Excerpts from Clinton's Speech on Race in America," *New York Times*, June 15, 1997, sec. A16. See also, Jennifer Fuller, "Debating the Present through the Past," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, ed. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

to sustain "white supremacy as the heartbeat of the American national form".[26] Rodriguez describes white supremacy as "a socialized logic of violence and dominance", where figures like Clinton and Obama enable "a sophisticated, flexible, "diverse" (or neoliberal) white supremacy".[27] He points out, as does this dissertation, that, perhaps, different rhetoric is mobilized to different degrees by conservatives and liberals, be they discourses of racial liberalism or the "prose of counterinsurgency", but they do not differ in the way they continue racialized wars, both domestic and global, and the way they "ensure there is not a radical transformation of the social, cultural, economic fabric of the US".[28] Liberal multiculturalists, like Clinton and Obama, want to conduct these wars and containment, however, "in the airs of respectability and civility", which ultimately lends white supremacy a façade of redemption and "permanently defers the political obligation of confronting an enduring present white supremacist social form".[29] Said differently then, and echoing Kelley's opening epigraph, racial liberalism, in many ways, is a renewed, refurbished formulation of white supremacy.

Rodriguez's scholarship also connects to the media memory work at core of this dissertation, as he emphasizes the role of what he refers to as a "Civil Rights regime" in legitimizing the hegemony of a multiculturalist white supremacy. He argues that, "[t]he aftermath of American apartheid's formal abolition has been overwhelmed by a grand national-cultural vindication of "Civil Rights" as the vessel of fully actualized gendered-racial citizenship…Bound by this narrative-political context, the racist state's mechanics shift and multiply to rearticulate a condition of normalized racist violence that is *condoned or even*

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[26] Dylan Rodriguez, "Inaugurating Multicultural White Supremacy," *Colorlines*, November 10, 2008. https://www.colorlines.com/articles/dreadful-genius-obama-moment
[27] Ibid.
[28] Interview with Dylan Rodriguez, *The Real News Network*.
[29] Rodriguez, "Inaugurating Multicultural White Supremacy," *Colorlines*.

applauded by the institutionalized regimes of Civil Rights" (Rodriguez mentions the NAACP and other organizations condoning domestic racial war, "so long as it is directed at the correct targets: gang members, drug dealers…terrorists"; but, even contemporary fiction films that mobilize a Civil Rights impulse, such as *The Hate You Give* and *Black Panther*, continue to condone this type of violence on certain Black bodies deemed as the correct targets of state violence) (italics in the original).[30]

Civil Rights and Black Power Memory: *History, Politics, and Form*

One of the most significant avenues for the construction and dissemination of this "grand national-cultural vindication" of the Civil Rights regime has been through the popular memory texts that remember the Civil Rights and Black Power era. As described earlier, the (mis) representations of social movements from this era have served the political imperatives of conservatives and liberals alike under US white supremacist, racial capitalism. These movements, led by Black freedom fighters, were the genesis for one of the most democratizing moments in American history. It was a moment that illustrated the power of people to organize and transform society. Social justice organizations demanded the redistribution of wealth through law and policy and spoke out and stood up against American imperial power, seeing US domestic racism as deeply connected to European colonialism, American foreign policy, and the international struggles happening across the globe. As such, the period and its social movements have become, as scholar Grace Kwungwon Hong puts it, "the symptomatic crisis of neoliberalism"[31], and as radical scholar Sohail Daulatzai echoes, "the decade that continues to haunt the American present".[32]

[30] Dylan Rodriguez, "Policing and the Violence of White Being: An Interview with Dylan Rodriguez," *The Black Scholar*, September 12, 2016. https://www.theblackscholar.org/policing-violence-white-interview-dylan-rodriguez/
[31] Grace Kyungwon Hong, "Neoliberalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 57.
[32] Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 138.

This crisis and haunting are what make their memory a significant battleground for the ideological struggle over the meaning of the past. This was particularly the case for the period under study, 1989-1995, where the US was triumphantly celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall as evidence that the US and capitalism had won out, proving America's rightful place of global dominance and justifying the violence of American foreign policies. This triumphalist atmosphere made it an especially prescient moment to re-write and re-image US history. Moreover, this was also the moment at the height of the "culture wars" where the US past, especially the 1960s and 1970s, became a central site where the struggles between multiculturalism and the New Right would play out. The New Right would assert itself in this battle through its attacks on identity-based politics, claiming they were creating "disunity", they were "un-American", they were racist on the fact that they mentioned race, and forced a level of mediocrity upon a tradition of excellence. Daulatzai makes it plain, explaining: "[t]he criticism coming from the New Right and from many liberals was then ultimately about re-centering whiteness and its invisibility, through appeals to "common culture" and the "the West," without understanding the powerful forces of slavery, genocide, and colonialism that were unleashed in the name of the West and that ultimately led to these challenges in the first place".[33]

Though these challenges were the origins of multiculturalism, this side of the culture war debate became largely absorbed within the hegemony of racial liberalism in national culture and in academia. African American Studies scholar Hazel Carby referred to this absorption as part of the "multicultural wars", wherein liberal formulations of multiculturalism were themselves in a battle against more radical notions of identity-based remedies that were connected to the goals of

[33] Ibid., 153

radical transformation based in the insurgent social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.[34] The "culture wars" or "canon wars" overshadowed this other battle and were formulated as an antagonism between the seemingly progressive forces of liberal multiculturalism and the New Right. The goals of liberal multiculturalism would be confined, however, to inclusion, representation, and recognition within US national culture, de-linked from material forms of radical transformation, where the "common culture" would be now be celebrated as a "multicultural one".[35]

These cultural and political conditions would help to shape the way popular culture would construct its narratives of the national past, especially that of the 1960s and 1970s. In turn, these popular memory objects would serve as important sites of political struggle. As a central premise, this dissertation sees popular memory as a cultural technology that uses the past for the political imperatives of the present. As memory scholar Barbie Zelizer writes, "[a]t the heart of memory's study, then, is its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas".[36] Though cultural memory texts are also about the retrieval of the past and can be used subversively as an alternative to hegemonic, historical narratives, this dissertation takes, as its focus, the way popular memory also becomes a technology of hegemonic power. In agreement with memory scholars Paul Connerton and Jacques Le Goff (respectively), the "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power", and "the classes, groups, and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate societies… [are preoccupied with]

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[34] Melamed opens her second chapter through Carby's writing on multiculturalism in *Represent and Destroy*, pp. 91-94. The term "multicultural wars" derives from Carby's 1992 essay "The Multicultural Wars, Part One" in *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 18, and "The Multicultural Wars, Part Two" first published as "Can the Tactics of Cultural Integration Counter the Persistence of Political Apartheid? Or, The Multicultural Wars, Part Two," in *Race Law and Culture: Reflections on Brown v. Board of Education*, Ed. Austin Sarat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 221-228.
[35] Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 34.
[36] Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12, no. 2 (1995), 226.

making themselves the masters of memory and forgetfulness".[37] This is why studying popular memory is always a political act, as hegemony is shaped, reproduced, and disseminated through popular memory, which makes dismantling its logics and operations particularly important.

This relationship between forgetting and remembering, mentioned in Le Goff's statement, is also a central dynamic in the politics of cultural memory. Communications scholar Marita Sturken asserts that "[a]ll memories are "created" in tandem with forgetting", and this is especially significant in the case of national identity in the US, she argues; as forgetting is necessitated in order to provide narrative cohesion for specific meanings of Americanness.[38] This is especially the case when it comes to the memory of race and resistance in the US, as many aspects of America's racial history are deemed necessary to forget in order to uphold any stable narrative around American exceptionalism and expanding democracy. This simultaneously requires creating memories that rewrite the past to make it fit within these hegemonic narratives. This is essentially what this dissertation critically examines.

Race scholar David Theo Goldberg conceptualizes this dynamic of remembering and forgetting as it specifically pertains to the political act of remembering, as a form of antiracist commitment, and of forgetting, which is necessary for colorblind discourses to operate (he refers to this here as antiracialism). He writes:

> Antiracism requires historical memory, recalling the conditions of racial degradation and relating contemporary to historical and local to global conditions. If antiracist commitment requires remembering and recalling, antiracialism suggests forgetting, getting over, moving on, wiping away the terms of reference…, to wipe away the very vocabulary necessary to recall and recollect…We are being asked to give up on race before and without addressing the legacy, the roots, the scars of racism's histories. We are being asked to give up on the word, the concept, the category…But not, pointedly not, the conditions for which those terms stand.[39]

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[37] Ibid., 228.
[38] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDs Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (University of California Press, 1997), 7.
[39] David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 21.

Goldberg illustrates the importance of racial memory, especially its material history, to actually fight against contemporary forms of racism. He also points to the ways in which forgetting this material history can erase the necessary terms needed to struggle against continued conditions of violence. This seems to be the case with racial capitalism and the necessity of forgetting the inextricable link between race and capitalism. The conditions of violence continue, as capitalism continues, yet the link to the mechanism that rationalizes and maintains it, is obscured, disavowed, or erased. This similarly is the case with the radical analyses of race, capitalism, and imperialism developed by Black radical figures and organizations. In many of the popular media texts in this dissertation, viewers are invited to remember and see these figures and learn about their organizations, but without the radical terms, lessons, and political possibilities they offered in their own present. This leaves viewers without the radical vocabulary that would allow them to understand their present and fight forms of oppression that are rooted in the past.

These narratives around racial memory and racial forgetting, and the circulation of power through memory are always already mediated, however, and need to be understood or analyzed within the specific forms of mediation in which they are produced and disseminated. This is why scholars who work in the field of popular media memory have been especially influential for this dissertation. As cultural scholar George Lipsitz's work on popular culture informs us, popular memory texts are embedded in the logics of exploitation and capital accumulation of consumer culture, yet they are also in a dialogic relationship with those on the receiving end and with the contradictions of this culture, and are thus open to negotiated and contested readings.[40] Sturken's work similarly argues that cultural memory is 'entangled' with personal memories, cultural

[40] George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

production, and history and are produced through specific "technologies of memory". She writes, "[t]hese…technologies of memory [are] not vessels of memory in which memory passively resides so much as objects through which memories are shared, produced, and given meaning".[41] These emphases on object specification, and audience reception, are especially important for the mediums of film and television. Media scholar Paul Grainge writes, "As a technology able to picture and embody the temporality of the past, cinema has become central to the mediation of memory in modern cultural life".[42] For the memory objects in this dissertation, the specific cultural technology used is television, which has similar cultural and technical capacities as that of film, yet also comes with it its own particular set of assumptions and conventions.

Television scholar Gary R. Edgerton lays out many of these assumptions in his important edited collection *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*.[43] The first is that television is the primary conduit by which people learn about history. With the expansion of the internet, this may no longer be the case, but for the years studied in this dissertation, this assumption rings true. The significance of this assumption is that the television documentaries under study, and the histories they tell, would reach a much larger audience than any other medium and thus have a much larger impact on society. Another assumption is the profit-making possibilities of history on television, which Edgerton illustrates with the popularity of programs like A & E's *Biography* (which is a network program for one of the case studies in this dissertation), its profit margin in relationship to its cost, and the wider markets of VHSs, books, and CDs connected to its programming. This assumption helps to situate the proliferation of television documentaries on Black radical memory within the larger market push for history on

[41] Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 9.
[42] Paul Grainge, *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003), 1.
[43] Gary R. Edgerton, and Peter C. Rollins, Eds., *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age* (Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky, 2001).

television in the 1990s. Finally, the medium-specific, technical and stylistic features of television, such as its properties of immediacy and intimacy, lends itself to history-telling in the ways described above—as more readily concerned with "usable pasts"; "where stories involving historical figures and events are used to clarify the present and discover the future".[44]

The technology of television is the central conduit for this dissertation's media objects; yet, more specifically, these media objects can be further categorized within the genre of television documentary and, more specifically still, almost all are constructed within the expository mode of documentary filmmaking. Though television history lends itself to a kind of immediacy and presentism, as Edgerton argues, this particular mode, its codes and conventions, is geared toward constructing narratives that make claims to deliver historical truth. Documentary theorist, Bill Nichols, exposes the falsity of these claims, however, as he explains this mode of filmmaking. The expository mode, he argues, "assembles fragments of the historical world into a more rhetorical or argumentative frame".[45] The argument of the documentary, he argues, thus guides, or in fact is, the documentary's narrative. Yet, this argumentative frame, or narrative frame, is hidden or obscured by the mode's conventions and techniques that claim authority over truth and give the impression of objectivity. In this mode, the spoken word, either through a voice-of-God commentary, a program host, or interviewed commentators, is given priority and authority over the visual image. The visual image, instead, plays more of a supporting role or as evidence for the argument. As Nichols explains, the expository mode has "greater freedom in the selection and arrangement of images" in comparison to fiction filmmaking and other modes of documentary. The editing of images "may sacrifice spatial and

[44] Ibid., 4.
[45] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 105.

temporal continuity to rope in images from far-flung places if they help to advance the argument".[46] As Nichols reveals, selective editing and the conventional authority of the spoken word belie claims to the purported truth-telling of expository documentary.

Yet, attending to these professional codes and dominant conventions, and their claims of authority over truth, are central to this dissertation's mode of analysis. In each chapter, I closely attend to the use of the human voice, either through the voiceover or the use of "expert" witnesses and commentators, as they serve to guide the viewer's understanding of the images seen on screen. I closely analyze the use of archival footage, where it is used in the narrative structure, how long the clips are, their visual and audio qualities, and how they are edited—both in terms of what shots are linked to one another, and, what has been selectively edited out. This has been an especially significant, yet tedious, method of analysis, since archival footage is difficult (or expensive) to access in order to examine what is left out. However, in what I have been able to access, I have found that, many times, archival footage is cut, rearranged, and used in ways that are contradictory to their original contexts, and reveal how specific narratives are constructed and what arguments about racial history are acceptable, desirable, and allowed to be shown on screen. Finally, I also attend to narrative structure, especially the use of dominant conventions of story-telling, such as the problem-solution formula that have a beginning, middle, and end and where the narrative arch leads to a resolved conclusion, giving viewers a sense of closure. This is especially significant for the kind of lesson or messaging the documentary is overall attempting to deliver to its audiences.

In addition to the memory scholars who focus on the larger theoretical operations of media and popular memory, this dissertation is deeply indebted to those scholars whose studies

[46] Ibid., 107.

of the Black Freedom Movement and popular memory have served as strong resources and models of historical and conceptual analysis. One scholar in particular is Herman Gray and his work on the televisual construction of the "Civil Rights subject". In his essay, "Remembering Civil Rights," he argues, similarly to Edgerton, that popular representations in film and television "are the chief means by which memory, history, and experience of the past become part of the common sense understanding of the present", and the Civil Rights subject—a visual trope of the latter day Black, mostly middle-class, subject who benefited most from the Civil Rights Movement—is used to "construct the mythic terms through which many Americans can believe our nation has now transcended racism" and "to displace and contain the most radical impulses" of the 1960s.[47] The Civil Rights subject trope on television is juxtaposed against "poor and disenfranchised members of the black community" and "as threats to the very notion of citizenship and the nation".[48] This visual dichotomy operates throughout the media objects in this dissertation, even if adjusted to construct acceptable and unacceptable Black radical subjects.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford's work *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* has been particularly informative, especially the section of their edited volume focusing on "Visualizing Memory". In this section, Jennifer Fuller's work on Civil Rights melodramas has effectively demonstrated the way Civil Rights memory can be mobilized to construct narratives of racial reconciliation and racial progress and to reposition redress for racial injustice away from the public realm of policy to the private realm of personal feeling.[49] This section has also provided resources and models for examining Black Radical and Black Power memory in essays from Tim Libretti, Leigh

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[47] Herman Gray, "Remembering Civil Rights: Television, Memory, and the 1960s", 238, 244.
[48] Ibid., 241.
[49] Jennifer Fuller, "Debating the Present through the Past," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, Eds. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006): 167-196.

Raiford, and Edward Morgan.[50] Where Raiford and Libretti provide analyses demonstrating how Black radical history has also become commodified (and can be mobilized for more radical history lessons for racial justice), Morgan's work has more directly impacted my own analysis through his very useful historical genealogies of Black radical representation, his anti-capitalist analysis, and his central argument for the way mass media continues to draw heavily from the discursive frameworks of the past—which, most commonly, demonize Black organizations and movements that fall outside of officially-sanctioned Civil Rights Movements.[51]

Other scholars who have deeply impacted this dissertation in their work on Black radical history, memory and cultural production are Jane Rhodes, Sohail Daulatzai, and Jonathan Fenderson. Rhodes's work has not only supplied important historical information in her canonical study *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, but also provides dynamic conceptual frameworks for thinking about Black Panther memory in popular culture—frameworks that account for both hegemonic uses and empowering reclamations.[52] Daulatzai's work also provides essential history and analysis from a Black internationalist, radical Left position, and his work on Muhammad Ali brings critical insights about the geopolitical stakes and ideological work of recuperating Black radicals in the 1990s. As he cogently argues, this recuperation of Ali not only served to contain his radical critiques of the US but to refashion his memory and contemporary figuration in a way that was useful to

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[50] Tim Libretti, "Integration as Disintegration: Remembering the Civil Rights Movement as a Struggle for Self-Determination in John Sayles's Sunshine State," and Leigh Raiford, "Restaging Revolution: Black Power, Vibe Magazine, and Photographic Memory," and Edward Morgan, "The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, Eds. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006): 197-219 and 220-250.

[51] Another important work by Morgan is his essay, "Media Culture and the Public Memory of the Black Panther Party," in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Moment*, Eds. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 324-373.

[52] Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

redeem the US from its troubled past and help "America transcend its racist legacy".[53] The insights coming out of this refashioning of Ali are critical to understanding the stakes and larger cultural sphere in which my memory objects are operating.

Finally, Fenderson's work has been crucial for my analysis mainly because of his focus on the liberal re-writing of Black Power history in the field of Black Power Studies. In his essay, "Towards the gentrification of Black Power (?)", he closely interrogates the rhetorical mechanisms and tropes used in historian Joseph Peniel's work on Malcolm X and Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael).[54] He demonstrates how these mechanisms fit Black radicalism into a "liberal history of American democratic progress".[55] In Fenderson's work, I found critical frameworks to analyze what was happening in the media objects I studied on Black radical memory. Some of these frameworks include: the elision of an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist critique, redefinitions of self-determination as rooted in individualism, exceptionalism as a guiding trope, and distortion of the political distinctions between liberal and radical histories. Fenderson makes clear what the liberal re-writing of Black radicalism aims to erase. He writes: "America, for [Malcolm X and Ture], was a repressive nation state and hegemonic idea that always rested upon the pillars of undemocratic praxis, in the forms of racism, capitalism, and imperialism. Hence for them American was not ultimately a place in need of democratic reform, but revolution."[56]

Stakes and Methods:

These central tenets, the call for the end to racial capitalism and the need for a complete transformation of the social order are the lessons obscured in the liberal re-writing of Black

[53] Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 165.
[54] Jonathan Fendersen, "Towards the Gentrification of Black Power (?)" *Race & Class*, 55, no. 1 (2013), 1-22.
[55] Ibid., 7.
[56] Ibid., 10.

radical memory. These lessons are those needed more than ever for ongoing struggles for justice today. When they are made to fit within US liberal politics and discourse, those lessons are not only lost, but refurbished to help legitimize and normalize the conditions that exist—at the least, they limit our ability to understand the continuation, and in many ways, exacerbation of inequality and racial injustice today. Moreover, the liberal antiracist façade of these re-writings taps into our antiracist impulses and our desire to learn about our present through an engagement with the past, only to deliver explanations and visual imaginaries that neutralize Black radical memory. The hegemonic currents of racial liberalism, of neoliberalism, needs this memory neutralized, needs us to forget the calls for global revolution in the twentieth century, and needs to erase our responsibilities to the unfinished projects that called for the end to racial capitalism.

This dissertation refuses this erasure and attempts to take up this call through the critical analysis of Black radical memory in broadcast television documentaries. I mobilize the radical, historical analysis of racial capitalism and racial liberalism, alongside the histories and analyses of counterinsurgency and the conservative movement, to examine how hegemonic ideologies are operating in, and are refracted through, television documentaries on the Black Freedom Struggle, as it is represented in the *Eyes on the Prize* series, on Malcolm X, and on the Black Panther Party. I pull from Black radical history to provide more expansive context and historical information for each of my case studies to fill in those historical elements that are mostly restrained, revised, obscured, or omitted in the documentaries. I pull from the critical studies of popular memory to analyze how these revisions and constructions dialogue with their contemporary contexts, not only to see how racial neoliberal ideologies work to recuperate Black radical history but to also understand how these cultural productions operate in and of

themselves, and how they imagine putting forward an alternative vision of Black history, especially in the face of counterinsurgent attacks coming from the New Right.

Alongside these critical, theoretical frameworks, I also perform close textual analyses of the media objects. I trace particular narrative themes and visual/audio devices to demonstrate how liberal ideologies are formally constructed. As was described above, this also includes close analysis of the particular codes and conventions of expository documentary filmmaking to examine how different techniques are working to construct their liberal narratives. Among other techniques, I have paid special attention to the uses and editing of archival footage, providing missing context and, sometimes, providing information for what comes before or after the cut. This has demonstrated the consistent technique of selective editing used to contain more radical messaging coming out of the archival footage. However, I also attend to moments of disruption, disjuncture, or contradiction, where the liberal frameworks and devices are unable to fully contain the radical messaging. This is also to say that I highlight moments in the documentaries where Black radical history and lessons are transmitted, even if for only a moment or two. These diversions and variations are also an important part of the analysis, since no two documentaries deliver the exact same liberal messaging, and, many times, the consistency of the hegemonic frameworks are also in flux within the individual documentaries themselves. Moreover, the contradictory conditions of racial capitalism are always already creating instability for this liberal messaging, and depending on the positionality of the viewer, these messages are always, on some level, going through another process of mediation, as individuals bring their own histories and understanding to the meaning-making process.

These complex processes belie the possibility of making definitive claims about the impact of these television documentaries on audiences. Yet, the material conditions that exist, the

violence that continues unabated, and the lack of the necessary revolutionary political culture to dismantle this system of racial capitalism serve as definitive evidence of the need to remember Black radical history, the need to deconstruct hegemonic operations in the cultural memory production of these histories, and the need to use this knowledge creatively to construct a more just world.

Chapter Breakdown:

Chapter one examines the fourteen-part, PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years* (*EOTP*), which is arguably one of the most influential media texts in shaping the meaning and representational possibilities for remembering Black struggle in the US. In this chapter, I argue and demonstrate how *EOTP* serves as a key example of what scholars refer to as the "consensus memory" or the "dominant narrative" of the Black Freedom Struggle. The chapter will track the dominant paradigms of this consensus memory in order to understand how they are used, negotiated, and contested in the media objects in chapters two and three. Yet, I will also argue that the construction of the dominant narrative does not unfold simply or uniformly, and, thus, affords the opportunity to analyze how and when dominant, liberal frameworks struggle to conceal their own contradictions. This is especially significant for chapters two and three, which largely examine liberation memories that should seemingly be difficult, if not impossible, to fit within a liberal story of American progress. My examination of what I call 'moments of disjuncture' in this chapter becomes useful in chapter two and three as a method of analysis for when liberal frameworks clash or contradict with their liberal frameworks.

Chapter two takes lessons from chapter one to illustrate the ways in which the memory of Malcolm X has similarly been impacted by the dominant memory of Civil Rights. The chapter

analyzes five documentaries on Malcolm X that cross three broadcast networks, ABC, NBC, and PBS, between the years 1990 and 1995. I demonstrate how many of the same representational practices and ideological frameworks from chapter one carry over into these memory texts on Malcolm X. Yet, I focus my analysis around five themes where liberal narratives around Malcolm's life, teachings, and legacy coalesce. I argue that these particular themes, in varying measure, all work to depoliticize Malcolm's memory, especially his Black Internationalism, his radical analysis of race and US history, and his sustained critique of liberal politics. This chapter provides an important analysis of how the hegemony of racial liberalism impacts on the memory of a key figure of Black radical history and on a highly contested cultural icon of the 1990s.

Chapter three is focused on the portrayal of the Black Panther Party in three television documentaries, all released in the year 1990. Two of these documentaries are episodes from *EOTP*, thus chapter one plays a significant role in establishing the larger context in which these two documentaries are read and understood. Following from chapters one and two, this chapter illustrates the specific ways in which liberal discourses operate in the media memory of the BPP. I examine six themes that cross each documentary project and show how particular visual and audio techniques are used to downplay or obscure the Panthers revolutionary politics. Yet, this chapter also finds multiple moments of disjuncture within the liberal frameworks that exposes how unstable, and at points, difficult, it is to contain Panther memory. This chapter provides an important introduction to some of the earliest media memory portrayals on the BPP and how liberal discourses operate within them. This will set a foundation for the multitude of BPP memory objects released over the next two decades; many of these are briefly analyzed and put into dialogue with chapter three in the conclusion.

These three chapters provide an intimate look at how the operations of racial liberalism work to re-fashion Black liberation memory in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, with the specific focus on television media memories of Black power and Black radicalism. Together, these chapters illuminate shared techniques and framing devices used to construct liberal messages, while also illustrating specific variations and deviations within each particular portrayal. They also provide expansive context and historical information to highlight the more radical histories and politics that are restrained, revised, obscured, or omitted in the documentaries. They also offer insight into the specific historical and cultural contexts in which these productions operated, and how they imagined putting forward an alternative vision, or perhaps counter-memory, within the cultural struggles of their own historical moment.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the 14-part, PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize I: The Civil Rights Years* and *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads* (*EOTP*), arguably one of the most influential media texts in shaping the meaning and representational possibilities for remembering Black struggle in the US.[1] It begins with six episodes (*Eyes I*), released in 1987, which covers the central campaigns of the Southern Civil Rights Movement from the years 1954 until 1965. In 1990, these six episodes are then followed by the final eight episodes (*Eyes II*), covering the years 1965 to 1983 and encompassing a broader range of regional campaigns and organizations. Though *Eyes I* has garnered more critical acclaim than *Eyes II*, the series, overall, has won multiple awards, including an Emmy, two Peabody awards, and an Oscar nomination for best documentary. Beyond its recognition in these prestigious academies, the series has also made a major impact in educational circles, especially at the college-level where, by the late 1990s, the documentaries could be found in more than half of all four-year institutions in the US.[2] From its beginning, the series has been paired with "Civil Rights Readers" and "Guides" to use as educational companions, and these publications have multiple editions with the most recent, 25th Anniversary edition, coming out in 2013.[3] Yet, the series widest distribution was its

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[1] The 14-part series, as a whole, will be referred to in the chapter as *EOTP*; the first six episodes will be identified as *Eyes I*, and the second eight episodes will be identified as *Eyes II*.
[2] Charles J.G. Griffin, "Movement as Memory: Significant form in Eyes on the Prize," *Communication Studies*, 54, no. 2 (2003): 196.
[3] Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, Eds., *A Reader and Guide: Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years* (Penguin Books, 1987). Clayborn Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990* (Viking Penguin, 1991). Juan Williams, Ed., *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965, The Companion Volume to the PBS Television Series* (Viking Penguin, 1987, Penguin, 1988, 2002, 2013).

release on the PBS channel in 1987 and then in 1990, and its re-releases from 1991 to 1993, and again in 2006, 2008, and 2016.[4]

With this long-lasting, expansive influence, the types of narrative structures and ideological frameworks used in this series have become paradigmatic in the ways Black liberation history has been, and can be, remembered. It is the job of this chapter to track these paradigms in order to better understand how they are used, negotiated, and contested in the media objects that make up the rest of this dissertation. As this chapter will show, *EOTP* is a key media text in the construction of what scholars refer to as the "consensus memory" or the "dominant narrative" of the Black Freedom Struggle. This is especially true of its first six episodes that portray the 'classical phase' of the Civil Rights story, which, according to Leigh Raiford and Renee C. Romano, is "held up as a shining example of the success of American democracy…proof of the vitality of America's legal and political institutions, and evidence of the nation's ongoing quest to live up to its founding ideals of egalitarianism and justice".[5] *EOTP* thus serves as a key example to examine the ideological tropes that work to fit Black liberation within this liberal understanding of American progress and exceptionality.

Yet, the construction of the dominant narrative does not unfold simply or uniformly, and the series becomes increasingly complex and nuanced, especially in its last eight episodes. As the series progresses, there emerges a more apparent disjuncture between its guiding liberal ideologies and what is shown on screen; though these moments of disjuncture also happen in *Eyes I*. One reason for this complexity is simply the result of multiple people working on the

[4] It must be importantly noted that, due to copyright laws, the film was not shown on television or available for purchase between 1995 and 2006. It was available through library access, but it took a large campaign to raise the money for copyright renewals, which finally happened in 2006.
[5] Renee Christine Romano and Leigh Raiford, Eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens: U of Georgia, 2006): xvii.

series and the contingencies of documentary work in general—the multiple teams of writers, producers, and editors, the different perspectives of academic consultants, the diverse and changing interviewers, the caprice of interviewees, the available archival footage, etc. These contingencies, as I will illustrate, bring with them complexities that complicate the smooth delivery of what *EOTP* creator Henry Hampton promises as "dramatic, engaging, and accessible stories about American progress".[6]

A more significant reason for this disjuncture, however, is how a liberal framing is unable to fully contain the contradictions that are inherent in US racial capitalism. As later episodes show, racial violence continues after the victories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement, and the failure of this movement strategy puts a constant pressure on the stability of the liberal narrative. Moreover, *Eyes II* introduces social justice figures and organizations that move outside the parameters of the Civil Rights Movement, such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, exposing viewers to alternative, revolutionary strategies and visions of liberation. In short, the struggle to maintain a liberal framework and to manage these inevitable contradictions becomes more apparent. Thus, the goal of the chapter becomes to both track the liberal representational practices that guide *EOTP*, while also attending to those moments of disjuncture and instability. *EOTP*, then, not only serves as a key text in understanding the construction of the "dominant narrative" of the Black Freedom Struggle, but it also affords the opportunity to analyze how and when liberal frameworks struggle to conceal their own contradictions. This is especially significant for this dissertation, which largely examines liberation memories that should seemingly be difficult, if not impossible, to fit within a liberal story of American progress.

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[6] Jon Else, *True South: Henry Hampton and Eyes on the Prize, the Landmark Television Series That Reframed the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Viking, 2017): 33.

Henry Hampton, Liberal Ideologies, and *EOTP* Production History[7]

The liberal ideology that underpins the series is not held as any secret, as creator Henry Hampton has made his perspectives clear in both his personal and professional exchanges. As can be gleaned from *EOTP*, and multiple records and studies, Hampton was committed to producing a liberal story of civil rights that championed US patriotism and racial reconciliation. Jon Else, who recently wrote a biography on Hampton and on the making of *EOTP*, writes: "…from the start [Hampton] demanded that we deploy a lot of American flags on the screen, in part to reassure skeptical conservative viewers and partly because he so believed in America".[8] This belief would also appear in many of his public speeches, such as a commencement speech he delivered at Washington University in 1989. In this speech, Hampton described the events at Selma in 1965 as follows:

> We had dismantled in…an eyeblink in historic time a system of apartheid that had prospered for centuries. And in a sense one could make the argument, as outrageous as it would be for a people who had been here from the beginning and whose labor had been used to create the great American fortunes, that we were immigrants in our own land, free for the first time to compete without the shackles of legalized segregation. It was a moment of exuberance and promise...[9]

This statement illustrates the liberal ideology to which Hampton espoused. According to the logic, the gains of the movement afforded individuals the right to better compete in a capitalist society that is assumedly a system that is fair and indiscriminating—once the "shackles of legalized segregation" are removed. This is not to say that Hampton was unaware of the economic inequalities that impacted Black people in America or the importance of the economic

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[7] The production history on *EOTP* derives from Jon Else's new book *True South*. Else paints a vivid picture of the history of *EOTP,* as he played a significant role as both a producer and cinematographer on *Eyes I*. It is important to note, however, that he was only a cinematographer for a single episode on *Eyes II*. Thus, much of the production history here comes out of his experience and knowledge of *Eyes I*, though there are some important insights he provides about the production history of *Eyes II*.
[8] Ibid., 108.
[9] Henry Hampton, Commencement Address, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, May 1, 1989.

focus of many social justice campaigns he covered in *EOTP*. It is more clearly referencing an unwavering belief in American institutions, here of capitalism, whose operations can bring freedom if they are allowed to function properly; i.e. once they are rid of racists or racism. The fact that race has always functioned to rationalize and normalize the structural inequalities of capitalism is obscured in this comment. This idea that capitalism can be “race neutral” is the only way it can become, as it does here for Hampton, the horizon or Promised Land to which the struggle for racial equality strives toward.

This connects to his use of the phrase “immigrants in our own land”, a phrase Hampton would use often in his speeches to represent the mistreatment and dehumanizing experience of Black people in the US. The concern here for Hampton was “the painful notion”[10] of being treated as an immigrant, as if one does not belong to the nation or is unable to make some kind of native claim over its land. This notion of ‘immigrant in one’s own land’ erases the function of racialized Blackness and the specific histories of slavery, genocide, and white supremacy upon which the nation-state was built and operates, and, in many ways, identifies with the types of exclusionary practices at the heart of the US national project; a project, according to scholar Dylan Rodriguez, “that requires the neutralization, domestication, and strategic elimination of declared aliens, enemies, and criminals”.[11] Here, this phrase rewrites the past to proclaim that America was a land that had belonged to Black people from the beginning, and the Civil Rights story plays an important role in reminding its Black citizens to stake their claim in it.

This demand and desire to claim America requires an unwavering faith and celebration in the American system, something, according to Else, Hampton unquestionably had and did. In his

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[10] The clarity that this phrase was meant to denote something “painful” comes out of Else, pg. 126.
[11] Dylan Rodriguez, “Inaugurating Multicultural White Supremacy,” *Colorlines*, November 10, 2008. https://www.colorlines.com/articles/dreadful-genius-obama-moment

mission statement for Blackside, Inc., Hampton's production company, the outfit would make films about "the real functioning of democracy as a permanent, accessible and even popular subject for broadcasting…serving democracy, diversity, culture and civil society…by producing powerful, dramatic, engaging and accessible stories about American progress".[12] In Hampton's promotional materials, he would pitch the *EOTP* project as "thirteen 1-hours…focused on the triumphs, tragedies, pain, and humor of black and white Americans on the move towards justice and equality…At its center, *Eyes on the Prize* will remind us of the sturdiness of the brand of democracy we practice".[13] At the heart of these materials is a teleological perspective of US history that works to make contemporary viewers feel they are more enlightened and evolved than their historical predecessors—this can be especially pleasurable for white audience members—and buttress the liberal myths that either racial justice and equality have already been achieved or this "brand of democracy" is all that is needed to achieve it.

Though it is clear that Hampton would use this kind of branding to attract corporate and government funders, this same ideology also created tension with many of *EOTP*'s producers, crew members, and consultants. As Else recalls in his biography: "…there was an underlying tension about Henry Hampton wanting to be celebratory. Carson and Harding [two historians working as consultants on the series] would have left more questions at the end of each program, more nuance and ambiguity, rather than resolved affirmation of the American system, even triumphalism, favored by Henry".[14] Clay Carson reiterates this, stating: "Perhaps the most significant area of disagreement concerned Hampton's determination to view the civil rights movement as a patriotic story of America's realization of its ideals. He clearly wanted white

[12] Else, 33.
[13] Ibid., 81.
[14] Ibid., 264.

viewers to react positively to the series".[15] As Carson points out here, this triumphant narrative was connected to Hampton's desire not only to celebrate and attest to the superior ideals and effective functioning of US democracy, but also to appeal to white viewers. What this exposes is the connection between this triumphant narrative and whiteness, since whiteness needs to disavow the continuation of Black and Brown racialized violence and white racial advantages in the present. A narrative that claims the Civil Rights Movement was triumphant in overcoming America's racist past can offer this. It also provides for the logic of reconciliation and redemption, where white people are not only forgiven for past racism but are afforded the opportunity, along with/as the nation, to redeem themselves as enlightened, anti-racists.

This consideration of white people was important to Hampton. As Else points out throughout his biography, Hampton made sure to give white people as much equal position and attention as possible throughout the project. He wanted *EOTP* to deliver to white viewers a sense of their involvement and contribution to the movement, which was made more possible when it came to using archival footage of the Southern Civil Rights campaign, since white newsman were already framing white people as central actors in the movement. This somewhat changes in the later episodes of the series. Hampton was also adamant about having an equal amount of white people working on the series, having each production team be literally constructed of one white and one Black person. These teams also had to consist of one male and one female, all with the hopes of developing a more "pluralist" perspective.[16] Hampton was also known for pushing his crew, in both the production and the post-production stages, to think about their

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[15] Ibid., 108.
[16] Ibid., 97.

white audiences. One notable question Hampton would ask, as Else points out in his memoir: "What will make a seventy-year-old white lady in Peoria care about the film?"[17]

Though Hampton would, at times, seek a more palatable story for white viewers or constantly insist that his film crew "find and use images of a black child holding an American flag"[18], the intensive process involved in the making of the series, the freedom afforded to the producers (at points), and Hampton's penchant for rigor and debate, especially between and among his Black/white/male/female designated production teams, made the series, overall, a complex and complicated media object. *EOTP* really began in 1979 under a different project name, *America, We Loved You Madly* (*AWLYM*), which was never completed and caused hardship for both Blackside, Inc. and those who worked on the project. Yet, this work, the research, the footage, and the lessons learned would help to build the foundation for what would become the *EOTP* project. As Else points out, Hampton would be able to pitch *EOTP* as having already been in the research and development stage for five years before ever starting *EOTP*, which, in many ways, was true. Moreover, when Hampton decided to pursue *AWLYM* or *EOTP*, there wasn't a comprehensive history of the Civil Rights Movement yet written, let alone in video format, and so nothing could really serve as a model or precedent for their project. According to Else, "Henry's vision of a people's history on television was stepping out in advance of the work-in-progress scholarship", which, at the time, was in its formative stages and just beginning to gain traction among historians.[19] Thus, much of what could be found in terms of archival footage, of participants willing to be interviewed, of participants who were still alive,

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[17] Ibid., 107.
[18] Ibid., 12.
[19] Ibid., 62.

of research and scholarship available, all helped to shape the nascent history telling in *EOTP* and in the larger historical discourse on the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1980s.

Furthermore, the process of making *EOTP* was extremely rigorous for the people working on the series, especially considering this nascent stage of producing Civil Rights history. There were pre-production courses that brought in some of the most prominent historians of the period to give lessons and exchange knowledge with the production teams, as these teams consisted of persons with variant levels of knowledge and experience with Civil Rights history. The pre-production courses were also a space for lessons on documentary filmmaking, as most of the film crew had never worked on a project of this scale, and, Hampton was known for bringing in young, new filmmakers who were just getting their careers started. Hampton and Blackside, Inc. would come to be famous for giving many filmmakers, especially young Black filmmakers and filmmakers of color, their first shot in the industry, and many would go on to become prominent filmmakers in their own right. Hampton placed a lot of trust in production teams and film crews to teach and learn from one another, and to work on their own without his supervision; at least, this was true for the production phase of the project.

These variants, however, in experience and knowledge, and the deep level of commitment to the project, many times caused clashes and conflict between the film producers themselves and between the producers and Hampton. The way Else describes it, these clashes and conflicts could be absolutely grueling and largely contributed to extended timelines and expanded budgets. Yet, they created the kind of rigorous debate Hampton was looking to cultivate. Hampton felt that these tensions were productive in helping to create a kind of excellence and balance in storytelling. There is also evidence, however, that this tension led to Black staff having to go behind Hampton's back to create space that was free "of always [having

to] explain your position to white people".[20] How much of these contingences, of having to work through and around the conscious and unconscious racism of whiteness, of working with variant levels of knowledge and experience, of working without historical precedents, actually impacted the making of the story, it is difficult to know. Or, how and when they happened to alter (or not alter) the smooth delivery of a celebratory, liberal narrative. In the end, however, Hampton did have the last word on the final cut and could be, according to Else, "merciless, adamant, and un-democratic in the editing room".[21] This unique mixture of creative freedom in production and tighter control in post-production, and this complicated production history, provides a glimpse into how and why *EOTP* is far more complex than a simple delivery of any singular vision of American triumphalism.

This complexity would deepen in the last eight episodes. Though Else was not as involved in producing *Eyes II*, his memoir still sheds some light on the shifts that took place in the second half of the series. Else writes that Hampton "expressed at times that he didn't want to tackle the post-1965 "bad movement"; it wasn't really his period and he didn't really like it".[22] The second series would be, according to Hampton, "less straightforward" and, according to Else, "without the kinds of resolution and redemption that audiences and critics had found so appealing in the original *Eyes I*".[23] Hampton also felt, however, that there was no other production company that should be responsible for its telling. Yet, it is important to understand that Hampton's hesitancy and discomfort with the post-1965 period had to have impacted the storytelling. According to Else, Hampton was adamant about not including interview footage with Robert F. Williams in the first six episodes, wanting to stay away from any discussions of

[20] Ibid., 348.
[21] Ibid., 270.
[22] Ibid., 330.
[23] Ibid., 332.

the use of guns and of Communism. Also, he proclaimed that Angela Davis would be off limits. Yet, in the second half, the production team would cover armed self-defense, both in relationship to the Deacons of Defense in the South and the Black Panther Party in the North. Also, Angela Davis would make a very brief, one-minute appearance in episode 12 to discuss the intertwining relationship between the prison industrial complex and the economic system. Thus, there were definite shifts in the making of the second eight episodes, and though there is not as detailed a production history available for *Eyes II*, an analysis of the content, structure, and disjuncture in the liberal framing help to illuminate its deepening complexity and contradiction. This analysis will be introduced and sketched out in this chapter, but a more detailed analysis will be provided in chapters two and three, which engage, more specifically, the memories of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party in *EOTP*.

***Eyes I* and Dominant Liberal Tropes**

In order to understand more about the deepening complexities in *Eyes II*, it will be necessary to begin with *Eyes I*, and to track the representational practices that were so celebrated by audiences, critics, and Hampton, especially for their ability to deliver a more 'straightforward' narrative with the components of 'resolution and redemption'. This more celebratory and straightforward design of *Eyes I* has also contributed to its wider success and accessibility in both academic and consumer circles. Nearly all academic scholarship produced on *EOTP* has concentrated on the first six episodes, and the latest academic study guide, released in 2013, meant to accompany the documentaries, completely cut out the last eight episodes. This study guide was the 25th Anniversary edition, which would correspond with the release of *Eyes I*, but no 25th Anniversary edition was ever published for the last eight episodes in 2016. Moreover, when PBS reissued an educational version on DVD in 2006, the promotional materials changed

the name of the series to *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement*, a replica of the *Eyes I* title, which does the work of simplifying and distorting the very different goals and trajectories of social justice groups introduced in *Eyes II*, encompassing them under a singular, domesticated, civil rights framework. Finally, in 2010, PBS issued a consumer version of *EOTP*, i.e. a more affordable version, which only includes the first six episodes. To this day, the only way to purchase *Eyes II* is to buy the entire 14-part educational version from PBS, which costs nearly three hundred dollars.

All of these measures have given *Eyes I* a prominence over *Eyes II*, aiding in the perpetuation of the dominant narrative of the Black Freedom Struggle. This dominant narrative usually begins in 1954 with *Brown vs. Board*, concentrates on the South, is mostly non-economic in its demands, and ends triumphantly in 1965 with the passing of the Voting Rights Act. The year 1965, then, represents the movement's decline, defined by urban riots, black militancy and the excesses of the late 60s and early 70s.[24] This dominant narrative has become fodder for arguments that the Civil Rights Movement succeeded in dismantling Jim Crow and creating unfettered opportunity and full inclusion of African Americans in US society. It has been used to construct an American redemption tale that purports the US has overcome its racist history and moved towards its natural destiny as a universal, multicultural nation to be emulated by the world. And, it has served as evidence for the rise of a colorblind logic that claims race is no longer a significant factor for one's successes or failures in American society and is mobilized as a testament to the democratic functioning of US political and economic institutions.

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[24] For more on the dominant civil rights narrative, see Jacquelyn Dowd-Hall, "The Long Civil Rights History and The Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* March 9.1 (2005): 1233-263; Romano and Raiford's *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*; Herman Gray, "Remembering Civil Rights: Television, Memory, and the 1960s," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised: Sixties Television and Social Conflict*, Ed. Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin (New York: Routledge, 1997): 349-359.

A strong example in *Eyes I* that captures the liberal discourse and representational practices of the dominant narrative can be found in the opening montage sequence of the first episode "Awakenings: 1954-1956". These discourses and practices are then repeated, and serve as a kind of template, throughout the series. One of the most distinct features is Julian Bond's voiceover, which provides a dis-embodied, voice-of-God narration that guides viewers in the larger historical meaning of what is shown on the screen. Bond's voiceover is given both a place of primacy and authority, since he is usually accorded the first and last words of each episode, and his matter-of-fact tone contributes to a seeming objectivity in his commentary—this is especially the case in relationship to the subjective, more emotion-laden dialogue of the interviewees and archival footage that are bracketed by Bond's commentary.[25] In this opening scene, Bond's narration enters about one minute in, stating:

> In a ten-year period, in the 1950s and 1960s, America fought a Second Revolution. It was fought in the South by Black people and white. It was fought in the streets, in churches, in courts, in schools. It was fought to make America be America for all its citizens. These were America's Civil Rights Years.

Bond's calm, even tone is interwoven with sounds and images of Mississippi activist and political leader Fannie Lou Hamer and a crowd of impassioned protesters singing "Go Down Moses"; Hamer is centered in the frame and leading the song. She sings so loud that she has to stop to swallow but picks right back up at the same intensity. This juxtaposition signals to viewers that Bond's commentary, in its calm and measured deliverance, is more simply a communication of facts within a highly emotional and dramatic unfolding of history.

This 'communication of facts' is especially important for the delivery of his statement about 'America being America for all its citizens'. Within this statement, there is a taken-for-

[25] The basis for this analysis derives from Griffin's article "Movement as Memory", especially the concept of brackets to describe the way in which Bond's voiceovers worked in the documentaries.

granted idea that America has some kind of innate characteristic. As the liberal, hegemonic imagination has it, the US, at its core, is a system of freedom, equality, and justice that only need to be 'made' to do what it innately or naturally does—give freedom, equality, and justice. Bond's delivery of this idea, and its positioning at the very beginning, is meant to establish this ideology as a guiding trope for the rest of the series. What this assumption actually does, however, is to obscure the very violent foundations and operations of both past and present America and replace it with the mythological notion that the US is, and always has been, a force for good.[26]

Another mythology embedded in this narration, that also becomes a guiding trope for the series, is the triumphalism and exceptionalism implicit in Bond's use of the term 'Second Revolution'. Bond uses the term to explicitly compare the civil rights struggle to the American Revolution. In his analysis of this narration, scholar Charles J.G. Griffin, argues that this comparison implies that: "Like its predecessor, this "second revolution" is a noble crusade for freedom, progressing through great adversity toward a triumphant conclusion".[27] In other words, viewers learn, from the start, that this struggle, like that of the American Revolution, will end in success, bolstering the terms of the dominant narrative. Moreover, as the American Revolution has been used to buttress mythologies about the uniqueness of the country's foundations, as emerging out of an "anti-colonial" struggle, as a fight for "liberty and justice for all", and its correspondent aspirations as an "empire of liberty", the Civil Rights Movement works to reify

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[26] For more on American exceptionalist mythologies and the role of the Civil Rights Movement, see "Introduction: Civil Rights, Civic Myths" and "Chapter One: Rethinking Race and Nation" in Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[27] Griffin, 201.

and reveal these truths of America's exceptionalism and prove that the US nationalist project is both sufficient and effective in bringing freedom and justice to formerly oppressed peoples.[28]

This latter idea, of the sufficiency and efficacy of the US nation-state, is implicit in the very structure of the series' editing design; another feature introduced in the opening montage and used as a stylistic template for the rest of the series. In the series, the editing materials are made up of 1) archival footage from the period, 2) narration from Bond, 3) music and sounds of the period, and 4) participant interviews. These four components are woven together in the editing process to create a cohesive narrative. One significant editing design choice is to pair a participant interview in the (supposed) present with an earlier version of themselves in the movement. As Griffin's study aids here again, the participant is usually shown in some dramatic situation in the archival footage and then is presented as their older selves, reflecting on the past "from a vantage point that is, materially and psychologically, very different".[29] The archival footage is mostly shot in black-and-white film stock, and the mise-en-scene, cinematography, and sound mostly consist of live, highly dramatic scenes; whereas the participant interview footage is shot in color film stock with the interviewee alone in a quiet and comfortable space, usually an office or mid- to upper-scale living room. In short, the present-day interviews show images of movement participants who appear to be in a much better place. According to Griffin: "The defiant outsider has become the composed, middle-aged professional. Anger has given way to calm, grief to consolation, alienation to reconciliation… [overall]…the participant interviews

[28] For more on the historical foundations of the concept of "empire of liberty" and its ideological power in the development of US empire, see Anthony Bogues, *Empire of Liberty: Power, Desire, and Freedom* (New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2010).
[29] Griffin, 206.

convey an implicit message that certain issues, at least, have been resolved, that appetites aroused by injustice have been satisfied by action".[30]

This can be seen in the opening sequence in the juxtaposition of shots of Reverend C.T. Vivian, SCLC[31] leader, as a younger man confronting Sheriff Jim Clark outside the Dallas County Courthouse with an older version of himself reflecting on the movement. The archival footage begins with a black-and-white image of Rev. Vivian yelling at Clark in the street. He exclaims: "We are willing to be beaten for democracy". The camera lens is covered in raindrops, obscuring the image, and quickly pans over to Sheriff Clark, who comes uncomfortably close to the lens with his baton, giving the very real impression of assaulting the viewer alongside Rev. Vivian. Sheriff Clark then shoves the camera, making the cameraman lose control of the image, where all the viewer sees is a shaky glimpse of the scene, while Rev. Vivian shouts off-screen, in a muddled fashion, something about "hiding your blows". The footage is extremely dramatic and does a good job of simulating the physical and emotional violence of the confrontation. The image then cuts to a 'present-day' interview with Rev. Vivian. The shot consists of muted browns, greys, and blues, with Rev. Vivian top-lighted and positioned alone in a medium-close up shot. His dialogue is clearly heard, as the space is quiet, and the shot is intimate. Without even engaging the dialogue, there is a feeling of relief and satisfaction for viewers that this assault for both themselves and Rev. Vivian is over. Also, Rev. Vivian seems to be doing well, as he has aged and wears a nice suit, allowing the viewer to presume things have gotten better and matters of the past have, at least somewhat, been resolved. This operation is constant throughout the series, as there are only a few rare moments where the participant interviews feature people who

[30] Ibid., 206.
[31] SCLC is the acronym for the civil rights organization Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

do not present themselves as financially well-off or comfortable, and emotionally and psychologically stable and satisfied.

This particular footage also exemplifies the kind of liberal ideology guiding the series in helping to identify what the goals and victories of the movement were about. In Rev. Vivian's participant interview, he states: "It was a clear engagement between those who wished the fullness of their personalities to be met and those who would seek to destroy us physically and psychologically. You do not walk away from that. This is what movement meant…" This statement will appear again three more times, and in the concluding episode of the series, episode 14, it serves as a kind of conclusive bracket to again remind viewers of what the movement meant. Yet, this third and last time the statement appears, it will be repeated by Bond himself, lending the statement more authority and moving it outside of the subjective space of the participant interview and into the objective space of the voiceover. The statement reflects the liberal vision of the movement's history, which places its goals (and victories) within the individual, and individual psychology. In other words, it ignores the more radical, economic, redistributive goals of the movement for a more bourgeois understanding of freedom that places liberty within the subjective formation of individuals. This primary goal for the 'fullness of personalities' will be complicated as the series moves into its second half and economic justice demands come to the forefront. Thus, this dialogue motif exemplifies the kinds of complexity and contradiction that occur in the second half. This goal holds up in *Eyes I*, but it loses its clarity of exposition in *Eyes II*.

Another standard feature presented in the opening sequence, which also takes a shift in *Eyes II*, is a balanced presentation of white persons on screen and a clear distinction between good and evil white people. In the opening, there are multiple white voices that are included to

either represent their involvement in the movement or their support for the goals of integration. Also, the archival news footage of different marches and picket lines are included that feature many white people in the crowd, at points, making it seem that there were almost as many white people as there were Black people participating in the demonstrations. This theme of 'black and white together' and the inclusion, and many times centering, of white bodies in the movement was common in the network news coverage of the Southern Civil Rights Movement. Aniko Bodroghkozy's close study of this archival material reveals: "Network television provisionally embraced integrationist civil rights, as long as whiteness and white people (at least non-Southern and nonrural) were neither marginalized nor discomforted…[and]…America's racial story was one of color-blind equality grounded on a vision of "black and white together".[32] As Bodroghkozy argues, these techniques helped to make blackness and integration palatable for white audiences and helped to frame movement strategies and goals within white bourgeois standards of respectability and liberal discourses of moderation.[33] These visual and narrative techniques, and the particular frames, themes, and actors involved, would become a kind of visual lexicon in the telling and re-telling of the Civil Rights story, especially when archival news footage was used. According to Else, *Eyes I* was very much dependent, and limited by, the availability of archival footage from the networks and newsreel companies.[34] Thus, with Hampton's known concern for white people aside, the ways in which whiteness shaped archival footage would inevitably impact and enter into the making of *EOTP*.

[32] Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: U of Illinois, 2012): 4.
[33] Ibid., 6.
[34] For a similar critique on how histories of the Civil Rights Movement are overdetermined by the overreliance on archival media material, see Bruce R. Brasell, "From Evidentiary Presentation to Artful Re-Presentation: Media Images, Civil Rights Documentaries, and the Audiovisual Writing of History," *Journal of Film and Video* 56 (2004): 3-16. Brasell claims that, in many ways, "the history of the movement becomes a history of its media representations."

These techniques and ideological imperatives of including and centering white people and constructing the story of civil rights through an ideology of color-blindness, was most succinctly achieved through the simple narrative paradigm of the 'good white' vs. the 'bad white'. This paradigm was used especially often in *Eyes I* and its editing of archival footage, but, again, has its roots in the historical practices of network television's framing of civil rights. As Bodroghkozy explains it, early television coverage of the Civil Rights Movement had as its central characters the progressive white Northerner, the moderate white Southerner, and the deviant white segregationist; the first two white actors would be pitted against the last, and worthy Black "victims" would serve as mostly backdrop while these white spokespersons crafted the story around civil rights. This would shift as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum and the television news networks symbiotically shifted with the movement, but the clear distinctions between good whites and bad whites would continue as a centerpiece of the story. In the opening sequence of *Eyes I*, this paradigm is conveyed through the juxtaposition of archival footage of a middle-class, Southern white woman who tells the camera that she "has thought for a long time that Negroes should be allowed to sit at the counters where we're served downtown. This is just part of many things I think they should be allowed to do." This footage is immediately met with archival footage of Senator Eastland of Mississippi vowing that the South would maintain segregated schooling no matter what the Supreme Court said, claiming, "All the people of the South are in favor of segregation". Because of the juxtaposition of the two shots, Eastland's statement is shown to not only be one of lawlessness, but also invalid and dishonest. The Southern white spokeswoman is shown to be tolerant in her inclusive perspective and enlightened, having had this perspective for quite some time. And though she does not speak with as much passion as other 'good whites' in later episodes, the moral clarity of the story is

evident, allowing white viewers to easily identify with these good whites, especially when their statements exclude any wrong-doing on the part of white people and instead express a support for the color-blind equality Bodroghkozy's study points to.

Another central feature of *Eyes I* is the amplified embrace of the non-violent philosophy of struggle and the illustration of its utility. As Jennifer Asenas points out in her dissertation on *EOTP*, "*Eyes on the Prize* portrays nonviolence as useful when protesters can enlist the sympathy of white liberals…and provoke the racist whites into using violence against them".[35] This presentation of non-violence exhibits the particular non-violent tactics used among many civil right organizations and illustrates the logic behind the philosophy, which dramatizes, especially, the hypocrisies of US democracy and "civil" society and creates significant pressure to garner broader support for civil rights goals. Yet, simultaneously, *EOTP* shows its viewers how these underlying components of non-violence (enlisting white liberal support and provoking violence from white racists) could also expose how white supremacist logic operates through it. However, this more critical engagement will not happen until *Eyes II*. Episode 4 in *Eyes I* illustrates how the non-violent strategy failed in the Albany campaign, but the overall narrative arc ends with non-violence resulting in civil rights legislation in the final episode. This episode, "Selma: Bridge to Freedom", being one of the most well-known and dramatic displays of white violence in the series. In the opening sequence, the non-violent strategy is exhibited in archival footage of the Woolworth lunch counter beatings in Greensboro, North Carolina, where mostly young Black men sit passively as a mob of white men throw punches and beat them to the ground. Here this display of violence conjures feelings of disgust and empathy, as the absurdity

[35] Jennifer Asenas, *The Past as Rhetorical Resource for Resistance: Enabling and Constraining Memories of the Black Freedom Struggle in Eyes on the Prize* (University of Texas, Austin, PhD Dissertation, 2007): 178, 180.

of beating people who refuse to fight back is placed in the spotlight. It is not until *Eyes II* where this philosophy and the necessity to provoke and sustain physical violence against Black activists and bystanders are put into serious question.

This display of senseless violence is followed by a brief image of the funeral of CORE[36] activist and martyr James Chaney, then, finally, archival footage of King giving a speech on the footsteps of the capital building in Montgomery, following the Selma-to-Montgomery March. The footage of King's speech serves as both the conclusion to this opening sequence and to the end of the sixth episode of the series and, thus, to *Eyes I*. The speech, and its privileged positioning, represents another key, liberal discourse that works to shape its exceptionalist narrative. King delivers his speech as follows: "We must come to see the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. That will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man; that would be the day of man as man". When this speech is seen for the second time at the very end of *Eyes I*, it serves as a climactic, triumphant moment that followed the brutal violence of the Pettus Bridge attack. Here in the opening, it follows the raging violence of a white mob and then the death of James Chaney, brutally murdered by the hands of white racists. Therefore, the speech also works in the opening to uplift the sequence from despair and violence to an ending of hope and overcoming. From both these patterns of sequencing, and the overall narrative structure of *Eyes I*, this messaging is meant to appeal to the minds and hearts of white people and/as the nation, those whose conscience are at stake here, and King is offering them/the nation a vision for redemption and colorblind harmony. With its triumphalist tone in episode six, paired with the celebratory coverage of President Johnson's

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[36] CORE is the acronym for the civil rights organization Congress of Racial Equality.

federal mandate to allow the Selma-to-Montgomery March and the passing of the Voting Rights Act, viewers can only assume the nation took this offering.

This offering of redemption is the final lesson of *Eyes I* and both structurally and symbolically illustrates how the Civil Rights Movement can be used to cleanse the nation of its violent, racist past while serving as evidence of its moral integrity. What this officially sanctioned form of Black liberation has offered is a renewal and redemption of the US nationalist project and the revelation of those deeper truths of "the universalizing force of American norms and institutions".[37] As Nikhil Singh informs us: "For the last half-century, one of the central ideological tasks of U.S. global power has been to cleanse sovereignty of its colonial-racist taint".[38] This first six episodes, and this overarching theme of redemption, aids in this process and becomes important for the conclusion of the series, in episode 14, which expands the universalizing force of the movement and the American creed to a global scale.

Two other important frameworks that guide *EOTP*, though they are not part of the opening sequence, are the abstract, non-economic definitions of segregation and the distortion or evasion of the impact of WWII and anti-colonial movements on Black soldiers and activists in the years prior to the Civil Rights Movement. These both happen in the introductory remarks and images that follow the opening sequence in episode 1. In his opening remarks, Bond describes segregation as "a complete environment…socially and psychologically…meant to keep Blacks and whites separate". Archival footage of both poor Black people and poor white people flash across the screen as Bond delivers these facts. This, to a degree, gives the impression of equal forms of poverty. There is no mention of slavery or any explanation of the economic system that

[37] Singh, 4.
[38] Nikhil Singh, "Racial Formation in the Age of Permanent War," in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, Eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012): 289.

necessitated this separation and the racial asymmetries that rationalized it. This abstract introduction leaves viewers without any sense of the root economic causes of segregation or poverty, especially the role race plays in structuring and justifying them.

With this abstract definition in place, Bond moves on to mention the social justice organizations and efforts underway directly before WWII. These efforts are simplified and narrowed to "Blacks who always fought against segregation…and preached Black equality." There is mention of a coalition of unions and Black organizations, such as the NAACP, but no other mention of a broader Black Popular Front. This larger coalition of Black artists, scholars, labor leaders, journalists, and politicians, many with varying connections to the American Communist Party, understood justice and redress through the root problems and conditions of race, class, and labor under a capitalist system; far more radical and expansive than just fighting "against segregation" and "keeping Blacks and whites separate". Even before WWII, this Black Popular Front saw themselves through an internationalist lens and in alignment with the anticolonial struggles happening across the globe, especially those taking place on the continent of Africa.[39]

This history is not only circumvented through a simplified definition of pre-war activism, but also further distorted by the way the experience of WWII is presented in the documentary. Bond's voiceover states: "World War II had an enormous impact on Black hopes for change. Black soldiers fought and died in a segregated US army, but they saw a larger un-segregated

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[39] For more on a Black Popular Front, its internationalist character, and the domestication of this collective, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democray* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); Sohail Daulatzai's chapter one, " "You Remember Dien Bien Phu!" Malcolm X and the Third World Rising," in *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Jacqueline Dowd-Hall, "The Long Civil Rights History"; Roderick D. Bush, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2009).

world. They saw their own power as they fought, and some were trained as officers and specialists. And they came back with a new sense of themselves". This new sense is given illustration through the participant interview that directly follows with James Hicks, who explains he was an officer in the army and was "eager to exercise authority". This larger sense of individualized, masculine, and militarized authority covers up another significant experience following the war, which was a broadened sense of internationalism for the Black Popular Front within the US. Soldiers and activists gained a more global understanding of white world supremacy while overseas and a deeper identification with anti-colonial movements. These anti-colonial movements especially gained strength following the end of WWII, as many European countries were losing their grip over their colonies. These experiences coincided with a renewed call for justice in the US, and the Black press, Black intellectuals, and organizing efforts were well aware of it. The idea that what Black soldiers experienced was a "larger un-segregated world" doesn't exactly match colonial history and the wave of independence struggles that happened after the war. This selective history obscures the origin story of the Civil Rights Movement itself, which emerged out of a split in the Black Popular Front that aligned itself with US militarism and the Cold War project of US expansionism in the post-war years. This alignment did gain Civil Rights leaders some leverage in passing important legislation, such as an anti-lynching law, but the split ultimately fractured anti-colonial solidarities and allowed the focus of Black struggle to shift away from global, white supremacist capitalism to a domesticated fight for entrance and access to the American system.

This domestication of Black struggle helps to explain the final theme examined in these first six episodes: the valorization of the federal government as a natural ally and hero and/or the ability of the movement to use the machinery of the federal government to achieve its goals. In

one way, the federal government and the Constitution is thought to have an innate purpose and moral imperative to fight for racial justice. In another way, the machinery of the US legislative and judicial systems are tested and ultimately shown to be successful as maneuvers for attaining justice. These characterizations of the federal government are repeatedly illustrated throughout *Eyes I*: the Supreme Court often referred to as a friend; King making the association between the Supreme Court, the Constitution, and God during a speech in Montgomery; the Little Rock Nine footage, showing the young students give statements to the press, praising "the federal government [who] respects and protects the rights of all its people"; narrative structures that conclude different campaigns with the government and the constitution playing a heroic role (which of course many times it did); Bond's voiceovers claiming "the Constitution had been upheld and affirmed" (in the enrollment of James Meredith to Ole Miss) or, "the federal government and the state of Alabama having been forced to protect the rights of freedom riders"; and the final climactic act in episode six of President Johnson lifting the injunction on the march to Montgomery and passing the Voting Rights Act.

Even in the one episode where the alliance or utility of the federal government comes into question—this was posed by Coretta Scott King in reference to the Albany campaign—this challenge is shored up at the end of the episode with excerpts of President Kennedy's 1963 speech announcing his proposal of a Civil Rights bill and Bond's framing of the speech. Bond's voiceover proclaims: "President Kennedy was moved to action. On June 11th, he took a stronger position than any president since Lincoln, calling Civil Rights a moral issue". Here, the federal government, the executive branch, is both "moved" by the movement in fulfilling its moral imperative. Though this was an important moment that led to civil rights legislation being passed that would impact many lives—the most impacted lives being white women—posing it as a

moral issue again elides the structural nature of racism, placing it outside the realm of economics and inside the realm of feeling and personal behavior. This is a long-used liberal strategy for addressing issues of injustice that has not only failed to bring large-scale, transformative change but has been mobilized by the Right as a counter-subversive strategy to claim moral rights to discriminate. It also lends liberal governments an antiracist veneer that can help to cover over both the continuation and support for status quo systems of governance. Ultimately, this concentration on the federal government and the movement's reliance on either its innate goodness or the ability to reveal and put to action its otherwise effective operations again illustrates the exceptionalist narrative that coerces the memory of Black struggle to work for and within the confines of the US nation-state and its liberal principles of racial justice.

Moments of Disjuncture in *Eyes I*

Though *Eyes I* readily illustrates these dominant ideological frameworks, it also offers moments of disjuncture and deviation that are in excess of the dominant story. That episode 1 includes a detailed history of the brutal murder of Emmet Till differentiates it from the standard narrative that usually begins with the *Brown vs. Board* federal court case. This choice to include Till in the opening episode, and Hampton made clear that Till's murder was an essential impetus in his wanting to ever create *EOTP*, *Eyes I* offers a vivid look into the state-sanctioned violence and killing of Black people as a central motivation for movement politics. Thus, the fight was not only about integrating or exercising rights as American citizens, or even just being attacked for attempting to exercise those rights, but to dismantle a system that sanctioned brutal violence against Black people as part of its everyday functioning.

Another example of disjuncture happens in episode 1 with the participant interview of Donie Jones, one of the few interviewees without a sub-title added to her name. Though

Hampton desired a 'peoples' history' of the Civil Rights Movement, stating that he wanted to show the "courageous, nameless individuals, locked arm-in-arm in a battle to uphold the promise of the American constitution"[40], most of those interviewed were representative leaders of the movement or news reporters, given subtitles next to their names to represent their "expert" status.[41] In the case of Jones, however, it seems she was one of the 'foot soldiers' Hampton was looking for, as she describes her experience of walking during the Montgomery Bus Boycotts. Yet, what made her interview unique was the setting and the off-screen voice of the interviewer who can be heard asking her questions. The shot, and the off-screen voice, gives the feeling that this interview was not as planned or staged as most others, and, therefore not as easily editable in post-production. The setting shows the project housing in the background that presumably Jones lives in, since she gives the interview on the sidewalk. The setting starkly differs from most interview settings in *EOTP*, and it is especially distinct from the next shot in the well-decorated living room of Virginia Durr, a white woman who tells a story of how many white women would drive their maids during the boycott. Though Jones' interview links these two shots narratively, since she also mentions white women stopping to pick up and drive the boycotting women, the stark differences between these shots gives the impression that perhaps not much progress has been made in terms of racial equality since the 1950s. The shot of Jones exposes the continuation of poverty for Black women and the shot of Durr shows the continuation of wealth and privilege for white women. This exposure is actually a rare display of the contemporary conditions in

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[40] Callie Crossley, "To Dream a Bigger Dream," *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 3 (2005): 95.
[41] For an interesting analysis on representational absences in Civil Rights memory texts and the argument that *EOTP* uses "expert witness", see Bruce R. Brasell, "From Evidentiary Presentation to Artful Re-Presentation: Media Images, Civil Rights Documentaries, and the Audiovisual Writing of History," *Journal of Film and Video* 56 (2004): 3-16. Though I agree with Brasell in many of his points in the article, I feel that his statement that *EOTP* is "not concerned with positioning the Civil Rights Movement as a grassroots phenomenon" may be somewhat overstated, and it is clear that he mostly focuses on the first six episodes in his critique.

which *Eyes I* was being made and puts a moment of pressure on the triumphalist narrative of Civil Rights.

Episode 5, "Mississippi Is this America", is one of the more disjunctive episodes in *Eyes I*, especially as it covers the assassination of Mississippi NAACP Field Secretary, Medgar Evers and the brutal murders of Freedom Summer, CORE activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Though there were the standard representational practices in place, such as Bond's voiceover in the beginning that reiterates the power of the electoral system, and, again, the ending when he states that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, though had failed to be seated at the 1964 convention, had "changed national politics" and "opened up the Democratic Party". Also, the paradigmatic narrative of good whites vs. bad whites fills the space between the murder of Evers and the murder of the three activists. This section includes some of the most racist and ignorant statements caught on tape in both the archival footage and participant interviews of "bad whites". Yet, simultaneously, this section also exhibits the longest string of archival footage and interview footage of the white students and interviewees who were clearly on the right side of history, having gone down to Mississippi for Freedom Summer. This section also includes a short segment of President Johnson signing the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Yet, even with this moral clarity and distinction about good whites and bad whites in place, and perhaps reassurance that legislative and electoral politics are still functioning, the participant interviews of Myrlie Evers, Medgar Evers' widow, and Dave Dennis, a former CORE activist, seem to be in excess of any easy liberal reading about whiteness and its foundational violence. In the re-telling of her husband's murder in the front yard, Evers describes the kind of hatred she felt for the white people in her yard at that moment. She passionately explains: "wanting so much to have a machine gun or something in my hands and just stand there and mow them all

down…I can't explain the depth of my hatred at that point" [looking off to the side of the screen, she pauses, not saying another word]. This raw exhibit of rage moves in excess of the standard good white/bad white paradigm or the obligatory non-violent philosophy, especially as she describes her desire to return this violence on a mass scale upon those white people around her, whether they pulled the trigger that killed her husband or not.

This excess happens again, first in the archival footage of Dennis's inflamed speech at Chaney's funeral and then again in his participant interview directly after. In the archival footage, Dennis is so upset during his speech that his voice seems to tremble and, at points, even screech. He describes those to which he blames for Chaney's murder as the "living dead", referring to white people in general (as he will go on to criticize Black people after), "everyone from the President down to the governor of the state of Mississippi", but also includes whites "who don't care" and those who care "but don't have the guts to do anything about it". His speech comes to a fiery peak when he proclaims that "I can rule over him as he has ruled over me for years, you see, this is our country too, we didn't ask to come here, but they brought us over here". This may be the first time slavery has even been mentioned by a Black person in *Eyes I*, and its delivery is the most dramatic. Like Evers, the rage he feels against white people, even those who sit idly by and don't pull the triggers, cannot be contained in the liberal narrative about good white people vs. bad white people; the violence of whiteness is too palatable in his speech and his tone.

Again, like Evers, there is a long pause, both after the speech and across the cut to the next shot of current day Dennis sitting in a serene natural setting. Though these 'before and after' juxtapositions are meant to signify progress, this is not exactly the case here, even with the beautiful, calm setting surrounding Dennis. The pause following the speech crosses the cut, as

the camera holds on a silent Dennis, serving to bridge the past to the present. He finally begins, explaining that he was asked by the representatives of CORE to take it easy in the speech, but once he was up front and saw Chaney's younger brother, "things just sort of snapped". He describes that what CORE wanted him to do was to be in some kind of "fantasy world…talking about how things are going to get better, and we should do it in an easy manner…non-violence and stuff like that…[however], in this country, you cannot make a man change by speaking a foreign language, he has to understand what you're talking about. This country operates, operated then and still operates, on violence. You say eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth; that's what we respect". Here, Dennis speaks truth to the hypocrisy of liberalism, especially the way in which it attempts to create a fantasy world within a system that runs on violence. What also aids in the disjunctive nature of this moment is his comment about the country's continued operations of violence—even after Civil Rights legislation and the expansion of Black political power. This is one of the rare moments in *Eyes I* where the contemporary moment is placed under such a radical critique.

Finally, other obvious deviations from the standard dominant narrative take place at the end of episodes 4 and 6. Mostly every other episode ends on a positive note, either with a campaign victory or an incremental gain, such as in episode 5, where, at least, 'the Democratic Party was opened up'. Episode 4 seems to be on this similar path, where the episode ends with Rev. Ralph Abernathy recounting his experience of the 1963 March on Washington and how proud he was that "no violence had taken place that day". He vividly describes how calm and peaceful the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial looked in the evening with the winds and sands dancing and blowing programs and trash around the yard. He ends his story: "This was the greatest day of my life". With this picture of calm painted, and the leisurely

tone of Rev. Abernathy's voice still lingering, the episode shifts with less than two minutes to finish, to sirens and footage of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing that killed four young girls. The viewer is presented with a montage of images of the rubble from the bombing, of the bodies of the victims, and of the funeral procession. Bond's narration states: "The murder of these children shook the non-violent movement to its core. As the people buried their dead, they sang 'We Shall Overcome'. But, in anger and in rage, many wondered how." The episode ends here, leaving the viewer with no sense of triumph or resolution, but with despair and a valid identification with a serious questioning of non-violent strategies.

It could be argued, however, that this short segment of tragedy, and questioning of non-violent strategy, works narratively as the pinnacle of conflict for the narrative arc of *Eyes I* in total. Episode 5, as described above, continues this constant stream of conflict and violence, and Episode 6 provides the narrative arc to triumph with the march from Selma-to-Montgomery and the passing of the Voting Rights Bill. Yet, at the very end of episode 6, after an archetypal still image of young Black men holding American flags, the screen fades to black, and returns with a still photo of martyred civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo's empty car and Bond's commentary of how she was murdered while transporting marchers back to Selma. This image is followed by a still photo of Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act, and finally a cut to images of the Watts Rebellion, the mention of a thousand people injured and thirty-four dead. The choice to end on these three images, two of which do not sustain the triumphalism delivered directly beforehand, is meant to leave viewers without resolution. Yet, because of the short length of this last segment, and its dearth of explanation, the triumphalism has a much stronger impression on the viewer, making this last 45-second segment seem almost misplaced. Its purpose may be to serve

as a cliffhanger for *Eyes II*, however. Whatever the case, it is a move that diverges from a simplistic triumphalist narrative.

Liberal Frameworks and Disjuncture in *Eyes II*

Though these diversions happen more often in *Eyes II*, the liberal framework and representational practices that guide *EOTP* as a whole are still in place, even if they cause more apparent clashes and contradictions. The most obvious feature is Bond's voiceover that continues to serve as a primary thread throughout the series to remind viewers of America's exceptionalist mythologies, no matter what the conditions of reality, and offer lessons in liberal racial discourse. This is especially significant in the first of the eight episodes in *Eyes II*, which, similar to *Eyes I*, opens with a montage that attempts to encapsulate the major themes and lessons of the series. Bond's voiceover states: "By the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement had changed the laws that divided us by race, but the struggle for unity was far from done." It goes on: "It was a time of anger and fear. It was a time when a gain for Blacks was seen as a loss for whites…It was a time when America struggled to be America for all its citizens." These opening remarks immediately establish a narrative framework that constrains the purpose of racial justice to interpersonal relations rather than to material forms of transformation. The legal justice system is to be understood as solving the problems of inequality, leaving only a problem of personal feeling between Blacks and whites (anger and fear). These assumptions about the legal system erase any questions about the inequities of the political economy and help reinforce the myth that America is always already this democratizing and benevolent force at its core ("struggling to be itself").

With this lesson of American exceptionalism resumed, and definitions of race placed within the realm of the subjective, *Eyes II* introduces two of its major themes, Black power and

Black pride. These two themes are defined and celebrated mostly as cultural phenomena that become recognizable and accepted within existing US institutions. Episode 7 begins its introduction of Black power through multiple participant interviews, both Black and white interviewees, that seemingly give the concept a well-rounded explanation. Yet, the definitions that viewers receive are: it scared white people, its goals weren't clearly articulated, it was an "empty slogan", it meant Black people and white people would now organize separately, and, most clearly, it meant Black people, indigenous to Mississippi, should be the ones who march to Jackson in the March Against Fear. In short, its definitions were solely based on interpersonal relationships between Black and white people, or Black people among themselves, and it is not connected or explained through any systemic or material change. In the last few minutes of the episode, Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture), chairman of SNCC[42], is shown in a short, archival segment, to offer some further explanation of Black power as: "strength and unity amongst each other from Watts to Harlem, where we won't ever feel afraid". Though Carmichael's statement importantly announces "strength and unity" as essential components of Black power, it continues to be characterized in terms of feelings and not in terms of structures or systems. Finally, the episode lands on a definition of Black power that then carries into other episodes and deeply shapes the ways Black pride can be understood. Archival footage of Floyd McKissick supplies this definition at the very end of the episode, where he states: "And let 1966 be the year that we decided that we would develop our own culture, that we would be proud of being Black people. That we would no longer accept the use of the word "negro", but we would become mature, we would regard ourselves as Black men in America." With these last two words, the documentary cuts to the last image of the episode of a low-angle shot of a Black man

[42] SNCC is the acronym for the Black freedom organization Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

holding an American flag; a quintessential Hampton move. The shot makes him tower over the viewer, giving a visual illustration of what Black power is meant to signify: pride, masculine strength, and a strong grip on the American flag and its institutions. McKissick comments here are deeply significant, as this shift in nomenclature would signify reclamation of one's identity from a history of white supremacist domination. Yet, this reclamation is quickly paired, or re-attached, to the US nationalist project, which helps to further distort the hypocrisy of a Black power that grips to a system that it is also rejecting. This is the image of Black power that is necessarily portrayed in *EOTP*, however, one that is accepted, recognized, and ultimately absorbed within the state, not one that can play an antagonistic role against it.

The concept of Black power is picked up in episode 9 but is quickly reformulated to lessen the Blackness in Black power and give it a more colorblind and Americanized veneer. The episode even drops the word Black from power, simply titling the program *Power! (1967-1968)*. In the opening of the episode, Bond's voiceover gives the viewer a declarative reminder: "The call for [Black] power challenged the established relationships between Blacks and whites in America." This opening definition again places Black power back into the realm of interpersonal relationships between Black and white people and domesticates Black power within the confines of US nationalism. The program goes on to show different strategies of attaining power through the election of Carl Stokes as mayor in Cleveland, through radical organizing in the Black Panther Party [this will be covered in detail in chapter three], and through the establishment of a community school board in the Oceanhill-Brownsville neighborhood in New York City. In this last segment on the community school board, Black power is finally devalued and dismissed as community leader Dolores Torres's participant interview and Bond's voiceover are given the last

word on the concept. Less than one minute before the end, serving as a kind wrap up for the episode on 'power', Dolores Torres remarks:

> There was a lot of people yelling Black power, Black power, Power to the People. Power to the People I liked, because, I think that what we were going through, any poor neighborhood, regardless of the ethnic make-up, was going through the same thing. I liked power to the people. People really needed to have some power, and we really needed, as a school board, to have power.

This statement does not comprehensively reflect the coverage of the Oceanhill-Brownsville struggle in the episode, which illustrated the specific ways in which the community board brought in Black teachers and teachers of color and exposed the students to African, Africa Diasporic, and Third World histories and knowledge that were instituted to help decolonize their education. This statement, however, devalues Black power for a more colorblind concept of Power to the People, which is meant to denote, as it is contextualized here, that all poor people experience oppression in the same way and that Black experiences should not be singled out. As it is stated here, these two concepts of power cannot be mutually embraced or understood, but instead have a seemingly antagonistic relationship, and it is Black power that needs to be dismissed.

Bond's final voiceover confirms this, as his statement directly follows Torres's, giving it the stamp of approval. Bond states: "It was 1968, communities across America, each choosing different paths, organized in the struggle for power. Power to the People was a promise as old as the nation. Now new voices demanded that the promise be fulfilled". In the antagonism set up by Torres, Bond chooses Power to the People, and Black power is dropped. This dismissal of the term is not exclusive to this episode, as it is no longer used or explored again in the rest of the series. As a liberal framework requires, Black power must give way to this more colorblind notion of power, especially if it is going to fit within the exceptionalist ideologies that Bond's

voiceover brings back into bear. Bond's claim that Power to the People is as old as the nation reiterates mythologies about America's time-honored, nationalist ideals of a peoples' republic, again whitewashing the material histories of white male supremacist power and the foundational violence against Indigenous populations, Africans and African-descended populations, and exploited peoples from all continents. This violence is the promise that is as old as the nation. But, as the commentary points out, it is the inclusion, however selective and precarious, of "new voices" that rejuvenates the ideological weaponry that works to cover over these histories of violence that continue to underwrite the US national project.

As Black power is dismissed for a more acceptable, Americanized, colorblind formation of power, Black pride moves to the forefront. Black pride is similarly made to be absorbed into the US nationalist project as was Black power, but it is done through a transformation of its definition to individualized self-respect, an emphasis on cultural identity, and a detachment from revolutionary forms of structural transformation; all allowing the concept to become acceptable and recognizable within the terms of US liberalism. This conceptualization of Black pride is presented most clearly in episode 11, as Tony Gittens, a former student at Howard University, explains it in his participant interview: "The whole attitude of the Civil Rights Movement was shifting, and Howard wasn't shifting with it. The attitude was one of integration and assimilation, and the whole movement was beginning to shift to one of self-identity and self-empowerment." Though this segment on the protests at Howard in 1968 presents, at points, a more expansive vision for Black pride and power, that include occupying the administration office and demanding there be no military training at the university, this theme of self-identity, self-love, and self-expression continue to dominate the participant interviews, which carry with

them the power of hindsight and the authority to reshape what appears in the footage surrounding them.

This is not the case with one particular participant interview of activist/artist Harry Belafonte in episode 11, yet this interview causes a serious clash because of all the liberal framing surrounding it. Belafonte's interview is focused on Muhammad Ali, who serves as the canonical figure of Black pride in both episode 11 and, overall, in *Eyes II*. The segment on Ali is first framed by one of Bond's opening voiceovers: "This struggle for Black pride was galvanized by the national Civil Rights Movement. Now Black Americans began to demand respect on their own terms. Among them was Cassius Marcellus Clay." Again, Black pride is narrowly conceptualized in terms of individualized respect from the US nation-state rather than a cultural shift away from it. This necessary relationship to US institutions is apparent in the way Ali's story is covered, as his anti-imperialist stance is completely left out of the story. He is shown making a statement that "the real enemies of my people are right here, not in Vietnam", and Bond's voiceover states that Ali "requested deferment as a minister of Islam and a conscientious objector." Yet, no footage included portrays his succinct critique of US imperialism, his refusal "to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over".[43] Instead, the segment focuses more on the impact of his decision on his career as a boxer and the personalized gains he received from his decision, which are ostensibly encapsulated in the last words Ali will have in the episode: "I have gained a peace of mind. I have gained a piece of heart". What is ironic, however, is he goes on immediately after this statement to say how he has also gained "respect worldwide" and he does not care to gain the respect of US warmongers. This part of his speech was not only left out of

[43] Quoted in Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 147.

the documentary, but it was twisted upside down. Bond's voiceover goes on to end the segment on Ali, stating: "Muhammad Ali had forced America to recognize him on his own terms." Here, Ali's form of Black pride is domesticated and used to reshape and enlighten America to be more tolerant and to recognize him as an individual. The assumption, then, is that America is now less racist and living up to its moral creed because Ali forced its recognition. Yet, this recognition is actually just another form of absorption within US exceptionalist ideology, since the internationalist, anti-imperialist pieces of Ali have been selectively removed in the editing process.

There is an important clash however that comes from Belafonte's participant interview. The interview is couched between Ali's statement of gaining peace of mind and heart and Bond's final voiceover of America's recognition. Belafonte is shot in a medium close-up in a quiet living room space that is well lit but muted in soft blues and greys. The viewer is drawn in, able to listen closely and feel close to the dramatic and moving story-telling style Belafonte is famous for. He states:

> [Ali] was courageous. He put his class issues on the line. He didn't care about money. He didn't care about the white man's success and things you aspire to. He brought America to its most wonderful and most naked moment. I will not play your game. I will not kill in your behalf. You are immoral, unjust, and I stand here to testify, do with me what you will. And he was terribly, terribly powerful.

With Belafonte's gripping dialogue and delivery, viewers are given a different experience of where Ali's power (or pride) resides, and it was not about making America recognize him, but about his defiance against US empire. There is a fleeting mention of an "unjust war" in the episode elsewhere, but here the entity that is being called out as unjust is America itself. This is not to say that pieces of Belafonte's interview are not also absorbable within an American redemption narrative, 'bringing America to its most beautiful moment', but the tone and raw

violence displayed in Belafonte's statement provides a brief moment of disjuncture, especially as it collides with the very neutralized and domesticated commentary of Bond's voiceover that follows it.

Later in this episode, however, the liberal message dominates with the coverage of the 1972 Black National Convention, which introduces the final and more prominent liberal trope of *Eyes II*: the valorization of Black electoral politics. This is not to say that all electoral politics need to be characterized as liberal, but the ways in which they are presented here, they work especially to buttress exceptionalist mythologies about the American system and uphold Black electoral politics as the high and end point of the movement. In her dissertation on *EOTP*, Jennifer Asenas comes to the following conclusions: "The trajectory of the documentary projects a version of the movement that heralds the usurpation of the movement into electoral politics, [and]…[never] questioning the move to electoral politics, the documentary presents the absorption of the movement into mainstream politics as a natural progression".[44] This is visually illustrated in the opening montage of episode 7, where the collage of images culminates with Jesse Jackson's call for "nation time". Though "nation time" was meant to signify on the concept of Black Nationalism and was inspired by the national independence struggles across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it is here consumed into a picture of US nationalism. In Bond's voiceover, mentioned earlier in the chapter, he introduces the series, as a time "of anger and fear…where a gain for Blacks was sometimes seen as a loss for whites". This leads to the upswing in his commentary and the end of the montage, where he adds: "It was also a time for triumph. A time when victory blurred the color-line. A time, once again, when America struggled to be America for all of its citizens." These last statements are paired with a montage

[44] Asenas, *The Past as Rhetorical Resource*, 9, 91.

of images of electoral victories. The commentary ends on Jesse Jackson at the 1972 convention, exclaiming: “When we come together, what time is it? When we respect each other, what time is it? When we get ourselves confident, what time is it?” The crowd chants back: “Its nation time; its nation time”. An American flag that covers the entire screen then visually engulfs this call for “nation time”; a pattern repeated at the end of each title card at the beginning of each episode. In this short montage, both frameworks are set in place early in *Eyes II*. The triumph of the series is illustrated as electoral victories, and the efforts of Black electoral politics are completely absorbed within mainstream America, both literally and figuratively. This opening montage even cut out the last phrase of Jackson’s speech to allow this absorption. Jackson, in actuality, continued: “when we form our own political party, what time is it?” Though Jackson’s call was made specifically to Black people, the montage transforms this call to be for the US nation, thus, signifying that through American nationalism, not Black nationalism, Black people can find and attain their liberation.

In episode 11, however, the specificity of the convention is made clearer, as one of the primary goals was to create an independent Black political party [the line that was left out of Jackson’s speech in the montage]. The theme of the convention, as Bond’s voiceover tells us, was “unity without uniformity”. As many participant interviews confirm, the terms “consensus” and “unity” often come up and most of these spokespersons are businessmen and male politicians, shot in suits and settings that connote prestige and authority. In these participant interviews, there is no challenge or critical analysis as to the outcome of the convention, except a celebration at the end by both Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary Indiana, and Bond, who confirms the explosive numbers of Black men who ran for office and were elected. The idea of political independence, however, is dropped, and there is a natural assumption that the absorption of these

Black elected leaders is natural and good. This exemplifies the ways in which racial unity and solidarity were used to advance an elite group of Black politicians and businessmen into the American power structure. As scholar Asad Haider explains in his study of Black nationalism:

> The parallel institutions [Black] nationalism had mobilized a grassroots base to build were now being incorporated into the state itself, facilitated by a black political leadership that used nationalism to its advantage…The lingering ideologies of racial unity left over from the Black Power movement rationalized the top-down control of the black elite, which worked to obscure class differences as it secured its own entry into the mainstream.[45]

This entry is what is left unquestioned in this episode and *Eyes II* overall, as if this 'absorption was just a natural progression'. What this also naturalizes then is the abandonment of a majority of Black people to the worsening life conditions of racial capitalism directly following this convention and its concomitant expansion of Black, elite political power.

The series ends, before its conclusive montage, on the election of Harold Washington with the song "Celebrate Good Times" in the background. Yet, before this celebratory ending there are important moments of disjuncture that happen, one located in this last episode, prior to the Washington celebration. The last episode's very opening juxtaposes Bond's commentary with footage that exposes the continuation of violence in the US, creating a real disconnection between the liberal ideology stated in the voiceover and what is otherwise seen and heard on screen. Bond begins: "Twenty-five years after the Civil Rights Movement began, the American Dream was once again on trial." Images of protest signs with messages about police violence and murder fill the screen. It cuts immediately to a protester who states: "They're asking for the Black peoples to be calm, because this time we can't take this sitting down. We must take to the streets again like we did in the sixties." Then a cut to another protestor: "I wanted to believe in

[45] Asad Haidar, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2018): 75, 76.

the America system, but no more, never again." All the while protest chants and police radios are heard in the background, while a shot of burning cars and burning buildings enter the screen. With this footage still being shown, Bond's voiceover picks back up: "Once again, the nation stood at a racial crossroads. Would America move closer to its promise of equal opportunity and equal justice? Or would it back away?" The voiceover clashes with the images, and the idea of some innate promise seems delusional or, at the very least, falls flat next to the fiery images and clear rage of the protestors. The level of transparency in this disjuncture does not fit the normal pattern of *EOTP* as a whole, making it implausible that this clash was intended.

Yet, the episode's content and structure continue to create these kinds of clashes. The images of protest seen in the opening sequence come from the 1980 murder of Arthur McDuffie in Miami, Florida. Directly before viewers learn about McDuffie, however, there is footage of Sammy Davis Jr. visiting Miami to give a motivational speech to a group of high school students. He states: "It's no longer like, well, 'I'm colored and I ain't gonna make it and all that. It ain't like that no more…and all the Civil Rights workers will have died in vain…if, once the doors are open, no one is prepared for it." This footage acts as the framing bracket for McDuffie's story, as Bond's voiceover tells us "[McDuffie] was ready to meet this challenge". We learn that McDuffie was a US marine, a successful business executive, and "strove for nothing but the top". Then, we subsequently learn the story of his horrific beating and murder by police, and the subsequent acquittal of those police officers. With this narrative structure and editing, Davis Jr.'s comments are made a mockery. As Bond's voiceover stated, McDuffie met Davis Jr.'s challenge, but it did not matter. During the coverage of this story, and the short segment on Libertyville gentrification before it, viewers are shown images of masses of poor Black people, especially those who came out in protest and rebellion after the McDuffie trial.

These images and the story of McDuffie put all the liberal tropes into question or cause them instability. In order to manage this instability, the program extends its coverage of the electoral race of Washington in Chicago, giving it an additional ten minutes in comparison to the conventional twenty-minute segment structure that prevails throughout the series. This, overall, does not smooth over the clash between the Miami and Chicago segments, however.

Other moments of disjuncture happen in *Eyes II*, especially in relationship to *Eyes I*. Two examples would be the loss, or the lack of readability, of the narrative of good vs. bad white people, and, also, King's resistance to the war in Vietnam and his concentration on economic justice. These examples divert the second half of *EOTP* from its easy containment within the dominant Civil Rights narrative and also its easy identification and clarity with the trope of 'good white people'. In this latter case, poor and working-class white people in Northern cities are presented in *Eyes II* that don't clearly place them in the evil category of 'bad white', like a Bull Connor, but also don't present them as enlightened, antiracist white people. For example, in Boston, during the court-ordered bussing between South Boston and Roxbury, white mothers are shown protesting against their children being bussed to attend less-resourced schools; their protests do not clearly relate to outward forms of racial discrimination established in *Eyes I*. Or, in the Bakke case, presented in episode 13, no outward acts of racist behavior appear on screen when Bakke takes UC Davis to the Supreme Court for allegedly discriminating against him because of his race. Yet, audience members are made to understand these measures are harmful and unfair for Black people and people of color. It is clear according to the documentary's argument that these white people are not on the right side of history or are ignorant of the historical harms of, say, school segregation. Therefore, white viewers have less opportunity to scapegoat or disavow the violence of whiteness, especially in its more normative forms. There

also are fewer white activists involved in organizing for Black liberation, so finding a strong white ally to identify with is more difficult. There are white spokespersons throughout *Eyes II*, but they are usually government officials or news reporters. The more central or equal role of white people as heroic agents in the movement, as seen in *Eyes I*, is no longer the case. All of these changes in *Eyes II* make it difficult to uphold the colorblind ideology that made white people feel comfortable and able to disavow the racial advantages of whiteness. Yet, even with this disjuncture, no viewer is really provided with a strong analysis of the role of racial animus and inequity in upholding the system of austerity and state violence that lay at the root of the problems shown on screen.

The closest one gets to this analysis is in episode 10, where King comes out against the war in Vietnam and makes the connection between economic injustice and war. This episode clearly falls outside of the dominant Civil Rights narrative, which attempts to erase economics from Black liberation history. The episode opens with a short clip on King explaining how the government spends three hundred and twenty thousand dollars on each enemy killed in Vietnam and only fifty-three dollars on those classified as poor within the US. Bond's voiceover aids in emphasizing his point: "War overseas, poverty at home. For Martin Luther King, the issues were inseparable". The episode goes on to show clips from King's speeches on Vietnam and to include his work on both the Poor People's Campaign and his support for the sanitation workers' strike in Memphis, Tennessee. In a speech given for the Poor People's Campaign, King is shown stating, "It didn't cost the nation one penny to integrate lunch counters…[or] to guarantee the right to vote. But now we are dealing with issues that cannot be solved without the nation spending billions of dollars and undergoing a radical redistribution of economic power." This clip and the campaigns on poverty and labor are radically different from the non-economic,

sanitized King that is presented in the dominant narrative in *Eyes I*. They expose the more radical direction in which King was moving, especially in his questioning and critique of the economic system of capitalism that was so unfair in the ways wealth is distributed. These are extremely important excesses in *EOTP*, especially in the early portion of the episode that connects economics to the war in Vietnam. It is understood that money spent abroad is money that is unavailable for people at home, and the disparity in the numbers exposes where the priorities lie.

Yet, the piece that continues to be missing is the very precise anti-imperialist critique so clearly laid out in King's speeches that would give viewers an even clearer understanding of why the priorities are set the way they are and the relationships between racism, poverty, militarism, and US imperialist violence. The clips that are shown of King only present him coming out against the war ["I ain't gonna study war no more" in *Why I am Opposed to the War in Vietnam*], his refusal to be silent [in *Beyond Vietnam*], and the cost of war in comparison to what is spent on the War on Poverty programs. His most famous lines from the *Beyond Vietnam* speech, especially, are left out, such as his indictment of the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government", or the "triple evils of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism". He explains in these speeches the role of the US in helping to recolonize the Vietnamese and the profit motive in continuing military campaigns overseas. Yet, this critique of global capitalism and militarism are not included, and what is seen is only a domestic critique that focuses on the disparity of spending. The anti-imperialist critique and analysis, the violence of US foreign wars and policies, and the Third World solidarities explicit in King's speeches move too far outside the liberal framework to be seen on screen.

The final example of a disjuncture between the liberal framing of *EOTP*, as a whole, and what is shown on screen happens in episode 12, which covers the Attica prison rebellion. The

narrative structure of the episode is split in half, the first half covering the Chicago Black Panthers and the second covering the Attica rebellion in 1971. The first half will be closely analyzed in chapter three, but, overall, the story on the Panthers is well managed within a liberal framework, though moments of disjuncture arise in the episode's discussion of FBI corruption. In the second half, however, the breaks and clashes are much more apparent and deeply and emotionally disruptive. This half begins with a short interview featuring Angela Davis, a figure Hampton had refused to include in *Eyes I*, speaking on the prison industrial complex. She states: "We had talked about police brutality. The Black Panther Party had talked about the police as an occupying force in the community. But we had not really understood the extent to which the whole criminal justice system, the police, the courts, the prison system, is very much intertwined with the economic oppression of Black people." Though there is not a deeper engagement with this statement, other than the prisons were disproportionately filled with poor Black and Brown men, this commentary is meant to frame the story on Attica and place this story within a larger complex of institutions that are connected. Though we get no explanation of how the courts are involved in this complex of repression or what it is about the economic system that requires this complex and the quarantining of mass amounts of Black and Brown men [and soon to be women], we are at least meant to connect police brutality to the brutalities of prison life; they are, at the least, not meant to be understood in isolation.

The story of the rebellion unfolds with the Hampton method, where an equal amount of Black and white participant interviews are included, all seemingly in alignment with the facts of the horrific living conditions in the prison and the orderly composure and organization of the prisoners and prisoner negotiators. These participant interviews are paired with images of prisoners sitting at the negotiating table with the commissioner and providing security for him

and news reporters as they enter and exit the prison yard. Viewers also see prisoners giving impassioned speeches about the inhumanity they experience and their refusal to live "as beasts" and are shown working together to build a small camp out in the yard. Here, viewers are clearly meant to align and identify with the hope and the freedom felt by the inmates. They are especially guided through the participant interview of Frank "Big Man" Smith, a former inmate involved in the rebellion, who describes his feelings of liberation in this moment. Moreover, viewers are also exposed to footage of police officers just outside the prison making racist remarks about the prisoners, furthering their support and understanding for the rebellion.

This affect of hope and liberation is quickly turned upside down as viewers are confronted with an onslaught of images of the massacre that ensued. For twenty seconds straight, viewers see prisoners being mowed down and they hear a non-stop, rapid succession of shots being fired. Directly after, there are images of prisoners, first crawling in the mud and then a still shot of lines of naked men with their hands on their heads, clearly calling up echoes of images of slavery or holocaust victims. Directly following these images, Smith is shown with tears falling down his face, as he describes the torture that followed the assault:

> It was very, very barbaric; very, very cruel, you know…I really feel it, what they did. They ripped our clothes off. They made us crawl on the ground like we were animals. They snatched me, they lay me on the table, and they beat me in my testicles, and they burned me with cigarettes, and they dropped hot shells on me. And, they put a football up under my throat, and kept telling me if it dropped, they was going to kill me. And I really felt, that after seeing so many people shot, for no apparent reason, that they were really going to do this.

Following these gruesome details of torture, viewers learn that thirty-seven men died in the massacre and that ten of them were the prison guard hostages, all killed by the gunshot wounds from state troopers and prison guards.

This affective shift from hope to horror to absurdity leaves the episode without the possibility for recovery or containment within a liberal framework. Though, there is a structure in place that attempts to do so. Bond's voiceover ends the episode, as it does most episodes, stating: "In a country troubled by unrest, call for law and order remained popular. But many wondered, was the nation well served by law enforcement used to silence voices of dissent? And was America willing to maintain order, no matter what the cost?" Bond's familiar matter-of-fact tone is meant to bring in stability and clarity with its more neutral comments on "silencing voices" and "maintaining order". The voiceover and its familiar tone are also meant to remind viewers of America's promises of freedom, even if not yet achieved and under trial. Yet, with what viewers just experienced, this tone feels completely out of place, and its lessons of American exceptionalism, untenable. The episode seems to have nothing to do with silencing voices of dissent, but rather murder [in the case of Fred Hampton, Chicago Chairman of the Black Panther Party] and massacre and torture [in the case of Attica]. It is here exposed, purposefully or not, that "maintaining order" and "silencing" means murder and massacre sanctioned by the state. The archival footage and the participant interviews speak in excess of the dominant framing devices and, here, even work to counter them and expose their hypocrisies.

Conclusion and Spreading America's Promise to the World

These counter-meanings or counter-memories help to break the stranglehold of the dominant Civil Rights narrative in *EOTP*, and they become most apparent in these moments of clash and contradiction with the liberal framing devices that guide the documentary. These moments of disjuncture illustrate that *EOTP* is a complex and nuanced media text that cannot be fully captured or encapsulated by this dominant, hegemonic narrative. Yet, it is key to see how these moments contend with the liberal framing and what elements are put in place to try to

refashion them to fit into an overall story of American progress and exceptionalism. Many of these moments or counter-memories in *EOTP* encompass histories that challenged US mythologies and racial liberalism in their own historical present. It is essential to ask why they are even folded into this dominant narrative history and what is at stake in their envelopment. The rest of this dissertation is dedicated to these questions and to the memories of Black radicals as they are portrayed in *EOTP* and other popular media texts in the 1990s. Yet, a brief analysis of the conclusive segment of *EOTP* will shed light on these essential questions, as the series ends on an American exceptionalist note, and may point to some of the reasons why re-writing Black radical memory is key to upholding current hegemonic conditions.

In the conclusive segment, the overall dominant Civil Rights narrative is quickly rehashed and highlighted and then mobilized to make much larger claims on its universal meaning and influence for the world. Bond's voiceover definitively states: "In the 1970s and 80s, the struggle continued, bringing America closer to the promises it made. Despite the resistance, the movement could not be stopped." The Black Freedom Struggle is definitively mobilized again, as it is overall in *EOTP*, to make this claim on America's innate promise of liberation that is always already there waiting to be seized. If Bond's voiceover had questioned this promise in earlier episodes, the challenge is answered here through this teleological thrust towards progress. And progress is shown next through the example of Unita Blackwell, the first African American woman mayor in Mississippi, who describes the change over time from when she and others in the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party were denied a seat in 1964 to her invitation to speak at the DNC in 1984. She states: "It's been a long haul, but I have come from the outside, to the inside, and now to the podium." As the example of progress, the series chooses to highlight the goals of integration and representation within US institutions and the shift from social movement

politics to electoral politics, serving as proof of the democratic functioning of the electoral system and electoral politics as the horizon for racial equality.

With these tropes in place, a dialogue motif about the universality of these ideas and the universalism of the movement for the world comes into operation. Bond begins: "On their journey to freedom, they won battles that became universal in their meaning." The immediate example following is of King, giving a speech: "The decision rendered by the Supreme Court yesterday, it was a victory. It wasn't merely a victory for 16 million Negroes in America, that was a victory for justice." The motif is quickly picked up again in a clip of Malcolm X stating: "Our problem is not an American problem, it's a human problem. It's not a Negro problem, it's a problem of humanity. It's not a problem of civil rights, but a problem of human rights." Bond's voiceover steps back in: "In less than two generations, the movement made a beautiful beginning and sent a message to the world." And, finally, through a participant interview with law professor Eleanor Holmes Norton: "When the Civil Rights Movement is over and no longer needed, and we ask ourselves what did it mean, seems to me it will have meant something universal, it meant something beyond Chicago, Detroit, and Mississippi…what gives our movement its majesty, is the example it set throughout the world for people of color, and for any people who were in any way oppressed and found in that example a reason to hope and strive for a different life." All while this motif circulates, a montage of struggles from across the world flash on the screen.

In this short, three-minute sequence, the promises of America are extended beyond the US to have universal meanings for the world. In short, the struggles in the US are meant to reveal certain universal truths about America that serve as exemplar for other world struggles. Taking into account the historical context of the moment, where the Cold War was ending, the Berlin

Wall had come down, and the US was undergoing, as Daulatzai explains it: "a euphoric triumphalism…assum[ing] the position of lone superpower now that democracy and capitalism had "won"".[46] In this geopolitical context, the Black Freedom Struggle becomes a key example to prove the US triumphalist narrative, a 'cleansing' of the racial taint, as Singh puts it, essential in ratifying this expansion of US global power and covering over (or justifying) the violence it has forged across the globe. US foreign policy is completely omitted from the picture, and the assumption of America's moral rightness as "leader of the free world" is set in place. The guiding trope of American exceptionalism is not only meant to control populations domestically, by obscuring the operations of race in rationalizing the continued forms of violence and domination in the US, especially while "a population of abandoned, disposable, and quarantine [racialized] subjects increase in numbers".[47] It serves as a reigning ideology for US global expansion and domination, as it has since World War II. Through the story *EOTP* tells, the US nation-state, its political, economic, and social institutions, become the horizon for antiracist struggle, as it has been shown these institutions can and have achieved racial justice for Black people in the US.

What is erased from possibility in this story is the link between Black liberation in the US and struggles across the globe fighting the US war machine and US-led global capitalism. The example of struggle and liberation, as it is conceived here, is an American example that then becomes universal for others to follow. It domesticates and contains Black liberation within a US nationalist framework, but then uses Blackness or Black liberation as a symbol of American democracy to be shown to the world. It cannot be conceived as an example of solidarity in the

[46] Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 149.
[47] Singh, "Racial Formation in the Age of Permanent War", 284.

struggle against US imperialism and neoliberalism, though there are figures, organizations, and actions in the movement that could aid in this conception. Malcolm X is a key figure in helping to revive this kind of revolutionary memory, but here he is folded right into a sequence of images and is selectively spliced into order to fit into and aid in propagating the hegemonic ideology of American exceptionalism. If only the editors had expanded this clip by a few seconds, this is what viewers would have heard Malcolm say:

> My purpose here is to remind the African Heads of State that there are twenty-two million of us in America who are also of African descent, and to remind them, also, that we are the victims of America's colonialism or American imperialism and that our problem is not an American problem, it is a human problem. It is not a Negro problem, but a human problem. It is not a problem of Civil Rights, but of Human Rights.

Malcolm's words were not meant to attest to the universality of American values or the universal truths revealed through the domestic struggle for civil rights. What is universal, as Malcolm informs us, is the struggle against white world supremacy as it shifts from European imperialism to US imperialism and from a more outward ideology of white supremacy to an ideology that works to obscure the work of racialization: a U.S. sanctioned, racial liberalism. As will be shown in the next chapter, even this clip that calls out American imperialism and calls for a Pan-Africanist, Black Internationalist solidarity, has to be re-shaped and refashioned, especially if it is to be managed within the liberal framework of *EOTP*. The details of this reshaping are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how popular television documentaries, from the early to mid-1990s, depoliticize the radical memory of Malcolm X. My historical and textual analyses trace visual and rhetorical devices used to refashion Malcolm X's memory to fit within a liberal ideology of American politics and history. The chapter illustrates ways in which the memory of Malcolm X is constrained within liberal discourses that dull any radical critique of the US, elide any challenge to racial capitalism, and disable the ability to see racial justice as a materially transformative endeavor.

The resurgence of Malcolm's memory in the 1990s emerged across multiple venues and media outlets, from mainstream network television, to public broadcasting, to art house film, to hip-hop culture, to academia, to mainstream art exhibition, to street protest. This plethora of cultural production signals the vitality of Malcolm's image for this historical moment and the wider contestation over the meaning and utility of his message. It is the job of this chapter to focus in, and counter-read, television documentaries produced and distributed by dominant media outlets (CBS, ABC, PBS), as they existed among this larger field of cultural production and in the midst of the growing inequality and heightened contradictions in American society. The goal is to understand and illustrate the ideological patterns they share, and the filmic strategies they use, to depoliticize Malcolm's radicalism and to obscure the larger, historical connections between racial injustice and the political economy.

Cultural Context:

The 1990s saw an eruption of interest and production in the history and memory of Malcolm X. This resurgence could be seen in television programming, VHS documentaries, and narrative filmmaking, most notably in Spike Lee's 1992 film *Malcolm X*. It also spread to academia with a proliferation of critical studies, international conferences, and even course guides for primary and secondary education programs.[1] Malcolm X's autobiography, told by author Alex Haley, saw a three hundred percent increase in sales between the years 1988 and 1991 and a nine-fold increase in Pathfinder publications of Malcolm X's speeches.[2] Malcolm's memory inspired major art exhibitions and an expansive market of consumer products, most famously captured in the X-cap.[3]

This proliferation in the 1990s, however, was preceded by a reclamation of Malcolm's memory in hip-hop culture that held much closer to its origins in Black Liberation history, using Malcolm's image and message to speak to, and help understand, the precarious and contradictory conditions many Black youth lived. In the late 1980s, hip-hop artists were sampling Malcolm's iconic phrases and using archival footage and still photographs in their music videos and album covers. KRS-One's 1988 cover art for their album *By All Means Necessary* referenced an iconic image of Malcolm X looking out his window with a rifle in hand. The image was meant to signify KRS-One's identification with revolutionaries, such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, and the album addressed similar issues to the teachings of Malcolm X—Kris Parker

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[1] A sample of titles of these critical studies, conferences, and education programs follow. Michael Eric Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X*; Ed. Joe Wood, *Malcolm X in Our Own Image*; Benjamin Karim, *Remembering Malcolm X: The Final Speeches*; Rosemary Mealy, *Fidel & Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting*; David Gallen, *Malcolm X As They Knew Him*; Bernard Aquina Doctor, *Malcolm X For Beginners*; Editor Teresa Perry, *Teaching Malcolm X*. Conferences: Malcolm X: 1991 "Radical Tradition and a Legacy of Struggle", Dec 14-16, 1991, Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York City; Malcolm X Speaks in the 90s, May 22-24, 1990, Havana Cuba.
[2] David Ansen, "The Battle for Malcolm X," *Newsweek*, August 26, 1991, 52.
[3] For an expansive account of Malcolm X memorabilia and cultural production in the 90s see Graeme Abernethy's chapter "From Hollywood to Hip-Hop (1980 to the Present)," in *The Iconography of Malcolm X*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

would declare himself a "teacha"—teachings that focused on structural racism, police brutality, the hypocrisy of violence in America, and American militarism.[4] Lakim Shabazz's 1989 song *Black is Back* sampled Malcolm's phrase "Concerning the difference between the Black Revolution and the Negro Revolution", signaling Shabazz's alignment with and reclamation of Malcolm's expanded definition of Blackness and Black struggle that moved outside a liberal, American nationalism to align more with a radical, Muslim, Black internationalism. In Gang Starr's 1989 music video *Manifest*, Guru more fully inhabits the figure of Malcolm X, fashioning himself in his likeness and delivering his lyrics behind a podium to an audience that simulates a crowd of political followers. His song and video reclaim the political platform and teaching of Malcolm X, aligning the space of the music video with the space of political protest. In 1991, Public Enemy featured both archival moving images and still images of Malcolm X in their music video *Shut'em Down*, appealing to Malcolm's Black Nationalist philosophy for economic self-determination and threatening to 'shut down' corporations exploiting poor Black communities.[5]

These artists were part of a larger movement in hip-hop culture that, according to radical cultural scholar Sohail Daulatzai, "sought to reclaim a history of Black Radicalism and internationalism in the context of the criminalization of Blackness, mass incarceration, and what [he has] called the rise of the carceral imagination in the United States from the 1970s into the twenty-first century".[6] This carceral imagination describes the shifting role of state power and

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[4] See interview with KRS-One, "KRS-One Recalls Making of Criminal Minded," *MTV News Archives*, August 27, 2010, accessed on January 3, 2017, http://www.mtv.com/news/1646650/krs-one-recalls-making-of-criminal-minded/.
[5] For a more in depth analysis of the influence of Malcolm X on hip-hop culture, see Sohail Daulatzai's chapter "Return of the Mecca: Public Enemies, Reaganism, and the Birth of Hip-Hop," in *Black Star Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
[6] Daulatzai, *Black Star Crescent Moon*, 109.

state funds away from social protections and programs to expanding budgets for policing and prison development. This shift was the necessary corollary to deindustrialization, structural unemployment, and neoliberal austerity policies. By the late 1980s, many inner-city neighborhoods were decimated, and many of these hip-hop artists experienced and spoke truth to power to the overwhelming violence generated by "the neoliberal carceral state".[7] Malcolm X provided a history, a grammar, and an image to address and combat US state power and to understand the position and place of Black youth within the longer history of Black struggle.

These radicalized reclamations of Malcolm in the era of 'golden age' hip-hop were met with, culminated in, and, in many ways, were transformed by the epic phenomenon of Lee's Hollywood film *Malcolm X*. Lee's film seemed to capture (and capitalize on) the spirit of this revitalization and turned out a three-hour, high budget, event film dedicated to a figure many felt Hollywood would never dare to touch. The film was received with a mix of accolades, ambiguity, and animosity. This mixed reception had as much to do with the portrayal of Malcolm X's life as it did with the film's controversial production history, specifically Lee's refusal to compromise with Warner Brothers' demands to shorten the film, the film's high profile Black funders, such as Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, and Janet Jackson, and Lee's marketing campaign that spun into a cottage industry of Malcolm X products. *USA Today* proclaimed the film "Smashing. An event movie that lives up to the event!" and the *New York Times* called it "ambitious, tough, [a] seriously considered biographical film".[8] Long-time activist, poet, playwright, and revolutionary, Amiri Baraka was inclined to classify Lee's film as

[7] For recent analysis on the history and expansion of the carceral state, see Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
[8] Both reviews quoted in Thomas Doherty, "Malcolm X: In Print, On Screen," *Biography* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 39.

part of “a retrograde trend” and referred to Lee himself as a Hollywood hustler.[9] In his scathing essay in Joe Wood’s edited collection *Malcolm X: In Our Image*, Baraka describes Lee’s use of Malcolm as “obvious and painful”, revealing him as “the apologist for [the] sector of the Black petty bourgeoisie that holds Black life a caricature, Black struggle a ridiculous hypocrisy, whose incomes “prove” this, whose “Blackness” is only a job description”.[10] In the end, he accuses Lee of co-opting the history of Black Liberation for his own financial gain and branding it to fit neatly within the imperial logic of US global capitalism.

Though Baraka’s critique may not fully attend to the complexity of negotiated and oppositional readings of the film—and the never smooth cooptation of a figure like Malcolm X—its underlying logic points to the centrality of Blackness and Black Liberation history in the construction of an American liberal politics. Lee’s film fits Malcolm X into this liberal history, as it was concerned mostly with recognizing him as an American hero, as opposed to an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, internationalist who sought a complete revolutionary transformation of the US system. Utilizing the biopic format for telling Malcolm’s story, Lee individualizes him as a heroic figure, disfiguring his Black collectivism and commitment to a Black united front. He also emphasizes and romanticizes his early life as a criminal and nearly ignores his Black internationalist politics. Dalautzai makes it plain in his critique of the film:

> Absent were Malcolm’s poignant insights into the global nature of White supremacy, the relationship of US empire to European colonialism, and the role of Black peoples in the United States in dismantling racial injustice nationally and internationally. By not exploring how Malcolm situated his criticism of US racism within a broader struggle against White world supremacy, Lee domesticated Malcolm’s politics and undermined Malcolm’s radical Third Worldist ideal under the banner of a liberal universalism.[11]

[9] Herb Boyd, “1992: Year of the X,” *The Black Scholar* 23, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1993): 23.
[10] Amiri Baraka, “Malcolm as Ideology,” in *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. Joe Wood (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 21.
[11] Daulatzai, *Black Star Crescent Moon*, 100-101.

Though many, especially in Black leftist and scholarly circles, held somewhat similar views to those of Dalautzai and Baraka, many articulated those perspectives ambiguously, simultaneously attempting to salvage the fact that, at the very least, the film was even made. In the introduction to a 1993 *Cineaste* special review dedicated to the film, featuring highly esteemed scholars, such as Manning Marable, Herb Boyd, and bell Hooks, this sentiment is made clear. The introductory author frames the collection of articles as all quite critical of the film, pointing to "various cinematic and political problematics" and examining, especially, "what has been omitted from Lee's portrait of Malcolm X".[12] However, this critical note is couched by a recognition that "such a film would even be contemplated" and going so far as to claim "how dramatically Spike Lee has expanded the cinematic horizons of Hollywood".[13] According to the *Cineaste* introductory essay, just Malcolm's inclusion within the Hollywood biopic tradition signifies a kind of democratic expansion of the Hollywood culture industry.

What is misunderstood, or what lies beneath this claim, however, is a dangerous fallacy. Blackness, especially histories of Black Liberation, has a certain cultural currency that when rewritten to fit a liberal narrative of American politics serves most effectively to normalize claims of the egalitarian nature of the American system of capital. The cultural currency of Blackness, which is contained in domesticated memories of Malcolm X and Black Radicalism in general, reinforces American capitalist power, while making it more difficult to see, address, or even challenge. In many ways, liberal re-writings of radical figures and histories, as is seen in Lee's *Malcolm X*, actually make it harder to fight the violence of racism by narrowing our political horizons for what antiracism and freedom can mean and do.

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[12] Gary Crowdus, "Malcolm X Symposium: By Any Reviews Necessary," *Cineaste* 19, no. 4 (1993): 4.
[13] Ibid., 4.

These liberal re-writings proliferated in 1990s popular media texts of Malcolm X, especially in television documentary and on the VHS market. This proliferation became an occasion for a multitude of documentaries to lay their claim over his memory, delivering such titles as *Malcolm X: The Real Story* and *The True Malcolm X Speaks*. Different media outlets, such as PBS, ABC, and CBS, framed their narratives and figurations of Malcolm X according to their imagined audiences and socio-political brands. However, these differences, and at points differences teetering on the edge of progressive, still illustrate the hegemony of racial liberal discourses that consistently dull Malcolm X's radical critique of the US and his internationalist politics that move beyond a Civil Rights framework. Many of these documentaries attempt to rewrite and redeem Malcolm X's memory by moving him towards the Civil Rights Movement, using his 'negative' image to forward Civil Rights goals, and contain his legacy within a US nationalist politics; reshaping Malcolm as a liberal American hero. These liberal reconstructions of Malcolm X cover over, disarticulate, and ultimately help to manage the inherent relationship between race and capital, capitalism and inequality, and the ceaseless human suffering racial capitalism necessitates.

Objects, Methodology and Analysis:

In order to track how these liberal discourses operate, I will focus on specific themes and formal conventions that cross over five television documentaries. The earliest documentary under study was aired in 1990 and part of the fourteen-hour PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize*. The particular episode analyzed is titled "The Time Has Come (1964-1966)" and dedicates the first half-hour to the life and legacy of Malcolm X. The next documentary is an episode from the PBS program *Open Mind* that aired in November of 1992, one week prior to the release of Lee's film. The episode is titled "Race Relations in America", which was modeled from a 1963

Open Mind episode titled “Race Relations in Crisis”. The 1992 episode opens with a short introduction from host Richard D. Heffner, then replays the entire 1963 episode in which Malcolm X was a part, and, finally, concludes with a present-day conversation with Civil Rights veterans James Farmer and Walker T. Wyatt, who were both present in the 1963 program. Though Malcolm X was not highlighted as a special guest in 1963, he becomes a central point of interest in the 1992 episode. The third documentary under study was released a month later, in December of 1992, and was broadcast on CBS and titled *Malcolm X: The Real Story*. The program is fully dedicated to the life of Malcolm X, telling his story in four, equally-timed, thematic segments: his background, his “rise and fall” in the Nation of Islam, his move towards the Civil Rights Movement, and his legacy and impact. The fourth documentary under study aired in January of 1994 and was a part of the PBS television series *American Experience*. The documentary, titled *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, is the longest of all the documentaries studied, running at two hours and eighteen minutes. Of all the documentaries analyzed, *Make It Plain* explores Malcolm X’s life in the greatest detail, featuring the highest number of interviews and historical footage. The last documentary studied is part of ABC’s *A&E Biography* series and aired in September of 1995. The documentary is titled *Malcolm X: A Search for Identity* and dedicates over half the documentary to Malcolm’s background and criminal history, distinguishing it from the others and echoing a similar narrative structure to that of Lee’s biopic.

Most of the documentaries under examination are constructed in the expository mode of documentary filmmaking, and many of these professional codes and dominant conventions are central to understanding the way liberal narratives about Malcolm X are constructed. The spoken word certainly guides the structure of all the documentaries under study, but in different ways and to different extents and effects. Some attempt to strictly control the narrative through a

consistent voiceover or program host, as in the CBS and A&E documentaries. Others are guided more by the commentary of experts or witnesses, as in the PBS documentaries. More voices included in the documentaries create more opportunity for tensions and complexity to arise in the narrative, but they also create the illusion of a spectrum of political perspectives that, in actuality, rarely step out of the liberal framework. The selective editing of archival material, the rhythm and duration of cuts, and the visual quality of archival images also determines the cohesion of the narrative argument. As these images are meant to illustrate, evince, or even counterpoint the spoken word, the more tightly tailored editing gives the argument a kind of seamlessness. Malcolm X was the staunchest critic of liberal politics and American exceptionalist ideology, yet careful, selective editing allows filmmakers to rewrite his perspective to actually fit within it. The narrative structure also plays a central role in managing the documentary's argument. Just as with mainstream fiction film, documentary follows dominant conventions of story structure: beginning, middle, end, problem-solution formulas, narrative arcs, resolved closure, etc. The adherence to these structural and conventional narrative elements is particularly important in the case of Malcolm X, not only because of the familiar discourse of the different phases of his life, first made popular in Alex Haley's autobiography, but also because the emphasizing or deemphasizing of those phases greatly impacts the meaning of his legacy for contemporary audiences.

This attention to form and genre is structured through an analysis organized around specific themes, or anchoring points, where liberal narratives around Malcolm's life, teachings, and legacy coalesce. The first theme examined is the framing of the Nation of Islam (NOI), which becomes an occasion for the documentaries to do an extensive amount of ideological work that ranges from containing the NOI within liberal discourses about cultural identity to

demonizing its organization as the primary antagonist to the Civil Rights Movement. The second theme is Malcolm's relationship to the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King, Jr. Again, this thematic opens up the opportunity, not only to concretize a binary with the NOI, but also to accomplishing a liberal redemption of Malcolm X through King, through the Civil Rights Movement, and through the supposed enlightenment of the contemporary viewer. The third theme is the way in which Malcolm's internationalism is framed, which includes his trips overseas to Africa and Asia, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and the development of his Organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Being one of the most radicalized components of his life and memory, setting him distinctly apart from the Civil Rights Movement and distinctly within the history of the Black Radical tradition, this theme can be quite difficult to fit within a liberal narrative. This requires some of the documentaries to elide or dismiss Malcolm's internationalism or simplify and abstract its terms. The fourth, and final, theme examined is the ways in which Malcolm's objectives for racial justice, especially in terms of his legacy, are rewritten to fit within a liberal discourse of cultural recognition and identity politics separate from any social or economic transformation. This thematic is more definitively located in the opening and closing moments of the documentaries.

The Nation of Islam

Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) in 1952 and helped to expand and transform the organization's role as a spiritual, social, and political force within and beyond Black America. Thus, Malcolm's rise, influence, and departure from the NOI are central to the story told about his life, as is the NOI's involvement in his dramatic and controversial death. All of the different stages of Malcolm's life and connection to the NOI are handled somewhat differently in the documentaries, but there are key themes that cross over and allow them to share in discursive

frames that fit the influence and definition of the NOI within neoliberal ideologies of self-help and self-esteem, that reinforce a narrative of the exceptional individual, and that distort and demonize the NOI's doctrine of separation that help move Malcolm X toward a liberal narrative of Civil Rights.

In order to shape these liberal narratives, so much of what the NOI represented and provided for Malcolm X, and many others, both Muslim and non-Muslim, is omitted or obscured. One of the central instruments consistently obscured is the radical lens of history and American society that Islam and the NOI provided, which foregrounded and exposed the violent connections between Whiteness, Christianity, colonialism, imperialism, slavery, and the making of America. This critical lens subverted bourgeois myths of great White men to instead view the world through the eyes of the oppressed and the great struggle against forces of exploitation, injustice, and dehumanization. Furthermore, the NOI provided a redefinition of Blackness that expanded not only beyond the United States, but also beyond Africa to connect and align with communities of Muslims around the globe. This internationalized identity linked the struggles of Black people in the US to those in the colonized and decolonized world. This redefinition is necessarily omitted or obscured in liberal stories of Malcolm's life, because it challenges the way Blackness and Black people have historically been mobilized to legitimize the American national project domestically, and the American imperialist project internationally. The NOI's redefinition of Black identity, such as in the use of the moniker "the Nation", allowed Black people to claim a form of sovereignty separate from the US and align Black people's struggle for self-determination to the growing Black Nationalist and national liberation movements taking place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Moreover, the NOI offered a political alternative to the Cold War liberalism and liberal integrationist goals of the Civil Rights Movement, helping to

clarify and expose their persistent limitations and hypocrisies. These many provisions, supplied to Malcolm, and to Black America more generally, through Islam and the NOI, centrally shaped Malcolm X and his ideas. This radical shaping, however, cannot be contained, and thus cannot be remembered, within these liberal celebrations of Malcolm's life.[14]

In many of the documentaries, this alternative vision and politic becomes obscured or omitted immediately at the point of introduction to the Nation, as Malcolm first encountered it while in prison. Malcolm X is repeatedly portrayed as having "educated himself" and "transformed himself" in prison without any mention of the critique and critical lens the NOI and Elijah Muhammad provided. This omission, then, allows Malcolm's transformation to become an individualized endeavor that fits him within a 'great man' historical narrative, reinforcing the idea of the exceptional individual who can rehabilitate himself through hard work and study. It also helps to downplay the role Islam actually played in his personal transformation in prison. This framing heightens the idea that Malcolm reformed himself from his former criminal life on his own, which, in many instances, is a useful device for contemporary arguments that blame the victims of historical and structural racism for not rehabilitating and reforming themselves, as did Malcolm.

In the CBS documentary *Malcolm X: The Real Story*, Malcolm Jarvis, Malcolm X's friend who was convicted alongside him for burglary in 1946, explains their commitment to educating themselves while in prison. He explains how they read "history, mythology, psychiatry, psychology, theology…anything we could get our hands on that pertained to the knowledge of the world". The next clip shows historian Peter Goldman explaining Malcolm's

[14] For more detailed analysis on the Nation's influence in the US and beyond, see Sohail Daulatzai's chapter ""You Remember Dien Bien Phu!" Malcolm X and the Third World Rising" in *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, and Melani McAlister's chapter "The Middle East in African American Cultural Politics, 1955-1972," in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001).

conversion experience. This narrative sequencing separates Malcolm's studies from his conversion or makes it seem as if his general education preceded his conversion, disconnecting the fact that the NOI provided a radical lens through which he would understand his studies and make his decision to convert. Malcolm X converted to Islam in the second year of his imprisonment, leaving five more years of studying "the knowledge of the world" while immersed in the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and Islam. This narrative sequencing and the elision of the radical lens downplays what this conversion meant and rewrites his commitment to "educate himself" to fit within a story of individualized transformation and exceptional individualism.

The A& E documentary, *A Search for Identity*, uses a similar narrative sequencing as the CBS documentary, yet shifts the context of what the NOI meant to Malcolm to fit within liberal discourses about race. Historian James Cone provides an explanation for what the NOI influence meant before he left prison. He states: "[Malcolm] saw Christianity as the White man's religion, as the religion of Black people that wanted to become like White people. But here, in the Black Muslim Nation of Islam, he encountered a religion that reinforced his identity as a Black person and enabled himself to love himself as a Black person". Cone's commentary begins to scratch the surface of the radical lens, but he is not given the space to explain the historical and material contexts of slavery, of colonization, and of imperialism that underwrote the reasons why Malcolm so rejected Christianity. As it is shown here, this statement can easily fit within liberal explanations of race as simply identity difference and prejudice: simply read, Malcolm didn't like Christianity because he didn't like white people. The follow-up commentary by Marvin Jarvis reinforces this liberal definition. He states, "[Malcolm] didn't have a particular love for White people. And they used to call him Satan at one time. Because they thought he was evil. A

lot of the White inmates, especially, used to call him that". Malcolm's conversion and his radicalized knowledge about the history of White supremacy are transfigured to be simply about personal feeling without any critical context.

The more general discussions of the meaning of the NOI follow a similar discourse, individualizing and abstracting its influence. The CBS documentary begins its definition of the NOI with commentary from poet, activist Maya Angelou, which frames the meaning of the NOI within a depoliticized form of identity politics. She states: "The Nation of Islam was a magnificent help to young Black men and young Black women in the sixties…People who had low esteem or no esteem, self-esteem, were dressing in suits with ties." The way the documentary uses Angelou's commentary leaves out that fact that the NOI was especially supportive of poor, Black, urban communities that were most dispossessed by historical and continued racial violence. This class-specificity of a majority of NOI members is necessarily elided, so that "low esteem or no esteem" cannot be linked to economics and, instead, can be attributed to individual character flaws. This explanation of the NOI in the documentary as good for Black self-esteem follows the liberal logic that seeks redress for racial inequalities and racial injustice through individual character building. The problems Black people faced could be solved if they could just build up their self-esteem or, as Cone stated earlier, "learn to love themselves". This framing of the NOI assists in the necessary elision of any critique of or challenge to the political economy that structures the disadvantages of those who did not "make it" or were "without self-esteem".

The PBS documentary, *Make It Plain*, does allow a limited engagement with the NOI's critique of White supremacy, yet it also succumbs to explaining the NOI's influence in individualist, depoliticized terms. In an early segment on the Nation's influence, Malcolm's

brother, Wilfred X, explains how Malcolm's critique of Christianity became clear once he studied its history with the critical lens provided by the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. Wilfred states: "and he finds all this history of how White Christians lynched Black Christians. White Christians were the ones who were involved in the slave trade. Those were Christians. Malcolm began to see this, and then he began to study it himself and prove that if there is such a thing as a real devil on this earth, it has to be the White man." This explanation of "the White man's religion" gives actual historical context to the material violence and hypocrisy practiced by Christians.

Yet, the intervention is limited, as the segment only addresses the past and not "the hell" Black people were catching in the current moment. This has a double effect, because it not only places Black oppression in a distant past from Malcolm X's time, but also extends that distance for the contemporary viewer of the 1990s, who could more directly relate to the kinds of hell Black people were catching in the 1960s. Furthermore, the documentary passes up the opportunity to re-engage with Wilfred's insights by selectively editing what will become Malcolm's only archival appearance to explain the Nation's influence before he is moved away from it. The archival clip is from a 1963 episode of the news program *City Desk*. NBC newsman Charles McCuen questions him: "How did you happen to join the Muslim movement?" Malcolm answers:

> I was in prison. I was a very wayward, criminal, backward, illiterate, uneducated, whatever other negative characteristics you can think of type of person, until I heard the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. And because of the impact it had upon me and giving me a desire to reform myself and rehabilitate myself, for the first time in my life and also be able to see the effect it had upon others. This is what made me accept it. Plus, prior to hearing what he teaches, I had no interest whatsoever…in any educational pursuit. And I noticed after being exposed to the religious teaching of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, immediately it instilled in me such a high degree of racial pride and racial dignity that I wanted to be somebody. And I realized I couldn't be anybody by

> begging the White man for what he had, but that I had to get out here and try to do something for myself or make something out of myself.

This footage reveals how fundamental the NOI was to Malcom's "educational pursuits"; that these educational pursuits were not abstract, individualized endeavors. The footage belies the framing provided in the CBS and A & E documentaries.

This significant exposure is still limited, however. The details of those teachings and a clearer explanation of what the NOI represented are cut from the clip. Most of Malcolm's discussion throughout the *City Desk* episode focused on the Nation's platform, which was dedicated to the "complete freedom, justice, and equality for the twenty million Black people…here in America". His commentary throughout emphasized the need for collective, self-determination, as he talked about the unity and growing understanding even among groups he highly critiqued, such as the NAACP. He addressed the living legacy of slavery, and the realities of police brutality. He also addressed the denial of human rights to Black people under the current system and resolutely rejected "having to beg for the things a man is supposed to have." He also spoke about the denial and disavowal White people practiced when it came to both the "original mistake" of slavery and of the continued injustices Black people faced. These factors, among others, are cut out or not brought in to more fully expand upon the teachings that led to Malcolm's self-reform, self-rehabilitation, and racial pride. Without these contextual factors, the teachings become immaterial and the individual acts are left to stand on their own without a clear picture of their motivation. The clip focuses only on the individual impact the NOI had on Malcolm, though most of his insightful commentary addressed the historical and material conditions plaguing Black communities and emphasized the need for a collective transformation that took place outside of, and in rejection to, dominant white society. Malcolm's radical critique

and collective ideals of transformation are distorted in a way that fits within neoliberal ideologies of self-engineering and individual responsibility.

This framing of the NOI's influence on Malcolm X also lends itself to racist discourses about Black criminality dominant in the 1990s. Following Maya Angelou's commentary about self-esteem in the CBS documentary, a new segment begins with a clip of Malcolm X stating: "I was a burglar, and I burglarized the homes…When I was a Christian, I was a burglar". The archival clip cuts to a voiceover and clip of James Cone discussing the role of the NOI in Malcolm's transformation from criminal to religious leader. Cone's commentary is placed in such a way that it shifts the narrative to be one about Malcolm's severe self-restraint, yet with alarming connotations. He states: "When Malcolm became converted to the Nation of Islam; from 1946 from when he was in prison until he married Betty in 1958, Malcolm totally abstained from any sexual relationship with women." By pairing the clip about burglary with the clip about sexual restraint, the documentary connects Malcolm's criminality to his sexuality, connecting his rehabilitation to his abstinence. These connections echo historical discourses on race that tie Black male sexuality to criminality, reinforcing White supremacist ideologies used to legitimize historical, and continued, violence against, and incrimination of, Black men (and women).

This severe self-restraint, which goes so far as to almost de-sexualize Malcolm altogether, is then paired with a comment from Malcolm X's widow, Dr. Betty Shabazz. She states: "Malcolm was very strict with himself primarily because he had gotten off the beaten path, and he was forever compensating to make up to society for what it was he had done. He was a good person." That Malcolm "was strict with himself", according to his wife and following the logic of the editing, Cone's statement about abstinence is corroborated. Yet, the comment is also framed in a way that it erases any history or material conditions that led to

Malcolm becoming a burglar and redirects Malcolm's commitments to Black liberation toward the society he so vigorously challenged and rejected. Thus, Malcolm's commitments are transformed to be about his redemption from his criminal past, which makes him a model for self-rehabilitation through self-discipline. In relationship to the racial discourses of Black criminality of the 1990s, this message fits the belief that high crime rates, mass incarceration, and the genocide of the drug war were problems that stemmed from the lack of self-discipline in poor, Black communities. Malcolm, then, serves as proof of the efficacy of self-discipline and self-rehabilitation as the answer to the debilitating effects plaguing impoverished communities. This message and its logic, then, reinforce racial stigmas of Black criminality, while erasing the realities of historical racial violence inherent to America's political economy.

The central theme in which most of the documentaries invoke Black criminality, and necessarily demonize the NOI, is through their portrayals and handling of the NOI's philosophy of separation. Historically, separation, for Malcolm, was about the absolute right of Black people to collectively determine the social, political, economic, and cultural systems that governed their lives. Malcolm understood how dominant white society controlled the means of production and governed societal institutions, and depended on the exclusion, degradation, and exploitation of Black people. Separation was a rejection to the call for integration into a system built on the foundation of white supremacy and Black suffering. Consequently, this also meant the right to defend oneself against this system and its myriad forms of violence.

During Malcolm's lifetime, these doctrines of separation and self-defense, however, were re-scripted within mainstream media to be equated with violence against, and hatred for, white people. Through this discourse of violence against whites, the system of white supremacist, racial capitalism was always, necessarily, disavowed, and therefore hidden and reproduced. In

the 1959 television documentary *The Hate That Hate Produced* (*THTHP*), the organization was demonized as a "hate group" that preached "Black supremacy". NOI members were characterized as "extremists", and the group was portrayed as an analogue to white supremacist groups, such as the KKK, making it seem as if the NOI's purpose was to attack and terrorize white people. The NOI's philosophy of self-defense was framed as the counterpart to the "nonviolent" philosophy of the Civil Rights Movement. This manufactured antagonism inferred that "violence" was the NOI's tactic in obtaining its freedom rather than defending itself from the vigilante and state violence faced by Black people, be they NOI or Civil Rights members.

The CBS documentary strongly relies on these historical interpretations that vilify the NOI's belief in separation, dismissing the idea as criminal and absurd. The documentary even positions Mike Wallace, the program host from the 1959 documentary, as the definitive voice of authority to explain who the NOI and Malcolm X were and what their ideas of separation meant. Wallace is also given the longest uncut, and best lit, screen time for his comments on the NOI, which are emphasized even more by the inclusion of the viewer's presumed surrogate, CBS host Dan Rather. In his interview clip, Wallace begins to recall his introduction to the NOI. Speaking about his conversation with journalist Louis Lomax, he states, "There is an outfit called the Nation of Islam that you've probably not ever heard about. They have maybe somewhere between a hundred and a quarter of a million members." This is a grossly inaccurate number for the 1950s but calls for a slow zoom-in on Wallace who continues: "And they want Black separation from Whites." This statement is accompanied by a shot reverse shot of Rather's reaction, which is wide-eyed and tight-mouthed. Wallace finishes, "And they hate, they hate White people. They are convinced there has been a conspiracy against Black people by white people. And they are selling this to young Blacks, and they are doing an extraordinary job of

attracting attention." This dramatic framing, both in terms of film form and content, define separation in terms of feeling (hatred) and as a conspiracy. In media interview after media interview, Malcolm X explained how the NOI did not teach hate, but rather spoke the truth about the brutality and oppression white society practiced on the Black population, which was then redefined by the media as teaching hate. In Wallace calling the NOI's message a "conspiracy", he completely disregards and dismisses the ways in which Malcolm spoke to the conditions and experiences of Black people in America. His use of the word "conspiracy" makes those conditions of structural racism seem unwarranted or paranoid, turning the truth of racial capitalism into an absurdity.

Minutes later Wallace is given the final word on Malcolm X and the NOI before the documentary begins to move him away from the NOI and towards the Civil Rights Movement. In his well-lit close-up, Wallace states: "Malcolm scared people. There was something sinister. There was something frightening about Malcolm and the Black Muslims. They wanted to separate from the White community. And there was always the hint of violence. When Malcolm said, 'by any means necessary', what that was taken to mean was, if we need the gun, we've got the gun." In this statement, the connections between the NOI, separation, and criminality are made clear and reveal the kind of challenge Malcolm X and the NOI posed to white supremacist logic. Malcolm "scared" white people, because his call for separation threw whiteness and white society into crisis. Malcolm's objectives within the NOI were not centered on white people, and, thus, generated a crisis not only for white identity, but for the entire structure of racial capitalism within the United States—a system rooted in a white supremacist logic, dependent on the psychological, social, and physical labor of Black people and Blackness, be it as slaves during racial slavery or as multicultural representatives in racial neoliberalism. This separation that

threatens the foundation of whiteness and liberal myths about American exceptionality, must then be deemed not only as absurd but also as criminal.

The A&E documentary does not demonize the NOI's philosophy of separation as directly as the CBS program. Following Cone's statement, which framed the NOI's influence on Malcolm in terms of racial identity and self-love, the documentary voiceover states: "The message of Elijah Muhammad was clear. The Nation of Islam did not need white people or white society. Black self-esteem came first, and with it the establishment of a separate country inside the United States for Blacks alone." Here, the idea is not immediately dismissed and begins to get at the de-centering of whiteness that so scared Wallace. Yet, the logic of the statement still adheres to liberal definitions of race that erase material conditions. "Black self-esteem", understood as self-love, displaces Black self-determination, and "Not needing white people" displaces real material oppression. Separation becomes obscured as a choice and can be decontextualized as a preference or personal prejudice against white people. In these terms, the NOI's rationale for separation loses its political footing and can be framed in terms of simple identity politics and grounds for accusations of reverse racism.

A more explicit critique of the NOI follows this segment, first by historian Peter Goldman's abstracted definition of separation and second through more manipulation of archival footage. Goldman states: "The message was always: this is a racist society. White folks are not going to rescue you. Forget about the Civil Rights Movement. Forget about Civil Rights legislation." In his commentary, Goldman's rhetoric is definitive, the message was "always", and it redirects the doctrine of Black self-determination to re-center white people, "White folks not rescuing you". Goldman's sarcasm, in tone and diction, degrade Malcolm's ideas of separation, making them seem like some kind of farce, or absurdity. This absurdity, or what the

documentary will soon refer to as “too extreme”, is driven home by the selective editing of archival footage of Malcolm X speaking on the PBS program, *Open Mind*. The clip cuts from Goldman to a black-and-white close-up of Malcolm stating: “You will never get real freedom and recognition between Black and white people in this country without destroying the country.” The clip continues to show Malcolm X speaking on the show, but the sound track is muted, and the voiceover returns with the commentary: “It was a message that terrified white America and was too extreme for most Black Americans, who saw the more moderate Civil Rights Movement growing.” The documentary then cuts to footage of Civil Rights activists and adds an upbeat jazz score. Here, as in the CBS documentary, the idea of separation is linked with violence (destroy the country) and terror (terrified whites, too extreme for Blacks), and the Civil Rights Movement is positioned as the more acceptable “non-violent”, enlightened counterpart. What “terrified” white people, as it is framed, is Malcolm’s unwarranted call to bring down the country.

This framing creates a simplified, and vilified, version of what Malcolm X was actually stating in his comment and throughout the *Open Mind* program. At the point where the documentary cuts him off, Malcolm goes on to say: “…without destroying the political system, without destroying the present economic system, without re-writing the entire constitution.” These are the forms of destruction he refers to, which are cut out of the clip, not an abstract form of violence and destruction that can be read as an attack on white people. Moreover, throughout the *Open Mind* program, Malcolm X’s statements are backed with evidence about white ownership of the means of production, the political institutions, the educational institutions, and so forth, which, as he explains, will never allow equality between the races. Simply, he argues that integration into a system owned and governed by whites will not bring freedom for Black people, and since whites will not agree to destroy this system, Blacks should create their own.

All this explanation about systems and structures of white supremacy are left out, and self-determination can be more simply read as an unwarranted (racist) desire for separation from whites, which is linked to physical violence and criminal behavior.

The PBS documentary, *Make It Plain*, also does not outwardly critique the NOI's doctrine of separation, but it does this through a complete avoidance of using the term altogether and abstract explanations for the lessons the NOI taught. There is mention that no whites were allowed in temples, that the NOI was "self-sufficient", and that Malcolm believed Black people "needed to solve our own problems". There are also participant interviews with artists/activists Ossie Davis and Sonia Sanchez that hint at the critique of white society the NOI taught. Davis describes Malcolm's lessons about white society as "raw", and Sanchez describes them through an analogy of sunlight coming in through window blinds. Yet, these abstract engagements and the documentary's unwillingness to use the terminology of separation allows it to elide any direct confrontation with the system being rejected.

Following these brief engagements that skirt around the doctrine, the documentary completes this segment with a surprisingly conservative view. The voiceover remarks: "…the racial views of the Nation of Islam shocked white America and many in the Black community." It then cuts immediately to archival footage of Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, stating: "Preaching racial hatred and racial advantage, and the bigotry involved, is a bad thing whether it's colored or white. For years, the NAACP has been opposed to white extremists preaching racial hatred of Negro people. And, we are equally opposed to Negro extremists preaching against white people simply for the sake of whiteness." The placement of this commentary gives it the privileged position to directly define the "racial views" mentioned in the voiceover. Though Wilkins statements represent a conservative reading of the NOI, it is

positioned to stand in for the view of (liberal) whites and “many in the Black community”. The comments are never challenged by the documentary, though they reproduce false analogies between white extremists and Black Muslims. Wilkin’s comment also completely dismisses and erases the historical and material conditions of Black life when it equates the NOI’s critique of whites as simply about racial prejudice (“simply for the sake of whiteness”). Wilkin’s views were even understood in their own historical moment as cautious at best, yet the documentary fails to contextualize these comments as such.

Moving Malcolm Towards the Civil Rights Movement

Once the NOI is demonized, dismissed, or simplified, many of the documentaries move Malcolm X closer to the Civil Rights Movement and to Martin Luther King, Jr., which redeems him from his involvement with the NOI and creates a more amenable narrative for fitting him into a liberal history of American politics. Most of the documentaries under study have constructed a binary between the NOI and the Civil Rights Movement, mobilizing sound and editing devices to associate the Civil Rights Movement with reason and American virtue and the NOI with criminality, racism and absurdity. Once Malcolm X leaves the NOI, this binary structure narrows the possibilities for the direction in which he can move and, in a way, coerces him to align with Civil Rights goals and philosophies—as no other alternative can be thought. It also redefines what Malcolm’s departure from the NOI was about. With the radical function of the NOI distorted and the doctrine of separation defined in terms of “hating White people” or simply “not needing White people”, all dismissing the structures of White supremacy, Malcolm X’s departure comes to be defined in terms of his evolved personal feelings about race and his desire to be a part of the Civil Rights Movement.

What must be understood, however, is that Malcolm X, of course, did share common ground with the Civil Rights Movement, but he was never, specifically, a Civil Rights leader. He, too, sought for the freedom and dignity of Black people living in America; yet, he never abandoned his radical understanding and critique of the United States and its institutions. In a way, Malcolm X carried forward the more radical, international, class-based strain of a Black Left in the US, that reaches back to the 1930s and 40s. He did agree, in many respects, with the Civil Rights leaders demands for full citizenship rights and protections. However, Malcolm was also a leading critical voice about the futility of relying on US legal and political institutions and pandering to the Democratic Party line. Malcolm X wanted to work with Civil Rights activists and groups, especially after his departure from the NOI, as he understood the need for a strong collective front, especially in the face of US capitalist expansion abroad and growing inequalities at home. Yet, many of the documentaries portray this desire for cooperation and the departure from the NOI as Malcolm X discarding his former beliefs, especially his ideas about separation and his focus on race for his analyses. In actuality, Malcolm X never ended his staunch critiques and fierce warnings about the limits of Civil Rights, nor did he stray from his commitments for Black self-determination. His understanding of the operations of white supremacy expanded, especially after his travels to Africa and Asia after leaving the NOI. He never compromised with the Cold War liberalism of Civil Rights leaders, but instead aligned himself with the decolonization efforts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, forewarning emergent nations about US imperial motives. The changes Malcolm experienced did not signal his alignment with integration, nor his disregard for Elijah Muhammad's teachings, but rather his expanded orientation towards internationalism and his reconfigured platform for social justice based on a human rights, not a civil rights, framework.

Another significant issue here, however, is the way in which the Civil Rights narrative, itself, had been refashioned in the popular imagination of the 1980s and 1990s, impacting the way Malcolm's proximity to it could, and still can, be read and understood. In many of the documentaries under study, there is a double operation in place, one that not only distorts the historical record of the Civil Rights Movement (distilling it within the singular figure of (1963) Martin Luther King, Jr., relegating it to the South, having it end in 1965, and charactering its objectives as non-economic), but also mobilizes a particular historical memory of Civil Rights that argues the 1964 Civil Rights Bill and 1965 Voting Rights Act succeeded in dismantling Jim Crow and creating unfettered opportunity and full inclusion of African Americans in US society. It depicts an American morality tale; one that purports the US has overcome its racist history and moved towards its natural destiny as a universal, multicultural nation to be emulated by the world. The narrative serves as evidence for the rise of a colorblind logic that claims race is no longer a significant factor for one's successes or failures in American society and is mobilized as a testament to the democratic functioning of US political and economic institutions. With this ideological work on Civil Rights memory in place and the NOI's influence and philosophies vilified or simplified, associating Malcolm X with the Civil Rights Movement does a significant amount of redemptive work to reshape the radical character of his memory.

In the *EOTP* episode, "The Time Has Come", this dominant Civil Rights narrative is established in its opening sequence. The opening voiceover states: "By the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement had changed the laws that divided us by race, but the struggle for unity was far from done." It goes on: "It was a time of anger and fear. It was a time when a gain for Blacks was seen as a loss for Whites…It was a time when America struggled to be America for all its citizens." These opening remarks immediately establish a narrative framework that constrains the

purpose of racial justice to interpersonal relations rather than to material forms of transformation. The legal justice system is to be understood as solving all problems of inequality, leaving only a problem of personal feeling between Blacks and Whites (anger and fear). These assumptions about the legal system erase any questions about the inequities of the political economy and help reinforce the myth that America is always already this democratizing and benevolent force at its core ("struggling to be itself"). The episode is only able to fulfill these ideological conclusions by pivoting Malcolm X's influence, once he left the NOI, toward a Civil Rights platform. This pivot is first established through a dialogue motif that primarily associates his break from the NOI as his willingness and desire to work with the Civil Rights Movement. This prioritizing of Malcolm's association with the Civil Rights Movement is then illustrated through the framing of his presence in Selma in 1965.

Malcolm is first shown using the dialogue motif in a shot-reverse-shot sequence that juxtaposes himself and Elijah Muhammad. In the first shot, Malcolm X announces his split from the NOI; in the second shot, Elijah Muhammad makes a retaliatory remark; and, finally, in the third shot, Malcolm X condemns the NOI's lack of involvement in the larger struggle for Black liberation. In this last shot, Malcolm states: "…many persons in the past were driven away from [the NOI] and are now becoming involved with us in an active effort *to work with other groups* toward solving the social, political, and economic evils that afflict our people [emphasis added]." This shot-reverse-shot sequence is the first instance that depicts Malcolm's split from the NOI and sets up a framing that equates Malcolm's split with his desire to "work with others". It is not that this idea is false, but it becomes a motif that morphs into his desire to work with Civil Rights figures specifically, though he does not make this distinction in his comment here, and his purpose to serve the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement.

The motif is brought up again soon after in archival footage of a press conference after returning from his travels in Africa and Asia. A reporter in this footage asks him: "Are you prepared to work with some of the other leaders of the other Civil Rights organizations?" The question already confines both "other leaders" and Malcolm, himself, within the bounds of the Civil Rights. Malcolm responds: "Certainly. We will work with any groups, organizations, or leaders in any way, as long as it's genuinely designed to get results." Similar to the prior footage, Malcolm does not distinguish his desire to collaborate solely with Civil Rights organizations. Yet, this important detail of Malcolm's more expansive understanding of collaboration is ignored and erased by the third time the dialogue motif is invoked.

A minute and a half following the second iteration of the dialogue motif, the documentary introduces the Selma voting rights campaign through a juxtaposition of archival images, first one of Martin Luther King Jr. smiling and shaking hands with protestors on a sidewalk, and, second, one of Malcolm X walking sternly through Selma with a body guard, not speaking to the crowds around him. The juxtaposition of images illustrates the documentary's earlier commentary made by Ossie Davis that Martin Luther King Jr. was the movement's "best face", and Malcolm X was "the other brother…outside the door", staging Malcolm as a kind of hidden weapon for the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement. This idea is reiterated through the final use of the dialogue motif, this time stated by the authority of the voiceover. As Malcolm X walks sternly and swiftly past the camera, the voiceover states: "When SNCC invited Malcolm X to speak in Selma, he reaffirmed his willingness to support other Civil Rights leaders." Here, the voiceover adopts the rhetoric of the 1965 reporter in its second iteration, binding Malcolm X to Civil Rights leaders and implying Malcolm's own identity as a Civil Rights leader.

The voiceover commentary ends with footage of a silent Malcolm X standing behind the podium at Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma, the location in which he gave his speech to a young crowd of SNCC activists. The footage shows him looking over the crowd as they applause. This footage of applause then immediately cuts to a press interview with Malcolm stating: “and I think that people in this part of the world would do well to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King and give him what he’s asking for and give it to him fast before some other faction comes along and tries to do it another way. What he is asking for is right, and that is the ballot, and if you can’t get it the way he’s trying to get it, it’s going to be gotten one way or the other”. This selective editing entirely omits Malcolm’s speech and, instead, refashions his purpose in Selma as completely in service to the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King, Jr. This is not to say that Malcolm X did not mean what he said about “giving King what he’s asking for”, but his objectives speaking in Selma are reduced to this through the voiceover framing, the selective editing, and the complete omission of his historical speech.

In fact, the content of his speech and the purpose for his coming to Selma moved far beyond a domestic framework for voting rights. He was invited by SNCC to speak in Selma after giving a speech at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama the night before. In replying to a question asked by the press as to why he came to Selma, he refers to his talk in Alabama and the topic he spoke of, which was, what he called, the relationship between “the Black revolution in America and the Black revolution in Africa”. In this Tuskegee speech the night before, he spoke about America’s involvement in blocking decolonizing efforts in the Congo and supporting a tyrannical regime compliant with US imperialist motives. According to press accounts, these same issues were also discussed in his speech in Selma alongside his famous allegory of “the field Negro vs. the house Negro”, which originated in his 1963 speech *A Message to the*

Grassroots. In this allegory, Malcolm's reference to "the master's house" served as a metaphor for the United States. He ridiculed "the house Negroes" who "would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would". These tropes signified on Black leaders who confined their politics within an American nationalist framework. It also signified on Black soldiers giving their lives to fight wars for the US and, also, on the hypocrisy of the "nonviolent" philosophy of the Civil Rights Movement, which was anything but nonviolent for Black people. On the other hand, in the allegory, Malcolm praised and identified with the "field Negroes", which referenced the larger masses of Black people who felt the brunt of American oppression, being, literally and metaphorically, further away from "the master's house" and its provisions and possibilities. As he describes in the allegory, this group hated the house and wanted to separate from it. This allegory not only spoke to the class distinctions and divisiveness within Black America, it also staged the ideological differences between Civil Rights leaders and Black Nationalism and Internationalism, whose struggles were "worldwide in scope" and saw American racism in the context of a much larger system of white world supremacy. The speech provided a challenge to the democratic nature of American institutions, especially calling out its imperial activities and its roots and legacies in slavery and asking its audience to question the history and tactical efficacy of Civil Rights. These challenges had to be excised in order for the documentary to complete its narrative arc toward the Voting Rights Act and to rewrite Malcolm's legacy as a part, rather than in contention with, the Civil Rights Movement.

Though the PBS documentary *Make It Plain* gives a more expansive picture of Malcolm's life and politics, it, too, ends up moving him towards the Civil Rights Movement at the end of his political career and downplaying his critique of Civil Rights leaders. Directly after establishing his split from the NOI, the documentary's first archival footage presents Malcolm

speaking about the Civil Rights Bill. Though a sequence of interviews and footage go on to discuss Black Nationalism, Malcolm's first appearance here, after his split from the NOI, is punctuated by the language, goals, and methods of Civil Rights. The footage starts with Malcolm stating: "So what you and I have got to do is get involved. You and I have to be right there, breathing down their throats. Every time they look over their shoulder, we want them to see us. We want to make them pass the strongest Civil Rights bill they'd ever pass, because we know, even after they pass it, they can't enforce it." The documentary's placement and editing of the footage presents Malcolm's initial break from the NOI as focused on putting pressure on, seemingly, the government to pass a strong Civil Rights Bill. What the footage leaves out, however, is whom Malcolm was originally addressing in this speech. The line that was cut directly before the shown footage stated: "Now, if you and I leave it up to the moderate Negro leaders, they'll be able to trick it up and make the world think that they passed something that doesn't really mean anything." Consequently, then, the pressure Malcolm was calling for, the throats he wanted to be breathing down, were not the government's, necessarily, but the Civil Rights leaders most intimately connected to Civil Rights policy-making. This commentary was, chiefly, a critique of Civil Rights leaders and a call to hold them accountable. However, as it is selectively edited, the footage instead reads as a desire to "get involved" with Civil Rights efforts, rather than "getting involved" to stop them from passing a watered-down Civil Rights bill that lacked the power for real change. This omission of Malcolm's critique makes it possible to more smoothly end his political career in service to Civil Right goals.

This conclusion happens in the same fashion as "A Time Has Come", as the same footage and editing sequences are used to depict Malcolm's purpose in Selma. First, Malcolm is shown outside the AME church. Then, there is a cut to him standing quiet as his audience applauses,

and, finally, there is an immediate cut to his news interview, where he states to “give King what he is asking for”. Again, the Selma speech, which also critiques Civil Rights leaders and positions the struggle in an international context, is completely omitted, and the documentary moves directly from Selma to the final assaults on Malcolm’s life and his assassination. It confines Malcolm’s purpose in Selma, and ends his political career, in service to the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement. His rigorous critique of Civil Rights leaders and his forewarnings of the limitations of Civil Rights legislation are omitted, allowing the dominant Civil Rights narrative to stay intact.

The CBS documentary, *Malcolm X: The Real Story*, also moves Malcolm X towards the Civil Rights Movement, and towards King, but in a way that emphasizes his redemption from a vilified NOI and presents an opportunity for the construction of white liberal heroes. Because the documentary consistently vilifies the NOI from the beginning, tapping into the historically dominant framing that demonizes the organization, Malcolm X’s move away from it, and towards Civil Rights, takes on an even more redemptive and moralistic character. The documentary begins this redemptive process by first inserting footage from June of 1964, where Malcolm X discloses Elijah Muhammad’s infidelities on public television in an interview with Mike Wallace. What is important to note here is that this footage took place much later in the story of Malcolm’s life. The filmmakers chose to use this clip even before depicting Malcolm’s suspension or split from the NOI. This liberty with the chronology of events serves the purpose to construct Malcolm’s move away from the NOI as based on reasons of morality, disassociated from any political program. As the rigid binary between the NOI and Civil Rights becomes established in the following sequences, the move towards morality can only be attained within the Civil Rights Movement.

This established immorality of Elijah Muhammad, and, thus, the NOI in general, not only sets the stage for moving Malcolm towards the Civil Rights Movement, but also opens the opportunity for white viewers to be interpolated to help in this process. Dan Rather's voiceover, following Malcolm's impassioned 1964 announcement, states: "against the will of Elijah Muhammad", Malcolm X, "ached to be a part of" the Civil Rights Movement and could no longer be confined under the "narrow ideology" of the NOI. Multiple scholars and former Civil Right activists are then summoned to corroborate this claim. James Cone begins with his interview commentary: "Malcolm wanted to be a part of the movement, but King could not relate to Malcolm and his movement, because Malcolm's image was so publicly negative in the dominant white society. That for King to be seen with Malcolm would have undercut much of his support in the white community." Cone's comment not only confirms Rather's claim about Malcolm's desires "to be a part of the movement", but also sets the stage for the interpolation of white viewers to right the wrongs of their white predecessors who kept Malcolm from begin accepted as part of the movement. According to Cone's statement, white people, and their negative perception of Malcolm, were the central obstacle that kept King from working with Malcolm X and, thus, from his ability to work with the Civil Rights Movement. Directly following Cone's comment, King's lawyer Clarence Thomas is made to reaffirm Rather and Cone's claims. Speaking for King: "He said many of my supporters would not understand my meeting and working with Malcolm X. They might interpret this as a deviation or abandonment of my commitment to non-violence." From Thomas's tone and commentary, this "interpretation" was misguided.

To alleviate this concern about the possibility of "violence", SCLC leader Andrew Young finalizes this segment, revealing to white viewers the "real" purpose of Malcolm's negative

image. Young states, "When Malcolm came down to Selma, he came down to Selma basically, almost to say there was a coalition. He reassured Coretta and all of us that he was not there to cause trouble, he was not there to take over the movement, but he thought that if white people saw him there, they would understand that if Martin Luther King didn't succeed, they were going to have to deal with him". Young's story repeats the common narrative that places Malcolm's purpose in Selma as one in full service to Civil Rights goals and to King himself. Yet, this dominant narrative also operates to reveal to white viewers that their fears of Malcolm's "negative image" or threat of violence was unfounded by their white forbearers in the 1960s. This negative image was just a tactic to move forward Civil Rights goals. This exposure brings white viewers into the fold of the inner-workings of Civil Rights Movement strategy, which, at that time, required the manipulation of the unwarranted fears of white people. Yet, now that contemporary white viewers are assured that Malcolm was not dangerous and was already a part of the movement, they can become enlightened white liberal heroes who understand they can accept Malcolm X as a safe and consumable Civil Rights figure.

This redemptive moment for both Malcolm X and the white audience concludes with a final photograph of Martin and Malcolm, strategically positioned before commercial break. The photograph shows them both in medium close-up, the frame cropped just above the elbow. What the framing cuts out, however, is the bottom half of the original photograph that pictures Martin and Malcolm shaking hands. The fact that the editors decided to crop this section out illuminates the message created, which is meant to entice the white viewer to want to bring them together, to feel it is their duty to fully realize the necessary push to bring Malcolm over to King's side. Dan Rather's voiceover, and the camera's long take on the edited photograph, adds to a feeling of unfinished business: "King and Malcolm actually met twice, with little said between them on

both occasions. The two most influential African American leaders of the twentieth century left it at that." A statement constructed to instigate feelings of longing and, perhaps, guilt on the part of the white viewer. Clarence Thomas, given the last word, concretizes this effect. He states, "Retrospectively, I think it was a political mistake. And, I think for the movement as a whole, it was a tragedy". With this affective construction of despair, longing, and guilt, and the knowledge of the role white people (of the past) played in keeping Malcolm from King, contemporary White viewers now understand it is their duty to fold him back into a liberal Civil Rights history. They become white liberal heroes that help to redeem Malcolm X, but also, in the process, they redeem themselves by righting the wrongs of their white predecessors.

Distortion and Dismissal of Malcolm X's Black Internationalism

Once Malcolm X is redeemed from his affiliation with the NOI and moved towards the Civil Rights Movement and King, it becomes easier to disengage, dismiss or distort his Black internationalist perspective. Though each of the documentaries portray Malcolm's internationalism differently, they all, in some way, prioritize those elements of Malcolm's life that fit into a narrative of US nationalism; be it finalizing his political career as in alignment and in service to Civil Rights and King, simplifying or ignoring his critiques of American imperialism or downplaying his objectives for Pan-Africanist and Third Worldist alliances, or completely omitting the impact of African socialism on his later political and economic philosophies. These attempts to domesticate and Americanize his memory thus help to understate or distort the radical, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist platform that constituted his Black internationalist politics.

During Malcolm's lifetime, Black internationalism was crystallized by, what he and others called, "the rise of the dark world", manifested in the decolonization struggles taking place across the continents of Asia, Africa, and South America. As Malcolm X puts it in 1963:

> The time is past when the white world can exercise unilateral authority and control over the dark world. The independence and power of the dark world is on the increase…As the white man loses his power to oppress and exploit the dark world, the white man's own wealth (power or "world") decreases…You and I were born at this turning point in history…Our present generation is witnessing the end of colonialism, Europeanism, Westernism, or " White-ism"…the end of white supremacy…"[15]

Thus, at the core of Black internationalism, is the global struggle against white supremacy: the historic continuation of Pan-European and American projects of domination and exploitation of most of the world's peoples, lands, and resources; these projects operating through a logic of extremely unequal relations between human beings, rationalized, predominantly, on the basis of race. As Malcolm saw it, white world supremacy was the enemy that connected a majority of the world's inhabitants, to which he, and many others, identified under an encompassing, expanded definition of Blackness. For instance, when he referred to the "Black Revolution", he discussed it in terms of a "worldwide revolution" that included Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[16] In a speech delivered at the Africa Freedom Day Rally in New York City in 1959, he names the common enemy in which "the darker people of the earth" share, which he identifies as the Englishman, the Frenchman, the Belgian, the colonialist, the imperialist and, with emphasis: "America…the citadel of White colonialism, the bulwark of White imperialism…the slave master of slave masters".[17] Here, as in other speeches and sermons, he points to the remains of European colonialism as they morph into an even more powerful American imperialism (what he

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[15] Malcolm X, "God's Judgment of White America," Manhattan Center, New York City, December 3, 1963.
[16] Ibid.
[17] See Clayborne Carson's *Malcolm X: The FBI File* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 1991). Speech record in *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch*, April 23rd 1959.

also calls "American dollarism"), highlighting the importance of Black struggle in the US in relationship to struggles across the globe. In the spirit of internationalism, at the end of this speech in 1959, he calls for a "Bandung Conference in Harlem", seeing the international solidarity of the "darker nations" as the model and platform for Black struggle within the US.[18]

Malcolm's Black internationalism expanded[19] in the last year of his life, as he travelled twice to the continents of Africa and Asia, established deep ties with Third World leaders, made his pilgrimage to Mecca, and began developing the Organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU). The development of the OAAU began in Ghana with African American expatriates and was modeled after, and in deep allegiance to, the Organization of African Unity (OAU).[20] While organizing there, Malcolm met national leaders from both Africa and Asia and ambassadors from China and Cuba, attempting to gain support for the OAAU and for his plan to indict the US for human rights violations in front of the UN court. These leaders received and identified Malcolm X as a diplomat who was representing African Americans as a subjugated people "engaged in a struggle for national liberation".[21] This trip established deep ties that led to his return in the fall of 1964 where he was invited to the OAU Summit Conference of Heads of

[18] The Bandung Conference was held in Indonesia in 1955, which brought together twenty-nine countries that sought to align and organize against colonialism, imperialism, and racism. The shared common goals of the conference were to bring peace and stability to the globe, seeking the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, especially from the U.S. and the Soviet Union, economic equality and cooperation in the wake the devastation of the legacy of colonialism, and cultural cooperation to battle the legacies of imperial cultural chauvinism and indignity. The conference paved the way for the Third World Non-Alignment movement and succeeded in expanding the admittance of former colonized states into the United Nations. See Vijay Prashad's *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008).

[19] The word "expanded" is used here to reiterate the point that Malcolm X's internationalism had undergirded his thinking far before the last year of his life. In 1959, Malcolm X had already travelled once to both Africa and Asia as an ambassador for the Nation of Islam and was deeply impacted by the CIA-backed assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. In 1960, at the climax of tension in US-Cuba relations, Malcolm met with Fidel Castro and facilitated his stay at the Hotel Theresa. As early as 1957, Malcolm outwardly praised and supported Gamal Abdel Nasser, of Egypt, especially in his defiant struggle against European imperialism and control over the Suez Canal.

[20] See William W. Sales, Jr.'s *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

[21] Ibid., 102.

State in Cairo. These trips and connections also led to his more crystallized critique of capitalism, which caused him to question and modify his political and economic programs of Black Nationalism—modeled on capitalism rooted in Western imperialism—and move towards alternative forms of socialism. Undoubtedly, Malcolm's influence and analysis had expanded and strengthened during this last year of his life, and this growth is what characterizes Malcolm's political legacy, which was, by and large, in struggle with US imperialism on both a domestic and global front.

This legacy, however, is simplified, dismissed, and in some cases, distorted to such a degree, its manipulation works to invert Malcolm's goals completely. This is the case with CBS's *Malcolm X: The Real Story*. Similar to the way it demonizes the NOI, the documentary adopts a historical, hegemonic perspective that downplays and dismisses Malcolm's internationalism and global influence. Dan Rather begins to replay this perspective by first framing Malcolm's departure from the NOI in his voiceover as "a desperate time for him" in which he was "discouraged and disillusioned". Disallowing any archival footage of Malcolm X to speak for himself, the viewer is guided by Rather's despondent, dramatic characterization, which is then corroborated by Mike Wallace, the most authoritative voice in the documentary. Cutting to a close-up of Wallace, he states: "[Malcolm X] started something called the OAAU, the Organization for Afro-American Unity. And I asked him, well who's your constituency, who's in there, he said well I don't have many followers. Well who's supporting you, well I don't have any money. He was a man in search of a platform from which to declaim, in search of his constituency, in search of money; he was lost." Not only do Wallace's comments completely elide any engagement with the development and aims of the OAAU, his facial expressions do the work of dismissing and disqualifying the organization altogether. He struggles to even remember

the name of this ostensibly inconsequential group, at first straining to state each letter of the acronym. The filmmakers give viewers a shot reverse shot of Rather during this commentary, where he squirms in his chair in discomfort of how empty Malcolm's efforts had become. As surrogates of Rather, the viewers are made to associate this downcast and disillusioned moment with Malcolm's organization. The organization was, in the way it's represented, a futile and fruitless endeavor.

This denigration of Malcolm's most revolutionary organizing efforts is exacerbated by the way the documentary rescripts the purpose and meaning of his travels overseas. Rather's voiceover states, "In April, perhaps to get away from his painful difficulties at home, Malcolm travelled to Africa and Saudi Arabia. That trip would produce extraordinary changes in his life." This notion of "getting away from painful difficulties" serves as Rather's explanation for Malcolm's trip, completely erasing the purposeful objectives he had in making those travels. For Malcolm to have met with as many national leaders as he did, for him to have been able to perform the hajj, and to have gotten the OAAU off the ground while there, much preparation and planning had to have taken place beforehand. These experiences while overseas were those that actually produced the "extraordinary changes in his life", as both his spiritual and political horizons expanded beyond the United States and gave him further insight as to the global nature of power—with the United States its primary arbiter—and the need for an international plan for liberation.

However, these "extraordinary changes" are not those that Rather was referring to in his voiceover. Instead, these developments are decisively omitted and the "extraordinary changes" are reframed to focus centrally on Malcolm's supposed conversion to colorblindness while making his hajj to Mecca. The documentary cuts from images of Malcolm praying to the

voiceover and interview footage of Maya Angelou, who is made to illustrate: “he talked to us about the metamorphosis he had experienced. He had gone to Mecca, and that he had seen blond-haired, blue-eyed men who he could call brother. So he had to revise his statement that all whites were blue-eyed devils.” At the moment when she says the words “blond-haired, blue-eyed men”, the score stops, dramatizing her soothing voice and making viewers sit with this moment without distraction. This reconstructed narrative delivers Malcolm to white viewers who had just been interpellated to accept him as a safe and consumable Civil Rights leader. Instead of focusing on the radical developments of his international ties or even the spiritual clarity and clout bestowed upon Malcolm for completing his pilgrimage, “the extraordinary changes” are meant to be about Malcolm’s enlightenment and acceptance of white people.

This supposed enlightenment, as a result of Malcolm’s hajj, is pushed further, as he is coerced to apologize to his white viewers. In order to construct this apology, the filmmakers had to reorder the archival footage of a CBC television program, *Front Line Challenge*.[22] Directly following Angelou’s commentary, historical footage of the CBC program opens with an announcement that “Malcolm X rejected the philosophy of Black racism and called Elijah Muhammad a religious faker”. The CBS documentary then cuts straight to a comment from the last seconds of the CBC program. The clip shows the host, Fred Davis, addressing Malcolm X: “Mr. X, may I thank you very much for coming on our program. I think you’re a very sincere man, and it takes a lot of courage to admit a former belief is wrong.” The footage is edited to cut immediately to Malcolm X who smiles at this comment and then nods to the screen. In the original footage, Davis continues his statement: “and perhaps clearing away some of the

[22] Alex Baris, *Front Page Challenge*, Host: Fred Davis, Guest: Malcolm X, Panelists: Betty Pierce Burton, Charles Kennedy, Charles Templeton, Gordon Sinclair, Jr., CBC, aired January 5, 1965.

cobwebs of misconception that some of us might have had about your beliefs". This statement and the entire episode—in which Malcolm discusses the underlying psychology of whiteness, the philosophy of human rights vs. civil rights, the connections between human rights violations in the US and South Africa, among other radical topics—these are aspects of the show he was nodding and agreeing to. The way this footage is edited, there is a simplistic message crafted in which Malcolm X is coerced to make a false confession that he was wrong in discriminating against, or even criticizing, white people.

The CBS documentary is somewhat extreme in its manipulation of Malcolm's pilgrimage or in its dismissal of his Black internationalism. None of the other documentaries go so far to directly discredit Malcolm's international developments, but they do, through more subtle means, depoliticize and downplay its radical character and meaning. Both PBS documentaries, *Eyes on the Prize*, "A Time Has Come", and *Make It Plain* share in depoliticizing Malcolm's internationalism, as was already argued, by ending his political career in service to King and cutting all of his speech in Selma, which included a scathing critique of US imperialist hypocrisy and a call for a widening, internationalist scope for Black struggle in the US. Beyond these choices in narrative structure and editing, however, both documentaries also deemphasize a central tenant of Malcolm's internationalist philosophy: the unification of forces between radical Third World nations and a Black United Front within the US. This de-emphasis or distortion of the radical solidarity Malcolm called for allows the documentaries to stress Malcolm's individual charisma as an international figure and to downplay the significance of building an international movement against US imperialism, global capitalism, and white supremacy.

In "A Time Has Come", the voiceover introduces the OAAU prior to any mention of Malcolm's travels overseas and characterizes the organization as "dedicated to the philosophy of

Black Nationalism". While the voiceover introduces the OAAU, the documentary shows footage of Malcolm X at the actual OAAU Founding Rally at the Audubon Ballroom on June 28, 1964. Yet, the only part of the speech that is shown is Malcolm giving the Muslim greeting "As-Salaam Alaikum". The documentary then cuts to Malcolm X speaking about Black Nationalism from a news interview that actually took place prior to the OAAU Founding Rally and prior to his travels abroad. In this earlier footage, Malcolm is made to respond to the voiceover's claim about the OAAU's dedication to Black Nationalism:

> which means the Black man should control the politics of his own community and control the politicians that are in his own community. My personal economic philosophy is also Black Nationalism, which means the Black man should have a hand in controlling the economy of the so-called Negro community. He should be developing the type of knowledge that will enable him to own and operate the businesses and, thereby, be able to create employment for his own people.

The documentary completely dismisses the role Africa (and Asia) played in the development of the OAAU. The narrative structure positions Malcolm's travels as having come after the development of his organization, thus further displacing the connection. Furthermore, the footage of Malcolm discussing Black Nationalism is also chronologically out of order and evidently used to illustrate the voiceover's claim, which is simplified and inaccurate. The words Black Nationalist are used only once at the OAAU Founding Rally, and they take place prior to the main speech and are in reference to a future conversation about building a "Black Nationalist army". In the speech, and in the stated "Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity", Black Nationalism is never brought up again.

The speech, and the platform of the organization, rested more so on the principles of Pan-African unity. The speech states, at the start, that the aims and objectives of the OAAU are modeled after the OAU, and a central goal is to "to unite everyone in the Western Hemisphere of African descent into one united force". This force would then "unite with our brothers on the

motherland, on the continent of Africa".[23] The documentary cuts out this radical theme of solidarity and replaces it with an earlier formulation Malcolm X had about Black Nationalism that advocated for modes of political and economic empowerment that fit within a capitalist system. This clip, and its function as explanation for OAAU, completely omits the Pan-Africanism at the core of the organization and the threat Pan-African and Third Worldist solidarity posed to white world supremacy. This is not to say that Malcolm's earlier Black Nationalist philosophy did not impact or help shape parts of the speech, especially his plans for community control of education, economics, and politics. But, for strategic decisions, Malcolm X chose not to define the organization in terms of Black Nationalism, especially since one of the central aims was to create a united Black Front, to, as he says in the speech, "submerge all differences" in the way African nations had in order "to fight a common enemy". Not only, then, would the framing of the organization, which, foundationally, was built on a transnational structure, conflict with his calls for Black Nationalism, but Malcolm, and the OAAU founding committee, sought to not exclude other Black organizations hesitant to identify with Black Nationalism.

With this definition of Black Nationalism framing Malcolm's political development, the following sequence further obscures the radicalism of Pan-Africanism and Third World solidarity. Following the clip of Malcolm explaining his philosophy of Black Nationalism, the documentary introduces his travels overseas, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his meeting with African leaders. The voiceover frames these events, however, not through the lens of building solidarity, but through the lens of controversy and conspiracy. The voiceover states: "His meetings with African leaders to seek their support attracted the attention of the US justice and

[23] Malcolm X, "OAAU Founding Rally," Audubon Ballroom, Washington Heights, New York City, June 28th 1964.

state departments." The voiceover characterizes his meetings as conspiratorial or controversial without further explanation, but this tone of controversy then colors the meaning of the following clip, where Malcolm X is interviewed during his visit to Cairo, Egypt for the Second African Summit Conference. He states:

> My purpose here is to remind the African Heads of State that there are twenty-two million of us in America who are also of African descent, and to remind them, also, that we are the victims of America's colonialism or American imperialism and that our problem is not an American problem, it is a human problem. It is not a Negro problem, but a human problem. It is not a problem of Civil Rights, but of Human Rights.

These statements depict, undoubtedly, the most radical statements made within the entire documentary, even allowing the words "American imperialism" to appear on mainstream television. Yet, with the tone of controversy and conspiracy framing this clip, the radical impact of the statement is lessened, and the following clips help in eliding any engagement with the radical aspects of the statement and shift the narrative to a more domesticized and simplified story about Malcolm X taking America to the UN court.

Historian A. Peter Bailey, who is made to refashion the meaning of Malcolm's message in the next clip, focuses singularly on Malcolm's UN action, stating that his "ultimate" aim, in terms of foreign policy, was to have the US government "to have to defend its inaction in terms of the racist attacks that were going on at that time." It is not that this commentary is untrue or unimportant, but that it leaves out its most radical aspects, and actually leaves open an opportunity for an assumed American redemption. Because Bailey frames it as "going on at that time", it is assumed, rhetorically, that these same kinds of racist attacks no longer exist. Furthermore, the Black internationalist perspective falls away, because part of the strength in bringing the US in front of the UN court was to expose its hypocrisies as the purported, rightful leader of the free world and forewarn emerging nations about its racist, exploitative practices, as

it meddles in their emerging political economies. In a way, the indictment at the UN court would expose America's imperialist agenda in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and open the way for solidarity and struggle against it. As Malcolm points out on multiple occasions, it would be foolish for these emerging nations to abstain from criticizing the US for its treatment of Black people, because American imperialism is not simply a domestic issue, but a world problem. In this Cairo interview, as in many other interviews in the documentary, Malcolm clarifies this and makes clear his aims to create internationalist solidarities between Third World countries and Black people in the US. But, these portions of his talk are cut out. Here, in this Cairo clip, at the moment where the clip is cut, he immediately goes on to finish his statement: "many of [the African Heads of State] had been misinformed by the American government into thinking that Black people in America don't identify with Africa and, therefore, they restrain themselves from voicing their interest in our problems. But I've impressed upon them our problems are their problems, and their problems are our problems."

None of this engagement is even possible in the A&E documentary *A Search for Identity*, as Malcolm's post-NOI period, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his creation of the OAAU are covered in just two minutes before the documentary begins its final narrative on the assassination of Malcolm X and the legacy of that assassination in 1995. Just in terms of temporal choices in constructing the narrative, the documentary clearly dismisses the significance of Malcolm's Black internationalist developments. Half of the length of the documentary is spent on Malcolm's background history and his time in jail, just over a quarter of its length is spent on his time in the NOI, and just under a quarter of its length on the final assaults on his life, his assassination, and controversies involving Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm's daughter Qubilah Shabazz. Similar to the Spike Lee film, the documentary plays up Malcolm's criminal

background and emphasizes his individual transformations; hence the title of the documentary *A Search for Identity*. Because the documentary is part of A&E's *Biography* series, it tries to craft these individualized transformations into a story about an American hero. For this to happen, the documentary avoids Malcolm's critiques of the US, omitting any mention of his efforts to take the US to the UN, and downplays the significance of his internationalism by giving it only a moment's mention in the context of the rest of the narrative.

Because of this very short allotment of time, the portrayal of Malcolm's travels to Africa and Asia, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his development of the OAAU are extremely conflated and convoluted. After quickly moving Malcolm away from the NOI, pairing him with Martin Luther King Jr., and portraying "his new activism" through an abstracted clip of him stating "the ballot is as powerful as the bullet", all within a single minute, the voiceover introduces Malcolm's trip to Mecca. The voiceover states: "his sense of religious mission drew him to a once in a lifetime opportunity for a pilgrimage to Mecca. It was a journey that would fundamentally change him." This is the only time the voiceover mentions Malcolm travels overseas, completely ignoring the political intentions of his visit, solely confining them to religion. Similar to the CBS documentary, this trip is made to be completely separate from the development of the OAAU, which is mentioned thirty seconds later with no context other than the year in which the organization was developed.

The documentary cuts to footage of Malcolm X stepping off a plane, and the voiceover states: "In 1964, Malcolm formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity, created to reach out to Blacks throughout the world as an expression of brotherhood." As with the earlier segments of the documentary, the explanation of Malcolm's organization, as an "expression of brotherhood", fits his internationalism within a liberal discourse about race. Here, Malcolm's aims for

international solidarity are reduced to an abstracted formulation of cultural expression. A cultural symbolism, based in the realm of feeling, replaces the historical and material links between race, capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. This cultural explanation not only covers over the extreme inequality produced by unequal power relations rationalized on the basis of race, but it also rewrites the function of culture in the struggle against it, which, as laid out in the aims and objective of the OAAU, plays a crucial role in transforming the political, social, and economic conditions in which oppressed people live. Here, culture functions more to distract, rather than transform, material conditions.

This depoliticized explanation of the OAAU frames the follow up commentary from Peter Bailey, dulling the impact of his explanation. After the voiceover frames the OAAU in terms of cultural expression, the documentary cuts to Bailey stating: "Unlike the other leaders at that time, Malcolm X had a foreign policy. He was treated, in Africa when he travelled around, almost like he was a Secretary of State…you know from Black folks in America to the rest of the world." The documentary corroborates these claims with still images of Malcolm with foreign leaders and diplomats. It refrains from including any historical footage that would allow Malcolm X to speak for himself. Bailey does begin to speak to the importance of Malcolm's internationalism, as he claimed he "had a foreign policy", but audience members are never allowed to know what that policy was. Instead, this term "foreign policy" is simply used as a way to transition to Malcolm's individual importance among leaders in Africa. Because the OAAU in not mentioned in the commentary, viewers can only imply that the organization has something to do with his treatment in Africa. Yet, any meaning they can create is formulated within the racial discourse of cultural identity and expression, which, here, can simply be read as African leaders "expressing their brotherhood" for Malcolm X.

However, there is another function for Bailey's comments of "Secretary of State", as it becomes a dialogue motif that is picked up at the very end of the program. When host Jack Perkins summarizes the program, he states: "Malcolm X led a life of continual change and growth. Spent the final years of his life struggling to find his spirituality. There was no doubt in the minds of his followers that he was headed for greatness, perhaps public office, but Malcolm was murdered, his dreams were left unfulfilled." These summary comments expose the goals of the documentary's narrative trajectory that spent much time on Malcolm's background and criminal history in order to redeem him through "change and growth" that culminate in his imagined public office. The tropes of Black criminality in the beginning become extremely important to establish in order for his redemption in the end, which need only to quickly refer to his connection to the Civil Rights Movement and a mention of a US state office position. A US public office position becomes the mechanism to completely shut out Malcolm's Black internationalist goals to struggle against American imperialism through Pan-African and Third World solidarities and, instead, it turns him into an (imagined) American hero.

Malcolm X's Legacy in Terms of Culture, Identity, and Personal Feeling

As the A&E documentary confines Malcolm X's legacy within a narrative of heroism, directly sutured to the US state, most of the documentaries under study construct their legacy narratives in terms of culture, identity, and personal feeling. These stories of Malcolm's influence and legacy offer lessons and solutions for racial injustice confined within a liberal discourse based on cultural recognition and identity politics that disassociate racial justice from political or economic justice. Race is simply understood as a cultural formation or as cultural identity and, therefore, its historical function as a political and economic relation of domination and exploitation is dissolved. This liberal antiracism becomes focused on individual or group

identity as a source of cultural pride and as a form of social capital, and the goals of racial justice become simply about inclusion and recognition within the unequal system of American capitalism.[24] These objectives of racial justice are confined to an idea of reconciliation that absconds from any need for policy changes or structural transformation and instead posits redress in terms of interpersonal relationships and changes in personal attitudes.

The PBS *Open Mind* special "Race Relations in America" depicts Malcolm's legacy in and through these formulations of race and racial justice. The program begins with host Richard Heffner who defines the program's purpose to "look back and to look ahead at race relations in America", which is materialized, first, by replaying the show's 1963 episode "Race Relations in Crisis", featuring Malcolm X in conversation with James Farmer, Wyatt T. Walker, and others, and, second, a follow-up interview with Farmer and Wyatt in 1992. In his opening remarks, Heffner entreats his audience to remember that the historical program took place "weeks before the massive March on Washington and Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech". He also reminds his audience that Kennedy sent out the National Guard to aid in the enrollment of the first Black students into the University of Alabama, intimating that the topics discussed by Malcolm X and others would be rectified, in some degree, by the most popular historical markers of the classic, triumphant, Civil Rights story.

Hefner ends his opening remarks restating parts of a speech Kennedy gave in 1963, which define redress for racial injustice in terms of morality and personal behavior. He states:

> John F. Kennedy appealed…to what Lincoln called 'the better angels of our nature' to help set right the relationship of white to Black Americans. We are confronted primarily with a moral issue, pled the young president…[Heffner turns to read directly from Kennedy's words] it is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American

[24] See Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism," *Social Text*, 24, no. 4, 2006. See also, Alana Lentin, "Replacing 'race', historicizing 'culture' in multiculturalism," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39, no. 4, 2005.

> constitution, the heart of the question is whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we wanted to be treated.

These framing comments mobilize a liberal discourse of antiracism that posits redress in terms of changing the way people feel about one another and treat one another. That racial inequality is "primarily" a moral issue obscures any challenge to the structural racism American capitalism is based on and, conversely, invites an opportunity to rejuvenate myths about the innate exceptionality of the US project.

In the rebroadcast of the 1963 conversation, Malcolm X concretely disrupts these claims to American exceptionalism and disallows the use of Black people as reason, and excuse, to continually renew this narrative. Throughout the episode, Malcolm analyzes the struggle for freedom and the material conditions of Black people in America through the lens and legacy of slavery and white supremacy. He does not allow for their disavowal or redemption, but instead connects America's past to the continued violence of its legal institutions, its political economy, and its historical practice of managing Black resistance and suffering. In a discussion about the desire of the 'power structure' to contain Black struggle, Malcolm adds:

> Yes, that's the white power structure. When you say power structure, I know you mean the white power structure, because that is all we have in America. The white power structure today is just as much interested in perpetuating slavery, as the white power structure was a hundred years ago. Only now they use modern methods of doing so...A hundred years ago, they could do it with chains. Today, they use tricks. And one of the tricks they've invented is this token integration, to get so-called Negro leaders to accept a few token crumbs of integration that don't solve any problem for the masses of Black people in this country whatsoever. But it does make the handpicked Negroes be satisfied to slow down the cry of the masses…Now the president is talking about new legislation, to take [the rebellion] out of the streets and back into the courts. As long as it is in the streets, it's in the hands of the masses of Black people who will not compromise or who cannot be bought out. But when you put it back in the courts, then that puts it back into the hands of the handpicked Negro leaders who will allow the judges and other persons who are involved in this white power structure to slow them down.

Malcolm X does not forget to center race in his analysis of the US, reminding his co-panelists of the power structure's reliance and foundation in race, and the manipulation of race in containing the rage and power of the masses of Black people. He goes on to explain that "freedom and recognition between Black and white people" will never be attained without destroying the social, political, and economic systems in which the US is built upon (this statement quoted earlier in the chapter).

Yet, these analyses are muted in the last segment of the program. Heffner immediately dismisses most of what Malcolm X states by starting the conversation with the question "…[that had he lived] long enough to have seemingly shifted his own orientation, his sense of separatism…which Malcolm is going to be remembered, the separatist or the integrationist?" Heffner simplifies the possibilities for Malcolm X, and the Black Freedom Movement, into an antagonistic binary of integration vs. separation, disregarding Malcolm's consistent critique of integration throughout his life. He also disregards his radical critique of American political and economic history and, instead, prioritizes a misleading shift in Malcolm's perspective toward integration. Directly responding to Heffner's question, however, James Farmer reinforces Heffner's framing, but this time mobilizing a discourse of identity politics. Farmer states: "Malcolm moved closer towards the Civil Rights Movement after his return from Mecca. [Walker chimes in at this moment from off-screen, "absolutely".] And the Civil Rights Movement moved closer to Malcolm with Black identity becoming a part of the Civil Rights struggle. So the mainstream of the United States Civil Rights struggle today is part integrationist and part Black identity and Afro-centrism, if you will." In this statement, Farmer wants to give Malcolm credit for his influence on the Civil Rights Movement, not wanting to simply identify Malcolm X with integration, as did Heffner. Yet, Farmer does his own simplification and

depoliticizing of Malcolm's influence by confining his radicalism to an aestheticized formulation of racial justice located in Black identity. This formulation fits within multicultural antiracism, which confines the impact of racism to the realm of identity and subject formation. The relationship between subject formation and the larger social, political, and economic forces are de-linked, and individual character and psychology become the narrow space where freedom can seemingly be fought for and materialized.

Farmer further individualizes and dematerializes the problems of racial inequality through his definition of racism, and he uses Malcolm X to illustrate his point. According to Farmer, "we were fighting against Jim Crow, against segregation, and we were not fighting against racism unfortunately, and we may have confused the two…we did knock out Jim Crow…but what remained was racism, and that is a concept, that's an idea, that's a belief. That the skin color and hair texture have something to do with morality, with character, with intelligence, and with other human qualities." In his definition of racism, Farmer disconnects the relationship between racism and its structural foundations. Racism becomes something separate, located in personal prejudices and beliefs. It is abstracted to the realm of idea and feeling, where even Jim Crow, as a legal system of oppression and exploitation, is something other than racism. This claim that Jim Crow was "knocked out" is an entrenched ideology based in the hegemonic, classic Civil Rights story, where the political and legal institutions accomplished the goals of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, the material conditions on the ground prove differently.

This hegemonic ideology that Jim Crow was dismantled leaves the continuation of racism and the condition of growing inequality to a dematerialized understanding of race and its operations. As such, Farmer goes on to suggest that, as an idea and a belief, racism can simply be unlearned, and he uses what he calls "the second Malcolm" to back up his claim. He states, "The

thing about Malcolm, in his pre-Mecca days, he believed that white racism was genetic. In other words, they had it, God, Allah as he would have put it, gave it to them, and there was nothing you could do about it. After Mecca, he saw that that was not true…and he was convinced then that racism as he had witnessed it in America was learned and not genetic. And if it is learned, I repeat, it can be unlearned." This explanation of Malcolm's thoughts on white racism leaves out the material aspects Malcolm consistently reiterated about the conditions of white supremacy both within and outside of the US, even in his "pre-Mecca" days. In his "post-Mecca" days, Malcolm X came to understand white racism through an even clearer, internationalist perspective, where the role of global capitalism, and the jockeying of Cold War rivals over the resources and control of decolonized nations, became, for him, the central obstacles in overcoming racism. Because, as Malcolm explained it, it would be through "the study of Islam", not a simplistic practice of "unlearning" racism, that he felt whites could overcome their racism, and this study, and the insight it would provide, was based in the historical and material conditions of a larger world picture.

The PBS documentary *Make It Plain* provides a stronger presentation of Malcolm's internationalism, the world picture absent from *Open Mind*, but this internationalism, and the central focus of ending white world supremacy, is, similarly, not prioritized in the framing of Malcolm's legacy and lessons. The framing of these lessons begins with a montage sequence at the start of the documentary, which acts as a kind of bookend that will be echoed again at the very end. The opening montage footage is wrapped in a light jazz score, threading archival footage of Malcolm X with contemporary images and interview responses from Ossie Davis and Sonia Sanchez. The montage opens with multiple shots of Black men, women, and children walking down a street, apparently from the present moment. This collection of images is shot in

black-and-white film stock and are voiced-over by Malcolm X speaking about the concept of self-hatred. He states, “Who taught you to hate the color of your skin? Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair?” The montage then cuts to the 1962 speech where Malcolm continues to ask his audience: “Before you come asking Mr. Muhammad does he teach hate, you should ask yourself who taught you to hate being what God gave you”. The editing, the score, the black-and-white stock, and the voiceover are meant to bring the present and past together, as it seems Malcolm X is directly speaking to the people on the street (and, thus, the people watching the program). This opening address signals the importance of this lesson about self-hate and the problem of racism in terms of personal (or group) psychology, which acts as a kind of thesis that is then reiterated at the end of the documentary.

This theme of self-hate spills into the present as Davis corroborates what Malcolm X is saying in the next segment of the montage. His voiceover creates a sound bridge from the archival footage of Malcolm X to a medium shot of Davis in an interview, again threading the past with the present. Davis states: “Most of us Blacks, or Negroes as he called us, really thought we were free without being aware that in our subconscious, all those chains we thought had been struck off were still there. And…what really motivated us was our desire to be loved by the white man. Malcolm meant to lance that sense of inferiority.” Thus far, the lesson Malcolm X provides is based in the realm of feeling and psychology, and thus the problems of racism are located within individuals and the way individuals feel about themselves and about one another. In this statement, as well, the claim that one thinks they are free, except for within one’s own mind, obscures the continuation of material hardship many Black people experience. This is not to argue that Malcolm’s message, nor Davis’s agreement and explanation, are not significant or important, since, they both explain how white supremacist ideology penetrates how human

subjects are shaped. Yet, the historical practices of white supremacy, and their material consequences, are severed from both commentaries. Because of the silence imposed on material issues, Davis's statement reiterates the idea that the political and economic institutions in the US are sound, and that the location for transformation need only happen in the way one sees and feels about their self. Once an individual can free their self from this sense of inferiority, racism will have less impact upon their lives.

Lessons of Malcolm's legacy continue to be de-materialized in Sonia Sanchez's response in the next montage segment, as she continues in the logic that prioritizes personal feeling and self-expression. Sanchez states:

> He expelled fear for African Americans. He says, I will speak out loud what we've been thinking. And he said, you'll see, people will hear it, and they will not do anything to us…but I will now speak it for the masses of people. [He spoke] in this fashion that is I am not afraid to say what you've been thinking all these years. That's why we loved him. He said it out loud, not behind closed doors. He took on America for us.

Though this last comment begins to breach a critique of the US, just by stating its name, the methods Sanchez suggests 'to take on America' can also fit into a multicultural discourse, which sees the power of cultural recognition, the ability to "voice" one's feelings, as a sufficient form of redress. Again, this commentary places resolution for racism within the realm of psychology, and if Black people could just fully express their selves and what they were thinking, the problems of American racism could be resolved. Placing resolution within the realm of individual or cultural self-expression, however, distracts from the need for structural change.

This prioritizing of self-expression and individual psychology are concretized in the last portion of the opening montage where Malcolm X is made to reiterate these points and finalize this framing with the added lesson of interpersonal exchange between Black and white people. The montage returns to the same 1962 speech and, here, Malcolm X states: "I, for one, as a

Muslim believe that the white man is intelligent enough, if he were made to realize how Black people really feel and how fed up we are without that old compromising sweet talk…Stop sweet talking him, tell him how you feel. Tell him what kind of hell you've been catching and let him know that if he is not ready to clean his house up…he shouldn't have a house; it should catch on fire and burn down." In the last part of this clip, Malcolm X is utilizing the metaphor of the house to refer to the United States as a whole system that should be destroyed if it cannot stop producing miserable material conditions for Black people. This message rings truer and more accurate in relationship to the rest of the actual 1962 speech, but the way the footage is cut, and in the context of the interviews and first segment of the speech, the message of interpersonal exchange is prioritized. The idea that Black people should tell white people how they really feel is what makes most sense in the context of the montage. Also, the idea that white people may respond intelligently is a kind of lesson motif that comes back at the end of the documentary.

In the entirety of the actual 1962 speech, Malcolm X never again makes any statement or illusion to the need for interpersonal exchange as an answer to the "hell [Black people] have been catching". Instead, the speech was given in response to the murder of Ronald Stokes by Los Angeles police officers, and the central themes of the speech were about unity among Black people, regardless of religion, and getting to the root of continued Black suffering in America. The speech covered many topics to provide context for these themes, such as the un-enforced desegregation bill, the hypocrisy of non-violence when it came to American foreign policy, and the role of the media in criminalizing Blackness. It also emphasized the need to learn lessons from decolonized nations, and the way in which these nations came together to rid themselves of exploitation from their white oppressors. These points of rigorous critique and resistance against white supremacy and the need for Black unity were the intended priorities of the speech, which

is where the reference to a burning house makes sense. Yet, the abstracted segment of this speech, in the context of this opening legacy/lesson segment, repurposes Malcolm's words to fit within a liberal discourse that emphasizes the need for interpersonal exchange, the changing of attitudes, and self-expression in place of a complete transformation of an unequal system.

This discourse is echoed again at the end of the documentary, completing the legacy bookend initiated at the start. Immediately following Malcolm's assassination story and funeral coverage, the final legacy segment begins with interview footage of Peter Goldman, describing the evolution of his relationship with Malcolm X. Goldman's voiceover begins while the final seconds of archival footage of Malcolm's burial linger on the screen, and a somber musical score hangs in a lower volume behind the clarity of Goldman's voiceover. Instead of allowing the somber score to finish and have the burial footage end without commentary, the filmmakers chose to link Goldman's words to this burial imagery. These techniques actually disallow a moment of silence or a sense of completion in Malcolm's death, and instead move his death right into the message Goldman delivers. Goldman states:

> I don't think we ever got to be friends or ever could have. I think our respective skin colors, and his view of this great division would have prevented that. But I do think we did get to…a relationship in which these encounters were interviews to a relationship in which they were conversations. Even in my first encounter…I never took it personally. Even with my blue eyes, and him talking about the blue-eyed devil, I never took it personally. I knew I was part of the indicted group, but he had a way of making you feel comfortable, feel as if you were talking man to man.

As Goldman speaks, the camera zooms in from a medium to a medium-close up shot, drawing audiences into his commentary; an unusual move relative to most of the interview footage throughout the documentary. Positioned in connection to Malcolm's death, and filling the space of the final two minutes of the documentary, Malcolm's ability to speak to a white man as a human being is emphasized, his ability to make him feel comfortable while making him know he

was part of an 'indicted group'. It is the lesson of interpersonal exchange, Malcolm's ability to have a conversation that moves beyond 'bad' feelings.

This lesson or legacy is concretized in the final message of the documentary, delivered by Malcolm X himself. Malcolm is shown stating:

> The only way the problem can be solved, first the white man and the Black man have to be able to sit down at the same table. The white man has to feel free to speak his mind without hurting the feelings of that Negro. And the so-called Negro has to feel free to speak his mind without hurting the feelings of the white man. Then they can bring the issues that are under the rug out on top of the table and take an intelligent approach to get the problem solved.

Here, Malcolm's suggestion for resolution fits Goldman's experience. Goldman becomes an illustration for the kind of action that is necessary to solve "the race problem". And this action is based on interpersonal exchange between Black and white people and personal, self-expression. As the message goes, if Black people and white people could just set aside their personal prejudices (and their ostensible fear of hurting one another's feelings) and be themselves, they could then begin to construct intelligent solutions to racial injustice. Using, first, Goldman's experience and then Malcolm's own words, the lesson Malcolm ostensibly taught is clear and verifiable. In the actual speech, however, his comment about sitting at the 'same table' had come after a discussion of Black people's right to determine their own fate by developing their own political, economic, and social institutions that specifically worked in their own interest. And this self-determined development was the only way in which any kind of interpersonal exchange would be possible. If this context were given, then the lesson taught would be reversed. The biggest obstacle would not be, in the first instance, personal prejudice, but the political, economic, and social institutions that prohibit Black life to flourish.

As *Make It Plain* and *Open Mind* emphasize resolution in terms of personal feeling and self-expression, the CBS documentary, *Malcolm X: The Real Story*, sees the resolution for racial

injustice in a more direct relationship with culture, especially popular culture, and cultural identity. The CBS documentary concentrates its last segment on the legacy of Malcolm X mostly through interviews with cultural icons of the day, such as Chuck D, Wesley Snipes, Robert Townsend, Damon Ivory Wayans, and Mario Van Peebles; all cultural workers in the music and film industry. Directly before the interviews, however, the documentary gives a brief history of Black Power, following Malcolm's death. This history sets the foundation for a simplified cultural understanding of Malcolm's legacy and of antiracism in general. Goldman describes this history in a voiceover as "Black is Beautiful", "afro-haircuts", and "Black pride", as images of Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and Fannie Lou Hamer silently flash across the screen. Though these cultural expressions were intricately tied to social, political, and economic forces in the 1960s and 1970s, culture is severed from these forces in the 1990s. Instead, culture, as group identity recognition and self-expression, come to replace and cover over culture as a "materializing social process" that produces the conditions for a more equal, ethical, and just society.[25] Here Black political power is transformed into aesthetics, style, and personal feeling, shifting culture as a process of liberation and self-determination that aims to transform society to a process of cultural identity development that aims for inclusion into dominant society.

With these cultural definitions established, the legacy segment begins with statements from Brother James and Chuck D from the rap group Public Enemy (PE). Brother James establishes the cultural framework, stating: "The youth now are going through a cultural revolution. We're trying to get back that same type of spark that Black people had in the sixties." Having just had "the sixties" explained in terms of aesthetics and style ("Afro-haircuts" and "Black is Beautiful"), Brother James 'cultural revolution' continues to be framed in these terms.

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[25] Melamed, *Represent and Destroy,* 94.

Chuck D's following comment actually opens some complexity within this narrowed cultural perspective and reveals a cruel irony about both PE and Malcolm X's inclusion within this conservative documentary. Chuck D states: "Just like someone would burn an American flag or mutilate a dollar, you'll see a cold-blooded American be like all offended. But that don't mean nothing to us. But if you took a picture of Malcolm and, like, put a slash across it, you're gonna get in a fight." His comment juxtaposes American flags and dollars with a picture of Malcolm, which gets somewhat at the distinction Malcolm made of himself—as separate from what it means to be an American, and as critical of what he called "American Dollarism". Chuck D aligns himself with these distinctions and promises a confrontation with anyone who desecrates Malcolm's image.

However, this commentary has a cruel irony with the very inclusion of PE within these legacy interviews and the inclusion of Malcolm X on a mainstream, commercial network that has 'scratched' his image (containing and depoliticizing his radicalism especially). Yet, it has obscured 'the scratch' through its liberal framing. The (ostensibly positive) inclusion of PE and Malcolm within these cultural realms assumes their image and memory are not being 'scratched', desecrated, or demonized, and, instead, celebrated and recognized. Yet, their inclusion and recognition are useful financially, as their image sells and attracts, especially, young consumers, and useful politically, as their recognition represents US multicultural enlightenment.

In the following interview, Wesley Snipes, reestablishes a narrow psycho-cultural politics that Chuck D's comment slightly challenged. Snipes states: "[Malcolm X has] inspired these young brothers and sisters to have a sense of self-pride. This whole movement, which I hope is not a fad—of being Malcolmized and walking around with your Kente cloth—a real sense of your African history, well a lot of this began with that type of dialogue that he was expressing at

that time.” Here, Malcolm’s memory and influence are formulated as an individualized endeavor of self-development and personal feeling; even personal style, as Snipes mentions wearing Kente cloth. It is of course true that Malcolm did inspire people to know their African history, but this knowledge was in every way about political, collective transformation. Knowing one’s African roots, and embracing Africa as a homeland, was, in turn, a practice of decolonizing the mind of white supremacist ideology. Moreover, this knowledge and embrace of Africa had everything to do with pride in the liberation struggles and decolonization of African countries. In Snipes comment, the understanding of African history disconnects the reclaiming of one’s own identity from the call for collective transformation and the historical struggle against white supremacy. Instead, the comment is confined within a politics of cultural identity that advocates a kind of self-esteem engineering that absconds from challenging dominant, American society.

In the following interview, Keenan Ivory Wayans commentary continues to depoliticize and individualize the impact of Malcolm’s memory through his redefinition of Black self-determination. Wayans states: “His message of self-determination, and not asking anybody for anything, understanding that a right is not something people give you, it’s something that you’re born with, and you have to exercise your right.” Here, Wayans redefines self-determination as “not asking anybody for anything”, which individualizes and abstracts the terminology from its collective ontology and historical reference. It becomes about individuals not asking for anything from their society and being responsible for themselves. Malcolm’s unwavering commitment to self-determination is reconfigured here to support a neoliberal ideology of self-responsibility that replaces all burdens of society on the individual, obscuring the larger social and historical forces that impact individual lives. Wayans’ reference to the need to “exercise your right”, because “you’re born with it”, reinforces this ideology of self-responsibility through a colorblind logic of

meritocracy, which impresses the idea that there exists a level playing field from which people can equally take care of themselves. If one does not "exercise their [abstract] right" [to take responsibility for themselves], it is their own choice, and, thus, any failure to succeed within American society is of their own doing.

Following Wayans' comment, in the second to last statement of the documentary, Andrew Young extends this notion of self-blame and erases the systemic violence at the root of US society. Young states, "One of the unfortunate things about his death for America, not just for Black people, is that Malcolm probably had the best potential insight into the problems of urban crime, of drug abuse, of the kind of things that enslaves Black people, and that, right now, are bogging down America." With Wayans' logic of self-responsibility in place, and the individualized, aestheticized understanding of Black empowerment framing this final commentary, Young's statement absolves America from its continued violence against Black people, missing a central lesson Malcolm X had always taught. These conditions of suffering and impoverishment are not "bogging down America", keeping it from fulfilling its national destiny. They are the logical outcome and historical practice of a nation based on inequality and violence. So perhaps Young's comment is actually correct in that the insights Malcolm had—to not integrate into a burning house—would have the potential to help solve these problems. However, Young's understanding of these problems are not delivered in systemic terms. He, instead, frames these problems as aberrant, revealing a taken for granted mythology about American democracy and exceptionality; mythologies that Malcolm consistently exposed as hypocrisy. The Malcolm X Young seeks is not the one who warned against the limitations of Civil Rights or who called for the revolutionary transformation of America. Instead, it is the Malcolm refashioned under the terms of racial liberalism, where he can serve as an individual model for

self-discipline and self-responsibility and help to legitimize the violent conditions of a neoliberal America.

Conclusion:

In December of 1964, speaking to a group of Peace Corps workers, Malcolm X stated: "We are living in a time when image-making has become a science. Someone can create a certain image and then use that image to twist your mind and lead you up a blind path". He understood the power of the media to manipulate images and set the terms for what could be understood about American racism and resistance to it. The blind path he mentions, especially in his day, was one that predominantly demonized his image, using him as the counterpoint to more acceptable Civil Rights figures. Though this blind path continues to exist, there has been another blind path created, a more contemporary one, that embraces Malcolm X and even celebrates him as an American hero. This blind path, as this dissertation argues, actually creates an even greater obstacle to overcoming racism, to fighting inequality, and to resisting a more violent, militarized American empire. This blind path establishes terms for antiracism that are confined within a capitalist logic, that de-link race from historical and material conditions, and that obscure our ability to see the violence of American global capitalism and the need for global forms of resistance. Yet, these hegemonic paths are not all encompassing, and, many times, they indicate a threat to hegemonic power. The proliferation of Malcolm's memory in the 1990s signals the kind of political power Malcolm X continues to possess and the threat his memory continues to pose to American hegemony.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

In this chapter, the focus shifts to portrayals of the Black Panther Party in public television documentaries. I examine two of the earliest documentary projects on Panther memory that include two episodes from *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965-1985* (*Eyes II*) and the hour-long, KQED documentary *Black Power, Black Panthers*. Following from chapters one and two, this chapter has set out to closely examine how liberal discourses shape Panther memory and how their visual and rhetorical frameworks move across different public broadcast networks in the same year: 1990. This examination aims to present some of the common narrative structures and representational practices that become precedents for liberal reclamations of BPP history throughout the 1990s and beyond. The two documentary projects under study share certain thematic patterns and framing devices that work to contain Black radical memory and make it consumable and usable in ways that help to legitimize status quo conditions of power. However, simultaneously, these memory projects are also attempting to reclaim the past in a way that helps to battle against the continued criminalization of Black people and Black history and help to explain the continued conditions of inequality and violence in the new era of 1990s multicultural white supremacy. With these dynamics and contradictory elements in place, both documentary projects become complex objects of study that, at points, create disruption and moments of disjuncture within the hegemonic liberal discourses that guide them.

Prior to my close analysis of these documentaries, I provide a thematic history of the BPP's origins, principles, and practices and specifically highlight their foundations in Black

internationalism, anti-capitalism, and their critique of liberal politics. These more radical aspects of Panther history are those left out, distorted or obscured in their popular media memory. I then provide a genealogy of how the Panthers have been historically remembered in popular mainstream media. This cultural genealogy provides an historical accounting of the representational practices of what came before the documentaries under study. Finally, I move into a close textual analysis that puts the *Eyes II* and the KQED documentary projects into dialogue. I track six thematic points of analysis across both media objects, which include: the concept of Black Power, the formation of the Party, the BPP's revolutionary politics and program, the survival programs, Fred Hampton, and the Party's downfall. This organization of analysis is not exhaustive but does provide an opportunity to track specific themes and patterns where liberal discourses coalesce, and where they breakdown and are disrupted. This analysis also opens the opportunity to track the ways these media objects both participate in and deviate from the broader cultural genealogy of Panther media representations.

The Black Panther Party: Origins and History

The Black Panther Party emerges out of Oakland, California in 1966, but hails from a much longer history and tradition of Black radical thought and praxis. Similar to that of Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Claudia Jones, and many others, the Party was grounded in a more radical politics that imagined Black freedom beyond a civil rights framework and beyond US jurisprudence. The Party saw itself as an integral part of the international struggle against white world supremacy and saw American imperialism as an extension of European colonialism and Pan-European slavery. Its principles were in fact anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonialist.

The Party, of course, was not a singular, homogenized organization, and cannot be identified as such. Within four years of the Party's founding, it had expanded to sixty-eight chapters across the US and had an international section established in Algeria. Different chapters adhered to Panther principles in various measure and originated particular programs, tactics, and strategies specific to the needs and experiences of their local communities. There were also differences and divisions within and between members in both the national headquarters and the local organizations. Thus, claiming a singular vision, purpose, or account of BPP history would be inaccurate and impossible. However, it is also beyond the scope of this dissertation to detail the specific histories of each local, and this lack of specification is also reflected in the broader histories of the BPP that popular media tell. Here, I am instead limiting this scope to give a more general accounting of BPP history that specifically highlights what is many times left out of liberal histories on the Panthers.

What makes the BPP different from many of the domestic Black liberation organizations in the 1960s and 1970s is the way the Party saw Black struggles for freedom within the US as directly linked to the anticolonial struggles of the Third World, especially in their fight against the neo-colonial expansion of US empire. This particular perspective links the Party's internationalism to their critiques of capitalism and liberalism, since the Panthers rejected Cold War liberal politics and understood integration and inclusion within US institutions as participating in the violence and genocide of the US global expansionist project.[1] This meant that

[1] For more on the radical, internationalist history of the BPP, see Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: the Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 2017); Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party (1969-1972)," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, Ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); Muhammad Ahmad's (formerly

they were also aligned with more leftist, revolutionary organizations and philosophies, having, at the moral center of their movement, the vision that they could transform the world.[2] Dominant discourses on Black Freedom history, however, attempt to erase or downplay these radical, internationalist foundations.

As Joshua Bloom and Waldo A. Martin argue in their recent book, *Black Against Empire*, "the Party became the strongest link between the domestic Black Liberation Struggle and global opponents of American imperialism".[3] In addition to its sixty-eight chapters and an international embassy, the Panthers, according to Black Panther scholar Sean Malloy, "cultivated alliances with the governments of Cuba, North Korea, China, North Vietnam, and the People's Republic of the Congo…[they] pursued links with the Fatah party led by Yasser Arafat and attended meetings of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan and Kuwait…[and] boasted support groups and emulators as far afield as India, New Zealand, Israel, Japan, Great Britain, West Germany and Scandinavia".[4] Former Black Panther Party Communications Secretary, Kathleen Cleaver, corroborates this in her own historical accounting: "From its inception, the Black Panther Party saw the condition of Blacks in an international context, recognizing that the same racist imperialism that people in Africa, Asia, Latin America were fighting was victimizing Blacks in the United States."[5] What prepared the Panthers to make these international connections, and get to this point of international engagement, however, was based in the Party's political origins and development.

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known as Maxwell Stanford Jr. of RAM) chapter "Black Panther Party," in *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007); Roderick D. Bush, *The End of World White Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

[2] Ibid., 400. Also see, Kelley, 62.

[3] Bloom and Martin Jr., 3.

[4] Malloy, 2.

[5] Cleaver, 216.

The two founding members of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, met at Merritt College in Oakland, California in 1966. Seale was first drawn to Newton by his sharp criticism of US policy in Cuba and his clear articulation of E. Franklin Frazier's critique of the Black middle-class in *Black Bourgeoisie*.[6] From the very beginning, a critique of liberalism and an international, anti-imperialist viewpoint were at the core of the two founders' relationship and the shaping of their nascent organization. Beyond the classroom, Newton and Seale were also deeply embedded in the radical, political organizing in Oakland. Both were greatly influenced by RAM, the Revolutionary Action Movement, a Marxist, Black Nationalist organization originating in Philadelphia. In 1964, they both joined the Soul Student Advisory Council, a front group for RAM, and were particularly impacted by RAM's key writings around the concept of revolutionary nationalism, which linked Black self-determination to the need for a worldwide socialist revolution, and the identification of the Black community as a colony within the American empire, and the police as an occupying force. They were also deeply influenced by Malcolm X (as was RAM), especially in his later goals to develop the internationalist organization, the OAAU, mobilizing African-descended people from across the Western hemisphere. This influence was the very reason Eldridge Cleaver even got involved with the Party. Cleaver was determined to continue to build Malcolm's trans-nationalist, anti-imperialist organization after his assassination and saw Huey Newton as the "legitimate heir to Malcolm X".[7]

These radical roots not only impacted upon and helped to determine the internationalist outreach of the Party, but it was equally influential on both the Party's local and national

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[6] Bloom and Martin Jr., 21.
[7] Bloom and Martin Jr., 50.

operations. This was particularly true of the Panthers' political theory and practices of armed struggle and policing the police, which evolved out of studies of Third World guerilla warfare and anticolonial theories of political education, synthesized alongside domestic Black organizing, specifically the Community Action Patrols in Southern California, who also donned the Black Panther symbol and patrolled the local police following the 1965 Watts Rebellion. As the police patrols in Oakland were meant to directly confront local police forces and protect community members against constant police violence, they were equally meant as an educational process and opportunity to galvanize political power and respect for the organization. As Malloy points out, the anticolonial vernacular used to refer to the police as "an occupying army" and Black people as "colonial subjects" was just as important and iconic as the Panthers carrying guns and wearing black berets. The Panthers made it clear in their writings, speeches, and news interviews that the police were understood not as individualized racists who brutalized Black people out of personal prejudice, but as the domestic, military arm of the US imperial state, tasked with containing and controlling Black discontent and political protest. Connecting this containment and control with those in Vietnam, Newton stated, many times, that the police were an occupying force, serving as the most immediate barrier to self-determination… "not there to protect, but to brutalize and oppress…for the interests of the selfish imperial power".[8]

Much of this revolutionary, political framing and theorizing were recorded and worked out through the *Black Panther* newspaper—the Party's national and internationally distributed publication and organizing tool—and was central to the culture of the Party across its many chapters and in its educational leadership. From as early as the summer of 1967, Newton was publishing a series of theoretical essays in the paper that articulated a revolutionary politics that

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[8] Huey P. Newton, "The Functional Definition of Politics," *Black Panther*, May 15, 1966, 4.

drew much of its analysis from figures such as Malcolm X, Fanon, and Mao. Over the years, many Party leaders and members published their own political and programmatic statements and portrayed their artworks, utilizing a blend of Third World revolutionary symbols, a loosely Marxist economic analysis, alongside a US Black vernacular that resonated especially with the paper's domestic readers. According to Malloy, "[t]he result was one of the most comprehensive and successful efforts to embed Third World anti-colonialism in the specific context of black life in the United States".[9] Furthermore, the paper also became a space to articulate the Party's critique of black liberalism, specifically in its early development of the paper's "bootlicker column". Here, especially, the Panthers criticized what they called "counterrevolutionary" Black leaders and organizations that they saw as complicit with US empire and strategically positioned to legitimize the continued violence against the masses of Black people domestically.

Beyond the newspaper, many leaders, such as Bunchy Carter in Los Angeles and Fred Hampton in Chicago, were fierce debaters of revolutionary theory, and both ministers of education, first George Murray, and second Ray "Masai" Hewitt, were deeply committed to education based on the principle of global revolution. Murray was especially concerned with making the connection between Black studies and Third World liberation, alongside other Black radical scholars. The Party's anti-imperialist politics and education became even more sophisticated and amplified under Masai Hewitt who was responsible for an even deeper engagement with Marxism, changing point 3 in the Panther's Ten Point Program, to replace " the robbery of the white man" with "the robbery by the CAPITALIST", and for developing stronger international connections and coalitions, travelling throughout Scandinavia with Bobby Seale,

[9] Malloy, 8-9.

and Algeria with David Hilliard, Eldridge Cleaver, and Emory Douglas.[10] Also, it was under Masai Hewitt's tutelage that the *Black Panther* newspaper began to consistently feature stories and images from international struggles.

Another radical aspect of BPP history, also shaped by revolutionary theory and practice, was the Black Panthers' survival programs. The survival programs were considered practices of socialism, developed on the grassroots level, and conceived under the terms and ideology of "survival pending revolution". According to former Black Panther Party leader Elaine Brown, the purpose of the survival programs was "to serve the People's immediate needs toward galvanizing participation in the Revolution. The Party held that the masses of the People, not the Party, were the makers of the Revolution of which, in our time and place, we were indeed the vanguard".[11] The survival programs consisted of free breakfast programs, free health clinics, free ambulatory services, free food, free clothing, and free shoes programs, liberation schools, free bussing services, among many other programs. One of the goals of the survival programs was, of course, to supply the needed societal provisions that the US welfare state was failing to provide, especially for poor communities of color. Just as important, however, the goal of the programs was to get the masses of people to feel and experience their own collective strength and determine the conditions of their own lives. In short, it was the development of a revolutionary consciousness aimed towards the complete liberation of Black people in particular, and all working people in general, from the dictates of US racial capitalism. Bobby Seale, writing in 1969, stated that the survival programs were not "reform programs" but "revolutionary, community, socialistic programs…set forth by revolutionaries, by those who want to change the

[10] Ibid., 317.
[11] Elaine Brown, "Ex-Black Panther Leader Elaine Brown Slams Stanley Nelson's 'Condemnable' Documentary," *The Daily Beast*, July 3, 2015.

existing system to a better one."[12] Seale's concerted attempts to reject and articulate against the idea of "reform programs" were echoed by other Panther leaders. In describing the free breakfast program as a form of revolutionary socialism, Chicago Chairman of the BPP, Fred Hampton, stated:

> a lot of people think its charity, but what does it do. It takes the people from a stage, to another stage, to another stage…revolution is change, unending, just keep on changing; that's what we do. We take people in there, take people through those changes and before you know it, they are in fact not only knowing what socialism is, they are endorsing it, they are participating in it, they are observing and they are supporting socialism.[13]

This point of experiential knowledge toward revolutionary change was at the core of the survival programs, which is why, in many cases, they were so violently attacked in their own day.

The Party's downfall also illustrates its revolutionary character, considering both the massive repression exercised by the state, especially through the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), alongside the significant impact of liberal concessions made both by the state and Black leadership. There were also internal conflicts, ideological splits, and individual malfeasance that played their parts in the Party's demise. The illicit and deplorable acts by some of its members had serious impacts on the Party's undoing, but they were not the only or central reason for the Party's downfall (though media coverage, past and present, has framed it this way). Instead, the downfall of the Party had many moving parts, and one of the most significant pieces was the violent assault of COINTELPRO and its mission to destroy the Party. By 1969, the BPP had become the central target of COINTELPRO, with seventy-nine

[12] Bloom and Martin, 195.
[13] *The Murder of Fred Hampton*, directed by Howard Alk (The Film Group-Chicago, 1971). Can also be found: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5NoPMqaqpM.

percent of all authorized actions geared towards discrediting the Party, instigating internal discord and disunity, and disrupting, undermining, and "neutralizing" Panther leadership.[14]

These overtly violent means of repression by the FBI worked in tandem with the impacts of liberal concessions, made on the part of both the state and social movement organizations and allies, and the dominant shift in Black activism towards more traditional, establishment politics. As Bloom and Martin Jr. detail in their book, a multitude of historical factors contributed to the unraveling of the Party and its revolutionary goals: the de-escalation of the Vietnam War and the draft, growth in government employment, affirmative action initiatives, expanded college and university access for marginalized populations, and US redevelopment of its relationships with revolutionary governments. Many of these concessions were enough to weaken the broader alliances the Panthers had made and undermine the revolutionary program it had set forth.

Moreover, the broader spectrum of Black activism, the Panthers included, turned towards more established political channels, materializing most clearly in Bobby Seale's run for Mayor of Oakland, Elaine Brown's run for a seat on the Oakland City Council, and the broader Black electoral program that culminated in the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary. The outcome of this turn towards establishment politics was, according to African American Studies scholar, Cedric Johnson, "to produce a moderate black political regime and incorporate radical dissent into conventional political channels".[15] As Johnson explains, this would happen right as the masses of Black people were moving towards radical forms of public action and self-determination. Participation in electoral politics became the dominate form of activism in Black politics, and as political science scholar Adolph Reed states, "drastically narrowing the horizon

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[14] See "The FBI's Covert Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party," The *Talking Drum Collective/Assata Shakur Speaks!*, accessed on January 31, 2019, http://www.assatashakur.com/cointelpro-blackpanthers.htm
[15] Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xxiii.

of political activity" and "demobilizing…the black citizenry by limiting the scope of legitimate participation to ratifying agendas set by elites".[16] This shift not only moved power and momentum into the hands of a small number of elite Black leaders, but it also suppressed and delegitimized the development of a radical political consciousness and political will based in grassroots, social movement organizing. Though the Panthers stated goals were to use the electoral process "to turn a reactionary base into a revolutionary base", their political strategies were caught within the web of these shifts, which, along with massive state repression, would bring their stature as national and international leaders in world revolution to an end.[17]

Media Portrayals of the Black Panther Party

Throughout the Party's existence, the media played a central role in shaping the visual and rhetorical discourse surrounding the Panthers. Yet, simultaneously, the Panthers were able to mobilize the media to shape their own image. As African American Studies scholar Jane Rhodes convincingly argues in her canonical study, *Framing the Black Panthers*, the media portrayals of the BPP were constituted in a "dialogic relationship" between the Panthers and media organizations; the Panthers were not just "framed" by the mass media, but they strategically framed their own image, mobilizing the media, many times, as a life-saving tactic (where the presence of the media could keep more harsh acts of violence at bay) and, most times, as an essential recruitment tool.[18] The Panthers also developed a sophisticated operation of managing, producing, and distributing their own media through member-written publications, newspapers, films, memoirs, etc., cultivating important relationships with multiple media networks. Thus, the

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[16] Adolf Reed Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 204.
[17] Bloom and Martin Jr., 308.
[18] Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

history of the Panther's media portrayal and their relationship to different forms of media and the mass media industry is more complex and dynamic than is commonly understood.

The common mass media framing devices for the BPP, such as fear, masculine strength, enemies of the state, the carrying of guns, were mobilized and consumed by different groups for different ends. The Panthers understood this visual lexicon and the ways in which their bodies would be perceived within the entrenched anti-blackness of the American imagination, and they used these imaginings to build a platform for their own movement. As Rhodes describes, the Panther image—the garb, the Afro, the paramilitary spectacles, the snarling Black Panther—were all a part of the visual lexicon that made up the BPP's "revolutionary culture". The visual symbolism worked not only to catch the attention of the media and attract certain audiences, but, as cultural studies scholar Amy Abugo Ongiri reveals in her work on the Panthers, the visual encounter with Black militancy, the "symbolic performance of military violence", served an important pedagogical function and was central to the process of revolutionary education.[19] Following the revolutionary praxis of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, Newton made clear the importance of showing the people that "the police were not bullet proof".[20] The performative displays of armed self-defense, especially during Panther police patrols and the 1967 armed Panther delegation in Sacramento, were visual illustrations of what Newton referred to as the "educational process" by which "the people started to feel their own strength" and identify with the Party as a revolutionary force.[21] The "theatrical militancy" performed in spaces of protest, such as outside the Alameda courthouse for Free Huey rallies or outside the New York County courthouse for the Panther 21 trial, continued this radical visual expression and education, led by

[19] See Amy Abugo Ongiri, *Spectacular Blackness: The Cultural Politics of the Black Power Movement and the Search for a Black Aesthetic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).
[20] *Black Panther A.K.A. Off the Pig* (Newsreel—San Francisco, 1968).
[21] Ongiri, *Spectacular Blackness*, 32.

both male and female, rank and file members. As Ongiri succinctly observes, "…the Black Panther Party successfully transformed the courthouse from its representative role as a vehicle for state power into a theater for the display of a spectacular blackness that was potent in its presentation and seemingly potentially revolutionary in its consequences".[22] This is one example of the way in which the Panthers could mobilize the media to forward their message and call for revolutionary change.

Though the Panthers radical expression and performances were central to building their revolutionary culture, it was also, as Rhodes points out, a strategy that did not work in their favor most times and could have been a major cause in their undoing. This revolutionary visual culture was mostly sensationalized in mainstream media, allowing many organizations to tap into age-old stereotypes about black criminality and violence, using the party's media image to demonize their movement. Especially in the early years of media coverage on the Panthers, they were characterized as "violence-prone" and "anti-white", revealing the ways in which exhibits of armed self-defense were immediately linked to an assault on white people, rather than a defense against the violence of the white supremacist state.[23] Moreover, some mainstream media organizations were in direct collaboration with government entities, such as COINTELPRO, and thus their efforts were geared towards dismantling the organization and presenting them as a grave threat to the US social order.[24] Overall, the Panther's media coverage was part of a larger shift in the media coverage of black liberation; whereas, the media was a friend in the early years of the Southern Civil Rights Movement, it many times became a foe to the more militant Black

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[22] Ibid., 48.
[23] Edward P. Morgan, "Media Culture and the Public Memory of the Black Panther Party," in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Moment*, Eds. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 331.
[24] See Ward Churchill "To Disrupt, Discredit, and Destroy" in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, Eds. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001).

organizations in the late 60s and early 70s, especially in regards to the BPP. As Rhodes clearly points out in her study, this shift exposes the ways in which the media play a central role of discipline and control, serving a "disciplining function in keeping black activists in line".[25]

This disciplinary function was also in operation, however, when the media functioned to increase sympathy and develop a broader set of allies for the Panthers. Oftentimes these types of stories focused on either personalized news stories, helping to create a "culture of celebrity" around the Panthers. Or, they concentrated on the most dramatic conflicts the Panthers faced, mobilizing these news stories for commercial entertainment.[26] At the same time, as media scholar Edward Morgan explains, the commercially driven media worked to capitalize on "the youth market and its more flamboyant modes of expression", co-opting the Panther's revolutionary expressivity as primarily stylistic and consumable.[27] This was in line with the ways in which the "New Journalism" genre of the period covered the Panthers and the popularization of what Tom Wolfe famously described as "Radical Chic". Though the term, on some levels, meant to capture the important affiliation between (mostly white) social elites and Black radicals, it actually worked to commodify revolutionaries, ridicule those relationships and trivialize Black radical politics, presenting the Panthers as "oversexed media sweethearts", mostly there to satisfy white (elite) subjectivity.[28]

This conception of the Panthers as media sweethearts illustrates another connected strain of popularized discourse at the time: that the BPP was a "media-made organization" and "liberal cause number one [overnight]".[29] This framing evacuates any agency on the part of the Panthers

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[25] Rhodes, 52.
[26] Morgan, 327.
[27] Ibid., 327
[28] Michael E. Staub, "Black Panthers, New Journalism, and the Rewriting of the Sixties," *Representations* 57 (Winter, 1997): 57.
[29] Morgan, 346.

in constructing their own media image and accuses the liberal media of giving the Panthers undeserved legitimacy. This was concretized in Edward J. Epstein's 1971 long essay, "The Panthers and the Police: A Pattern of Genocide?", which attempted to invalidate the numbers of Panthers killed by police through an exhaustive and "objective" study of media stories covering the killings.[30] The study would become extremely influential, as it proclaimed to be a definitive account on the matter and ultimately attempted to demonstrate that the media was exaggerating and validating baseless claims made by the Panthers, their lawyers, and supporters.

In the realm of popular culture, some of these same dynamics were also at play, especially within the Blaxploitation genre; a Black action film genre that emerged and declined in tandem with the rise and fall of the BPP. Though the Party was not always directly referenced in these fiction films, their influence and the revolutionary culture of the time deeply impacted both the content and reception of the films. According to Ongiri, "Blaxploitation films provide a telling counternarrative, not only to myths of white supremacy, but to national myths of visuality and visual culture created in traditional Hollywood cinema and through the conventions of mass media".[31] In many ways, these films served to counteract the racist history of Hollywood film culture and news media, both providing opportunities for Black cultural workers and promoting images of powerful and savvy Black heroes and heroines that mobilized many of the same visual symbols as the BPP. Films like *Shaft* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem* are important examples of these powerful images of Black masculinity that starkly contrasted Hollywood's historic representations of Black male sexuality. Yet, they also reflect significant contradictions and

[30] Edward Jay Epstein, "The Panthers and the Police: A Pattern of Genocide?," *New Yorker* 46 (13 February 1971).
[31] Ongiri, 165.

limitations for Black political representation, positioning their heroes as state officials in service of law enforcement.

The most famous and popular film connected with the BPP was Melvin Van Peebles's 1971 *Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song!*, which Newton called "the first truly revolutionary Black film…", dedicating almost an entire issue of the *Black Panther* to its close review.[32] The film was praised for its heroic representation of the central protagonist, Sweetback, who kills a cop brutalizing a young Black activist. Following the murder, Sweetback overcomes many obstacles as he flees and escapes to Mexico—a rare conclusion for such a storyline on the big screen. The film opens with a dedication "To All the Brothers and Sisters who've had enough of the Man," reflecting the revolutionary spirit of Black collective power that underwrites the film. Yet, the film also received much condemnation for its hyper-sexualized antagonist and its ambiguous, if not contrary, relationship to revolutionary action, which centered around one man's sexual prowess. According to film scholar Ed Guerrero, *Sweet Sweetback* set a kind of model for a flood of Blaxploitation films that, in many cases, "developed more subtle and masked forms of devaluing African Americans on the screen".[33]

Beyond Guerrero and many others' concerns about the genre's reproduction of harmful stereotypes and playing into racist, white expectations, critics were also concerned about the kinds of "narrative containment" within the genre that, according to Guerrero, "repressed and delayed the awakening of any real political consciousness".[34] In other words, the individualized acts of "super-fly" men and women obscured the kinds of revolutionary politics and praxis materializing during the Black Power era. Yet, as can be gleaned from these varied scholarly

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[32] Huey Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1972).
[33] Edward Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993): 94, 70.
[34] Ibid., 93.

perspectives on the genre, the film movement and its portrayal of revolutionaries and Black power is as complex as the news media's visual engagement with the Panthers. The genre pictures Black agency and empowerment, while also reflecting the commodification and depoliticizing impacts of consumer capitalism and the enduring hegemony of white supremacist logic. It is also reflective of the desire and necessity to control and discipline Black radical politics and imagery as is seen in the news media.

During the later years of BPP activity, the news media slightly shifted its coverage, especially when Seale ran for mayor and Brown ran for City Council in Oakland. The media saw these developments as legitimate and fitting within conventional media discourses; yet they did so in a way that was both cautionary and disciplinary. The rhetorical framing was to portray the BPP as docile and domesticated, with language such as the "Purring Panthers", an "old Panther with a new Purr", a "new Bobby", and a renewed concentration on the survival programs; in some cases, as if they were brand new.[35] This handling of the survival programs was a narrative framing used even in 68 and 69 to portray the Panthers as moving in a more acceptable direction for the mainstream public, characterizing the programs as "decidedly unrevolutionary".[36] Yet, the media also, at times, needed to add a cautionary note to this seeming domestication, with characterizations such as electoral politics as "muted anger" or careful acceptance of their supposed docility, as illustrated in the *Time*'s 1972 article "Tame Panthers?" Both of these media portrayals exhibit the desire for a containment and sanitizing of what the Panthers represented, yet not without, as Morgan points out, "the rationale for ample budget allocations to fight the criminal menace" if the organization ever posed a threat to the US social order again.[37] In other

[35] Morgan, 353.
[36] Ibid., 336.
[37] Ibid., 354

words, Black criminality and violence were always assumed to be lingering behind these seemingly legitimized images of the Panthers, and these cautionary cadences allowed room for a quick return to the full support of state violence if necessary.

In the late 1970s, multiple media outlets attempted to capitalize on the Party's decline with attempts to lay early claim to the Panther legacy. One influential article, written by Kate Coleman and Paul Avery in 1978, severely disparaged the Party, especially Newton, and later served as a foundational text for "evidence" in vilifying the Party wholesale. This 1978 scathing report was titled "The Party's Over: How Huey Newton Created a Street Gang at the Center of the Black Panther Party." It claimed that: "Black Panthers have committed a series of violent crimes over the last several years…There appears to be no political explanation for it; the Party is no longer under siege by the police, and this is not self-defense. It seems to be nothing but senseless criminality, directed in most cases at other blacks".[38] These ideas of Black Panthers as "violent criminals" and as "unprovoked" or 'without reason' in their actions would become long-lasting tropes in later writings on the history and memory of the Party. It would have an especially powerful impact on David Horowitz, who would build his career as a writer and public intellectual by demonizing the Panthers and the Left as a whole, and Hugh Pearson, whose 1994 book *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and Price of Black Power* would spur nearly fifteen years of scholarship that would attempt to rebut his allegations and reclaim a different history of the BPP.[39] This is not to say that the Party, and Newton in particular, did not commit any of the crimes accused by Coleman, Avery, or later Horowitz and Pearson. It is instead to point out the long-lasting influence of these accusations on how or what can be

[38] Kate Coleman and Paul Avery, "The Party's Over," *New Times*, July 10, 1978, 1.
[39] Joe Street, "Historiography of the Black Panther Party," *Journal of American Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 351-375.

remembered about the Panthers, the way these narrative tropes block out the historical and political importance of the Party and lead to its wholesale condemnation and criminalization.

Though this process of wholesale criminalization was already in place since the late 1970s, it took an even deeper hold in the late 1980s, especially with the murder of Newton in August of 1989. Newton was shot in the head during an alleged drug deal or confrontation with a man the police described as a drug dealer. This event helped to fuel the New Right's cultural attacks on the memory of the era with Newton's death serving as definitive proof of the "bad sixties" and the "moral decay" of the time period.[40] Yet, many liberal media outlets followed suit. According to Elaine Brown in 1990, "Shortly after the assassination of Dr. Huey P. Newton, several articles appeared in local and national publications attempting to discredit the Black Panther Party itself."[41] As Brown explains, Newton's death offered the occasion to condemn the entire organization and to frame the history and legacy within the terms of violence and failure that were also used to narrate Newton's life and death. In media scholar Jack Lule's extensive study on the media coverage of Newton's death, he concludes: "the sources of criticism, the amount of space given to charges and the context of overall coverage supported the portrayal of a man of violence who accomplished little and got the end he deserved".[42] Lule's study illustrates how certain news strategies were used to equate the nature of Newton's death with the entirety of his life's work. These narrative strategies painted a picture of man whose "life was spent largely on violence and crime"; thus correlating his time and work within the Party with a life-long

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[40] Jennifer Hyland Wang, "A Struggle of Contending Stories: Race, Gender, and Political Memory in Forrest Gump," *Cinema Journal* 39 no. 3 (Spring 2000): 63, 87.
[41] Elaine Brown, "Responding to Radical Racism: David Horowitz Barely Remembered," *The Commemorator* 1, no. 2 (December 1990): 5.
[42] Jack Lule, "News Strategies and the Death of Huey Newton," *Journalism Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 292.

commitment to crime.[43] Many times, this was followed with the suggestion that Newton's death was a kind of "ironic justice" or "just reward" for a man who "preached power through guns" and was gunned down himself. Newton's clear analysis on the politics of armed self-defense and armed struggle, which served as a backbone to the Party's philosophy and practice, is completely erased and replaced with one man's penchant for violence who got what he deserved.

1990: PBS's *Eyes II* and KQED's *Black Panthers, Black Power*

This genealogy of media portrayals lays the groundwork for what would become the first wave of television documentaries remembering the history and legacy of the Black Panther Party in the early 1990s. With the media focus on Newton's death at the time and narratives of violence, criminality, and failure as dominant, many popular media objects produced in the early 90s were, according to Rhodes, "intent…to right the historical record or introduce an alternative perspective to the ongoing memories".[44] This was the case for two documentary projects on the Panthers released in 1990: Episode 9 "Power! 1966-1968" and Episode 12 "A Nation of Law? (1968-1971)" from PBS's *Eyes II* and the KQED documentary *Black Power, Black Panthers*. Both documentary projects attempt to give voice to former Panthers and community members involved in the movement and provide a picture of Panther history that counters the full-scale demonization or criminalization of the organization. Yet, as I will illustrate, these two accounts are also caught in liberal antiracist discourses that sanitize and erase the most revolutionary elements of the Party and, ironically, in the case of *Black Power, Black Panthers*, reinforce discourses of black criminality.

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[43] Ibid., 289.
[44] Rhodes, 325.

Episodes 9 and 12 are both documentaries that came out of the second *EOTP* series, *Eyes II*, and thus come with all the nuance and complexity of that project. Both episodes feature segments that focus on the BPP, Episode 9 a seventeen-minute segment and Episode 12 a thirty-minute segment. They are here to be understood as *Eyes II*'s combined and comprehensive portrayal of the Party. In many ways, the one picks up where the other left off. However, these two episodes also have their differences, especially in their structure and tone. Episode 9 couches its segment on the Panthers between the mayoral race of Carl Stokes in 1967 and the establishment of a community school board in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood in New York City in 1968. These three stories are meant to be representative of different manifestations of Black Power, at least this is how they are introduced. This narrative segmentation places the Panthers in between two stories that celebrate forms of power that align with more established, conventional politics. Episode 12 is quite different in these respects. This episode sets a very different tone, especially in its critique of federal law enforcement and the prison system, and has a different narrative structure, as the episode is split in two segments, one on the Panthers and one on the 1971 Attica Prison Rebellion.

The KQED documentary, *Black Power, Black Panthers*, is a one-hour comprehensive history of the BPP that shares much of the same thematic frameworks as Episodes 9 and 12. Yet, it differs from them in important ways as well, especially in its concentration on the Panther legacy and on the downfall and death of Huey Newton. Though both documentary projects were released in 1990, *Black Power, Black Panthers* includes the coverage of Newton's murder and spends a great deal of time disparaging his character. These elements are not included in the *Eyes II* episodes. Also, where Episodes 9 and 12 are pictured as part of a longer history of Black liberation that spans from the years 1954 to 1983, *Black Power, Black Panthers* is more

specifically dedicated to Panther history and gives much more screen time to engage with its legacy, especially within its place of origin: Oakland, California. This is not to say that the Panther segments in Episodes 9 and 12 are without any concentration on legacy. Yet, their legacies are instead more comprehensively included within the larger, over-arching legacy segment that happens at the very end of *EOTP* in Episode 14.

Black Power

Both documentary projects frame their expositions on the Panthers through the concept of Black Power as both a movement and an ideology. This framing is meant to establish the larger context of the transformations taking place in the Black Freedom Movement, especially as Black militancy and Black Nationalism become more dominant forms of movement politics following the Southern Civil Rights campaign. In Episode 9, Black Power is explained through three different manifestations, a mayoral race in Cleveland, the BPP in Oakland, and a community school board in New York, importantly signaling to audiences the different formations and definitions that the concept of Black Power encompassed. In the opening moments of the episode, Julian Bond's voiceover frames it: "Across the nation, Black men and women struggled for control of their lives. Through the ballot box, on the street, in the schools." This commentary includes an essential definition that crosses all these forms of Black power, the goal of self-determination in Black communities.

In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, Black Power is defined more as the development of a movement, directly connected to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and to Malcolm X. This highlighting of Malcolm X in the movement for Black Power is especially significant, since Malcolm X was, in many ways, the most influential figure for the development of the BPP, and he receives no mention in either episode on the BPP in *Eyes II*. Here, however,

he is highlighted in the beginning of the documentary in the commentary of former BPP Central Committee member Landon Williams. He states: “we felt we were the heirs of Malcolm. I could remember hearing Malcolm saying we demand our rights to be treated like a man, like a human being in this society, right now. And we are going to have that right by any means necessary”. These introductions portray Black Power as empowering and complex, battling against definitions both historically and concurrently that simplify and demonize the term as a form of Black racism and underwritten by violence.

Both documentaries chose to show archival footage of SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) to aid in explicating Black Power. Carmichael was the most well-known spokesman for the Black Freedom Movement’s shift towards Black militancy and for the earliest usage of the term Black Power, which he first announced in 1966 during the March Against Fear in Mississippi. Episode 9 opens with footage of Carmichael speaking at a 1966 rally at the University of California, Berkeley. He is shown stating:

> This country knows what power is. It knows it very well. And it knows what Black Power is because its deprived Black people of it for four hundred years. [Splice here.] We are on the move for our liberation. We have been tired of trying to prove things to white people. We are tired of trying to explain to white people we are not going to hurt them. We are concerned with getting the things we want, of getting the things we have to have to function.

This opening archival footage importantly illustrates the shift taking place where efforts in the movement are redirected from a concentration on white people, and their fears and prejudice, to a focus on Black peoples’ needs and wants. It also rebuts hegemonic discourses that associate Black Power with violence against (or racism towards) white people. In other words, this footage both discredits these false associations and voices the exhaustive, unproductive efforts of trying to assuage the white imagination of its racist fears.

Yet, there are multiple ironies and contradictions. While these lessons are significant, they also ironically re-center white people to explain Black Power. Moreover, they also define the problems of racism through the simple terms of white peoples' fears ('not going to hurt them') and judgments ('proving things to white people') and not about *the system* that is structured on asymmetrical human relations and Black animus; a system based on the structural disinvestment in and exploitation of the masses of Black people. These material explanations of systemic racism were lessons that were stated throughout Carmichael's speech, but they were not presented here and, instead, lessons that fit within present day liberal discourses about race and racism are delivered.

Ironically, this speech was also written for a predominantly white audience, "the white intellectual ghetto of the West" as Carmichael addresses them in the speech and was decidedly not written to explain the concept of Black Power. In the original speech, Carmichael immediately states that he would not let this speech be "caught up in the intellectual masturbation of the question of Black Power". He makes the point that it is not necessary to defend or seek sanction for Black Power by white people, to whom this speech addresses. Instead, the speech would focus on white supremacy as the foundation of the US system and ask how "we can build institutions that will allow people to relate to each other as human beings." He insists on the need for white activists to tear down racism in their own neighborhoods and to build new institutions that do not economically exploit people of color; it would then be possible for Black people to have a coalitional base with white people. The speech also explains US white supremacy in a global context, strongly condemning "the economic exploitation of non-white peoples around the world", making connections between the looting of countries in South and Central America, Asia, and Africa with the treatment of Black people in the US. These powerful

lessons that focused on US imperialism, white supremacist, capitalist exploitation and white peoples' role in upholding this system are not those delivered in the documentary. Instead, the archival footage shown is severely edited, consisting of an eight-second segment that is cut from the middle of the speech that is then spliced together with the last twenty-five seconds of the speech, to feature the two rare moments where the term Black Power is even mentioned.

The liberal framing established here and the contradictions in the messaging continue after this footage with the opening remarks from Bond, (which were partially stated earlier). Directly following the complex messaging, "across the nation, Black men and women struggled for control of their lives. Through the ballot box, on the street, in the schools," the voiceover follows up with, "[t]he call for power challenged the established relationships between Blacks and whites in America." While the voiceover mentions the struggle for self-determination within the material conditions of streets, schools, and elections, these struggles culminate with a change in relationships between Black and white people and not the 'established systems of domination' that structure those relationships. This statement also domesticates the influence of Black Power within a US nationalist framework, when in fact Carmichael, SNCC, and the Black Panther Party, all featured in this episode, understood Black Power as a challenge to systems of domination across the globe. This omission of internationalism, and the clashes between historical efforts for material change and liberal definitions of race and racism, are repeated and re-appear throughout the documentary. [45]

Similar to Episode 9, *Black Power, Black Panthers* mobilizes highly edited archival footage of Carmichael to introduce and explain Black Power. The voiceover first introduces

[45] By the end of the episode, even this simplified definition of Black power that gives focus to the wants and needs of Black people, is reformulated to lessen the Blackness in Black power, as the title of the episode alludes, and give it a more colorblind and Americanized veneer. In short, the concept opens the episode but is dismissed at the end.

Black Power as a movement: "SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Committee, broke with its multi-racial past. Its leader, Stokely Carmichael took the movement in a new direction: Black Power." This introduction leads into a montage sequence that includes multiple lines edited together from a speech Carmichael gave at Tougaloo College in 1967. He states,

> In this country, you would think that white people were God. That they had the right to give us our freedom. And so what we had to do was to beg them or act the way they want us to act before they gave us our freedom. [splice] We must stop seeking to imitate white society. We must create for ourselves in order to save our very humanity. [splice] Because the fight for Black Power in this country is, indeed, a fight to civilize a barbaric country, the United States.[46]

This powerful message to decolonize one's mind from a white supremacist culture was an important part of Carmichael and SNCC's lessons of Black Power. The significant analogies here are the correlations between white society, inhumanity, and barbarity; analogies that were not directly made in the original speech, since these statements are spliced together from different parts of the speech. Yet, they do deliver powerful lessons for understanding the resistance to the integrationist philosophies SNCC and others were moving away from.

Yet, as was seen in Episode 9, the emphasis of Black Power focuses more on rejecting white peoples' racist behavior ('think their God', 'want to be imitated') and not on the economic, political, and social systems of control Black Power sought to challenge. The dominant issue here is to 'not act like or imitate white people or white society', because it is barbaric; yet, its barbarity is not defined outside of white peoples' arrogance. When Carmichael states, "we must create for ourselves", there is no context other than one based in behavioral change, leaving out the structural transformations actually laid out in the speech.

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[46] I cannot find this last line in any of the transcripts of this speech. The voice is evidently that of Ture, but the context seems inaccurate here. The logic, as the analysis explains, would lead to Ture making the argument that the goals of Black liberation in the US were aimed at saving the nation. This type of US nationalistic rhetoric seems to counter the principles and political programs Ture stood for.

This decision to focus on white prejudicial behavior and not on the structural and institutional creations SNCC called for is part of a longer historical problem of who gets to define terms, especially around Black empowerment. This is something, ironically, warned about in Carmichael's Tougaloo speech. He cautions against the "much more insidious" nature of definitions of Black Power that are based in reacting to "white America".[47] Carmichael states, "…that is what white America has been able to do is to try to make us react to their definitions of our very own terms…and we never got anywhere because we were playing her game". He illustrates this through Southern civil rights leaders' calls for integration, which was clearly defined, as he states, "in the minds of black people…[as] good housing, good schools, good jobs, better neighborhoods, and a good way of life." Yet, as Carmichael explains, this definition of integration based in material transformation becomes redefined through the racist psychology that instead reads: "You want to marry my daughter, don't you?" And, as Carmichael criticizes, "instead of our black leaders having the strength to tell the honkie later, they begin to react to his definition". With this type of psychological, reactionary definition of Black Power he concludes, "we never got anywhere". This lesson could be heeded here, where Black Power is redefined through liberal racial discourses based solely in psychological behavior or in more respectful relationships between Black and white people. These are important, but if they are without any understanding of material transformation or inadvertently de-emphasize material change, they lead to nowhere.

The Party's Formation (The Role of the Police and Armed Self-Defense)

Once these expositions on Black Power are set in place, both documentary projects move into their official introductions to the Party's formation, and both begin with a discussion of the

[47] Stokely Carmichael's speech, "We Ain't Going," Tougaloo, Mississippi, April 11, 1967.

police and end with the Panthers' demonstration in Sacramento. In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, Judge Henry Ramsey Jr., a prominent commentator in the documentary, lays the groundwork for this discussion, stating:

> people don't know how much we rely, unconsciously, on the police, on the judicial mechanism to protect us from harm. I mean we walk around feeling safe and secure, because, in general, if we have a confrontation with a law violator, we really think that the judicial system will ferret that out, and it will be protected. But most Black people in the United States everywhere just *did not* share that view, and they *didn't* feel safe [emphasis added].

Ramsey's comment is followed by interview footage of former Panther Field Marshall Richard Aoki, who will corroborate Judge Ramsey's statement and actually name the 'police brutality' as the reason "Black people didn't feel safe". This leads to a brief biography of Newton that emphasizes his tough character, as he is described as "a formidable opponent" who was respected among "the guys on the street", since "he was not one who lost a fight." Finally, with these elements laid out, the voiceover will formerly introduce the Party: "Huey Newton decided he did not want to run from the police. He and his friends Bobby Seale and Richard Aoki decided to take a stand…In 1966, Newton and Seale formed an organization to monitor the Oakland police."

This sequence importantly informs the viewer that confronting police brutality was at the very core of the founding of the BPP. Yet, Ramsey's commentary, which opens this segment, establishes a tone that should garner particular attention. His interview is given prominence with its narrative positioning as first, and the well-lit, medium shot framing that emphasize his costume of judicial robes and his backdrop of law books. Ramsey's explanation of the police spends most of its energy trying to convince audiences that such an 'unsafe' relationship could even exist between the police, the judiciary system, and the Black community. His commentary assumes a liberal logic, proclaiming that present-day, US law enforcement and judiciary systems

are now functioning democratically, and police brutality is a thing of the past. Yet, this logic would not seem to resonate with many audience members that understand and experience police brutality as a continued and unabated practice.

Whatever way these opening clips on the police are read, they are meant to provide the content and evidence for the voiceover's official framing of the Party, that it was 'an organization developed to monitor the Oakland police', and it was Newton, and his formidable character, that motivated this decision. These two explanations for the origins of the Party—Newton's tough, aggressive personality and the practice of 'monitoring' the police—are corroborated by many historical studies; yet, they also leave out significant dimensions of both Newton's character and the Party's origins. Most significantly, they leave out the radical political education and organizing that undergirded both Newton and Bobby Seale's reasoning for creating the organization and for policing the police in the first place. Also, this framing of the organization, as created to 'monitor the police', goes without any mention of the Ten Point political program or any of the other revolutionary politics that guided its founding principles. This reproduces a problem that the Panthers dealt with in their own day: that the BPP was without a revolutionary political program and whose engagements with the police were non-ideological and, instead, stemmed from Newton's fearless and aggressive behavior. This lack of discussion on the revolutionary politics and radical political organizing from which the BPP emerged leaves their portrayal open for very simplified explanations and easy consumption as a spectacle.

Yet, there is a moment of disjuncture that occurs immediately following the voiceover's official introduction of the BPP. This next clip features archival footage of Newton speaking from jail. He states:

> The police are there…in our community not to promote our welfare or for our security and our safety, but they're there to contain us, to brutalize us, and murder us because they have their orders to do so…just as the soldiers in Vietnam have their orders to destroy the Vietnamese people. The police in our community couldn't possibly be there to protect our property, since we own no property.

The inclusion of this clip allows Newton to speak for himself to explain the role of the police in poor, Black communities. In this statement, he explains how police brutality is part of a system that is designed to protect propertied peoples and to contain those most exploited and impoverished. This explanation begins to get at the root of the system of racial capitalism that operates through the brutal oppression of people racialized as unworthy and disposable and requires a military arm to contain the rage and discontent of the oppressed. The statement also makes a connection with the Vietnamese people and the American soldiers brutalizing the people of Vietnam. This clip begins to expose the internationalist, anti-imperialist lens through which the Panthers understood their own oppression (and their shared liberation) with the victims of US imperialism.

While the documentary features these ideas, it also edits the clip at a point where this internationalist, anti-imperialist lens and these connections could have been made much clearer. The lines omitted from this footage, which come directly before what is shown, are as follows: "In America, Black people are treated very much like the Vietnamese people, or any other colonized people, because we are used, we're brutalized, the police in our community occupy our area, our community, as a foreign troop occupies foreign territory." This context would allow viewers to make more sense of Newton's commentary and gain deeper insight as to how the Panthers made common cause with other colonized people and saw themselves as a colony within the US.

This exposure to the Panther's more radical politics illustrates an example of the mixed messaging of the documentary and the disjunctive nature that archival materials can create. However, following the clip, the documentary inserts, what I'm calling, a 'trope of spectacle', used to downplay or spectacularize these revolutionary politics and reinstate a liberal framing. Directly following Newton's radical statements, the voiceover re-enters, stating: "The Panther flair for the dramatic attracted the Party's first members." This use of the trope "flair for the dramatic" echoes historical discourses that presented the BPP's revolutionary ideas and expressivity as primarily stylistic or dramatized. Because the trope is asserted through the voiceover, it gains authority and has the effect of minimizing Newton's radical critique and the seriousness of the abuses he describes. Yet, it also creates a kind of collision that exposes the dissonance between the liberal framing and the radical politics.

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Similar to *Black Power, Black Panthers*, Episode 9 also explains the emergence of the Party as predominantly a response to the police. Bond's voiceover begins the segment: "Blacks had little say in how their community was run. In particular, many questioned the role of the police." This invites the next clip of Newton in a participant interview. Newton answers: "the police, throughout the Black communities in the country, were really the government. We had more contact with the police than we did the city council. The police were universally disliked." This explanation of the police then leads back to Bond's voiceover, which declares: "Armed with law books and guns, the Panthers monitored the actions of the police in the Black community". This voiceover statement is brought to life through a follow-up montage that brings Seale, Newton, and Richard Jensen, an Oakland police officer, together in a short, quick-cut montage to re-tell a vivid story about the Panthers policing the police; especially dynamic was Seale's

recitation of an armed Newton confronting officers with his sharp-witted expertise of California Supreme Court laws.

Many similar operations are at work as were in *Black Power, Black Panthers*. Bond's opening statements, though somewhat lukewarm in their tone, do make the connection between the 'lack of control over one's community' and the 'role of the police'. As this entire episode is about gaining power, here it is "on the streets", these opening remarks signal how the police are a central obstacle in that effort. Moreover, though not as radical in its explanation, Newton's interview footage also begins to get at the role of the police as a systemic force of control through his analogy that the police were "really the government". His statement is cut off quite abruptly, however, and it would have been helpful to gain more understand as to why the police played this dominant role. The viewers are informed that the police were "universally disliked in the Black community", suggesting their mistreatment of Black people, but this explanation is obscured in liberal discourses that explain racist violence through feeling and personal prejudice, even if shared among Black people "universally", and misses the opportunity for structural explanations that connect police brutality to larger systems of domination, exploitation, disinvestment, etc.

Similar language is also used to emphasize the Panthers as a 'monitoring' organization as its raison d'etre, and the vivid re-telling of the Panther patrol story brings this element to life. Yet, again, the Panthers' radical education and organizing are missing, except for a four-second cut that quickly pans across a still image of Patrice Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, Kim Il Sung, and Mao Zedong and a quick mention that the Panthers were "[i]nfluenced by…the Third World nations." There is never any explanation of what or how they were influenced by these nations and figures, and this extraordinarily brief mention makes it seem somewhat random

or out of place (or, perhaps, stealthily shoved in there). More concentration is placed on the 'monitoring' actions of the Panther patrols, the vivid re-telling of those actions, and the focus on Newton's knowledge of federal and state laws (and not on the guerilla warfare tactics that were also influential for how and why the Panthers armed themselves). The re-telling is significant, however, as it exemplifies the "revolutionary culture" and "potent presentations" of militancy that drew people to the Party. Yet, Bond's voiceover brings in a 'trope of spectacle' following this re-telling, stating: "The boldness of the Panthers attracted young Blacks, many in their teens," only partially capturing the radical character of these presentations and, in some ways, downplaying their political efficacy through their description as dramatic behavior.

Sacramento

Both documentary projects end their introductory segments with coverage of the Sacramento demonstration, and neither trope in place, either the "flair for the dramatic" or the "boldness" could fully contain their displays of revolutionary culture. In the early months of the BPP's formation, the Panthers sent an armed delegation to Sacramento to protest the passing of the Mulford Act in 1967—an act that would ban the open-carry of guns on public property in California. Both Episode 9 and *Black Power, Black Panthers* have strong coverage of this demonstration and share in their portrayal of this event their longest, uninterrupted montage of archival footage, and both feature Seale reading the Panther opposition statement to the Act. These remarkable collections of images and editing deliver vivid pictures of this particular event and expose, in a very raw way, the Panthers ability to radically disrupt establishment politics. The official opposition statement of the Party, read by Seale, clearly explains how the legislation is meant to disarm and disempower Black people while there is a simultaneous ratcheting up of police repression and brutality.

Moreover, this coverage of the demonstration, along with the accounting of police patrols, help to demonstrate how successful the armed demonstrations were. Though no spokesperson is ever able to directly discuss the radical education and political leverage of armed self-defense, the disruptions made within the police force and the obvious legislative move to disarm the Panthers demonstrates the efficacy of this tactic. In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, there are multiple officers who describe how "they knew people who left the force" and detailed the way the Panther patrols would deter their attention when they made their stops. Kathleen Cleaver summarizes this in *Black Power, Black Panthers* when she states: "it worked so well that the Oakland police could not restrain themselves from running to their state representatives to pass a law to ban the carrying of guns in the state of California."

These are important lessons for viewers to see, to understand why the Panthers carried guns, to know it was effective, and to see the government stamp down on their political activities. Yet, these lessons become somewhat reigned in, or disrupted, again, by tropes of spectacle that follow the demonstration coverage. In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, the voiceover states, "[t]he Panthers had fewer than thirty members when they went to Sacramento. This dramatic display attracted many more." As this statement illustrates a truth about the impact of this demonstration, and echoes Rhodes claims about the BPP using the media to recruit members, this framing also narrows what was just seen to an element of visual spectacle and dramatization. A similar pattern takes place in Episode 9. The demonstration ends with Bond's voiceover stating, "[t]he Black Panther Party's style and dramatic actions captured the attention of the media." The Sacramento demonstration becomes caught in these tropes of style and drama that emphasize their ability to create spectacle, and not to put forward a revolutionary program

and pose a threat or challenge to repressive state forces. What attracted new members and media, as these tropes suggest, was their "boldness", their "dramatic displays", and their "style".

Revolutionary Politics and Program

Though the Panthers' revolutionary politics and program are not clearly articulated in either documentaries' exposition on Black Power or in the formation of the Party, the idea of revolution or the notion that the BPP was a revolutionary party does emerge later in the documentaries. As was explained in the introduction, the Party saw Black struggles for freedom within the US as directly linked to the anticolonial struggles of the Third World and were aligned with more leftist, revolutionary organizations and philosophies, having, at the moral center of their movement, the vision that they could transform the world. This section takes into account those moments that more directly portray (or obscure) these principles and the Party's revolutionary political program.

In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, the BPP's revolutionary politics are only directly engaged in two short segments. The first introduces the Panther's Ten Point Program about a third way into the documentary, and then will mention the Panther's perspective on world revolution at the half-way point, but only for a brief moment. The Ten Point Program is first introduced by the voiceover at the twenty-minute time stamp: "The Panthers Ten Point Program, their Bill of Rights, demanded quality housing and education, as well as community control of the police," which is then met with archival footage of Seale stating: "The Ten Point platform and program that Brother Huey P. Newton was running down today in the courtroom is the key fact, is the key thing that has made the Black Panther Party survive and grow to the numerous numbers and…" [Seale is cut off here.] These introductions are significant to finally show audiences that the Panthers were a political organization with clear, concrete demands that were

meant to meet the basic needs of, especially, poor Black communities. They also signal that community empowerment was a key component, at least here in the voiceover's mention of community control of the police, and, through Seale's commentary, how significant these demands, and the political program overall, were to the very survival of the Party.

While this introduction provides significant context for the BPP's political orientation, it also neglects to mention the more revolutionary aspects about these demands. For instance, in terms of quality housing, the Ten Point Platform also included an ultimatum. If this demand was not met by the "White landlords", the platform stated, "then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people". Or, according to the platform, the demand for education was one "that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society…[and]…that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society." These demands clearly articulate a transformation of the conditions and foreground Black empowerment and community control over those conditions; yet, what is presented to the viewer is much more generalized and does not capture these transformative aspects. Other demands that capture the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics would be those calling for a U.N. plebiscite, "an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black community", and the end of military service for Black men. Mention of these demands would have helped to capture what was uniquely radical about the Panthers and what could not be as easily fit within establishment politics.

Moreover, the significant mention of the Party's platform to their survival, as is seen in Seale's footage, is quickly re-directed towards a focus on Seale as a charismatic individual. At the point where Seale is cut off, the footage is overlapped with a voiceover and then cuts to an interview with former BPP member Landon Williams. He states:

> Bobby was the key person responsible for the growth of the Black Panther Party. Bobby could talk about how this Black woman who lives right here across the street needs to get more food for her children, because she's been struggling. That was the kind of person Bobby was. When Bobby talked you could empathize with him. He could paint a picture of the Black community that would make you want to go out right now and do something.

The documentary cuts to a close-up, still shot of Seale and slowly zooms in on the image in silence, dramatizing Williams' statement. Ironically, the moment that Seale is saying the political program is the key thing, Williams is telling audiences that Seale was the key person to grow the Party. Of course, it is important to recognize the importance of Seale and his charisma in building the Party, but the re-directed focus on this extraordinary individual works to divert from the underlying politics, political program, and, therefore, political possibilities of the BPP's larger political vision.

Following this coverage on the Panthers' political program, the documentary briefly addresses the Panthers' radical perspective on world revolution. As a point of context, the documentary mentions the *Black Panther* newspaper and shows a still image of an article on the South African nation of Angola; this context giving a brief visual demonstration of the BPP's internationalism. The voiceover then states: "By now, the Panthers saw themselves as part of a larger struggle, a world revolution." Directly following this statement, the documentary cuts to archival footage of a protest and two male activists (Panthers maybe) holding Mao Tse-tung's *Quotations*, one activist shouts: "Is this the answer, they said it. You hear em' in there. They're talking about the Red Book by Chairman Mao of Red China." Though it is significant that the voiceover mentioned this world revolutionary perspective and the documentary showed archival footage that mentioned Mao and the Red Book, this segment is extremely abstract and so brief that its presentation is also a part of its devaluation. There is no attempt to explain the context of the footage or, more generally, the influence of Maoism on the Panthers, especially the

significance of the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist politics of Mao Zedong and the identification and solidarities the BPP cultivated with Asian radicals in the US and across the Pacific.[48]

The voiceover on world revolution and its abstract footage are followed by an interview with Charles Bates, an FBI Special Agent in San Francisco. Instead of allowing any of the other participant interviewees to comment on the Panthers' vision of world revolution, especially Kathleen Cleaver who consistently focused on BPP's international perspective and lived at the BPP's international embassy, the documentary cuts to Bates whose interview creates disorienting clashes between the two segments. The archival footage of the Red Book protesters is gritty with a low-level resolution and rapidly cuts to different shots of the crowd that pack the screen and chaotically move in and out of the frame. This chaotic image then shifts to a brightly lit, high quality close-up of Bates, shot with a static camera, and he is positioned in the center of the frame; the shift in film techniques jolt and compel the viewer to give Bates a concentrated, almost appreciated, attention. Immediately following the cut, Bates begins:

> I don't think the Panthers accomplished anything. I think they could have. I think they could have. They could have been good for the Black community, the less fortunate Blacks and the young people…with programs of trying to feed schoolchildren. Had that been the main thrust instead of marching around with guns and bandoliers across their chest, they could have accomplished something. But it got out of line.

The messaging of Bates' interview, its design, and its placement as follow-up material to a presentation of the BPP's revolutionary internationalism, creates an adverse association with these politics. It is obvious that Bates plays a more antagonistic role in other places in the documentary, but here, this is either not clear, or not the case. Because Bates' comment shifts to exhibit an ostensibly balanced perspective, giving the Panthers some credit for their programs

[48] For more on the influence of Maoism, see Chao Ren, "Concrete Analysis of Concrete Conditions": The Study of the Relationship Between the Black Panther Party and Maoism," *Constructing the Past* 10, no. 1, article 7 (2009).

(repeating himself in the idea “they could have” accomplished something), his degrading comments seem to be given more legitimacy. It seems the documentary is aligned with Bates here, at least in how he is used to demonize the idea of the Panthers as revolutionaries. The juxtaposition Bates’ makes between guns and feeding schoolchildren, and therefore (ostensibly) revolution and the survival programs, will be reinforced and repeated by both the voiceover and Hilliard soon in the documentary. In the end, the idea of the Panthers as world revolutionaries is slighted and instead becomes useful as a counterpoint to what is seemingly “unrevolutionary” and more acceptable: the survival programs (discussed in the next section).

This same juxtaposition will be used in Episode 9’s coverage of the BPP’s revolutionary politics. Yet, this documentary will differ as it dedicates a much longer segment to an exploration and definition of revolution. The documentary starts this sequence with archival footage of Newton in his jail cell, as he states, “In America, Black people are treated very much as the Vietnamese people, or any other colonized people, because we’re used, were brutalized, the police occupy our area, our community, as a foreign troop occupies territory.” This footage importantly illustrates the Panthers’ internationalist perspective on oppression and features the Panthers’ iconic framing of Black people as a colonized people and intimately connected to those also brutalized by US empire. It is significant that the documentary would begin its presentation on revolutionary politics with this archival footage.

Yet, it soon becomes unclear as to why this footage does open the sequence, as these ideas are demonized in the next clip. Similar to *Black Power, Black Panthers*, the archival footage comes without any engagement from a former BPP member or Panther sympathizer, and, is instead defined by, or followed up by, commentary from a white, male law enforcement official, Charles O’Brien, Chief Deputy Attorney General of California. He states:

> The Panthers seemed to be in deliberate, open, provocative confrontation with the police departments, in their earlier periods. They used revolutionary language, provocative language, and seemed to be deliberately seeking to confront established authority, particularly police authority. But then we observed, they seemed to have a social side, a concept of doing something beyond these angry confrontations.

Similar to Bates' commentary, O'Brien also presents a kind of measured analysis that is not obviously adversarial, as he demeans the BPP's revolutionary language as "angry" and "provocative" and offers praise for their "social side". With this clip as the follow-up to Newton's archival footage, the revolutionary commentary Newton provides can be read as "provocative" and "angry" rather than foundational to the Panthers' radical, anti-imperialist analysis of race and domination. This reading becomes reinforced two minutes later in an interview with present-day Newton, who states, "the Party grew much too rapidly, because many of the young people were very enthusiastic about the guns and about the berets, but they knew little about the community programs that were really our reason for existing." With this editing sequence, O'Brien's denouncement of the Panthers 'revolutionary side', gains legitimacy, especially with present-day Newton corroborating this dividing line between guns and community programs. This is not to say that Newton would at all agree with O'Brien's assessment, but the juxtaposition and editing line up in a way that portrays O'Brien's repressive comments as neither adversarial nor illegitimate.

Episode 9 goes on to offer other definitions and explorations of the Panthers' revolutionary politics, however, that do not leave open this possibility for such hostile interpretations. Yet, they are also definitions of revolution that do not display the Panthers' more radical character, as did the first archival footage in the sequence. The first is coverage of the Ten Point Program. With the camera scanning over a copy of the platform pamphlet, Bond's voiceover proclaims: "The Panthers called themselves a revolutionary organization. The Ten

Point Program was their blueprint for change." Seale picks up this explication in the next clip: "and we wrote out this program, we want power to determine our own destiny in our own Black community. An immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people was point number seven. The right to have juries of our peers in the courts, what have you. We summed it up, we wanted land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace." The demands Seale rehearses, and the visual display of the pamphlet, concretely establishes the Panthers' foundational concerns with the basic needs and wants of poor and working-class Black people. There is also more emphasis on the platform's significance here than in *Black Power, Black Panthers*, illustrating its centrality to the Party's ideology and organizing. The voiceover goes so far to equate the platform with the Panthers' definition of themselves as a revolutionary organization—i.e. the platform as their blueprint for revolution.

Yet, the way the Ten Point Program is portrayed, the demands that are displayed, are not necessarily revolutionary and can be more easily accepted within a liberal politics. In other words, these domestic demands that call for the basic needs of Black people and the right to determine one's own destiny can be revolutionary, depending on the approach. However, the revolutionary approaches the Panthers did take are not included in the documentary. As such, these demands could be, theoretically, met within US liberal reform politics, which may be why they are those associated with a definition of revolution that the documentary can accept and does not need to contain, as was seen earlier. The display here does not include the demand of draft exemption, which would point to the Panthers' internationalist politics, and only shows the earliest version of the platform that does not yet include its anti-capitalist stance or its anti-imperialist demand for a U.N. plebiscite. These platform points would demonstrate more clearly what was revolutionary about the Ten Point Program as they disclose the rejection to capitalist,

imperialist systems of domination as the approach to meeting the needs, wants, and rights of Black people.

This more acceptable definition of revolution is concretized at the end of the segment in a participant interview with Seale. He states: "now, many call a revolution a confrontation, really what Huey and I meant by revolution was a need to revolve more political power and economic power back into the hands of the people, that's really what a revolution is". Seale may be describing the way the Panthers made efforts to place political and economic power into the hands of the working classes, especially through its grassroots organizing or when Seale ran for mayor and Brown for city council. But what is essentially missing from this definition, that cannot be easily appropriated into liberal reform politics, is the goal of dismantling the system that exists, not revolving power within it, and transforming that system to a new one, or as Seale stated in 1969: "to change the existing system to a better one."

Survival Pending Revolution

When Seale made this statement in 1969, he was specifically speaking about the BPP's survival programs, which, as he stated, were decidedly not "reform programs" but "revolutionary, community, socialistic programs…set forth by revolutionaries, by those who want to change the existing system to a better one…[whereas] a reform program is set up by the existing exploitative system as an appeasing handout, to fool the people and to keep them quiet."[49] As has already been seen, however, the survival programs have not been presented as revolutionary, socialistic programs but, rather, as useful techniques to downplay or divert from the Panthers' revolutionary politics. This type of framing has its roots in the historical media

[49] Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (1971; repr. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1990), 412-413.

coverage of the Panthers while their organization was still active. It was an aspect of the Party that could be used as a disciplinary mechanism and portray the Panthers as moving in a more acceptable direction for the mainstream public. Both documentary projects carry on these historical framings, but on varying levels. They also provide hints towards the revolutionary goals of those programs. This is especially the case for Episode 12, which exposes the survival programs' revolutionary character through its coverage of their massive repression by federal and state authorities, contradicting and complicating claims that the programs were the more acceptable 'social side' of the Party.

In *Black Power, Black Panthers*, the survival programs are introduced, similar to Episode 9, following the presentation of the Ten Point Program. Most of the information provided about these programs come from former women Panthers, spokespersons not well-represented in either documentary project. The voiceover begins: "With Newton in jail for the Frye shooting, Seale took control. The Panthers adopted a new slogan: 'serve the people' and began providing free breakfast to school children." The slogan mentioned here was used as the mantel sign above many of the Panther offices and served to draw people in and gain support within the mainly poor, Black communities where the Panther offices and programs existed. As it is portrayed in this documentary, however, this slogan is the only one mentioned, supplanting the more official slogan that covered the BPP newspaper and was a part of the official discourse surrounding the programs: "Survival Pending Revolution". This choice of phrase will frame the way other commentary is understood and divert from the more revolutionary dimensions of the programs.

The first commentator, Jonina Abron, speaks to the significance of, specifically, the breakfast program, both its impacts on the well-being of children and their ability to learn, and the message the breakfast program sent to both local and national communities. Abron explains:

"our programs, like this, are consciousness raising programs and we hope that people would begin to wonder, well if the Black Panthers can feed a few children, then, the United States government, with all their wealth, why aren't they feeding more children." This important insight opens a multitude of possible interpretations for why Abron highlighted this government neglect. One interpretation would be: the Panthers just had to garner the attention and to push the government to provide this type of program, which, at the end the documentary, the viewer is informed that this does happen, and a similar type of breakfast program now exists across the nation. Another conclusion, that comes closer to the actual political education of the Panthers: the people need to understand that the system purposely does not provide these services and, thus, the system in place is inadequate, even with the War on Poverty programs. Or: Black people could create their own grassroots institutions that put the needs and interests of Black people, and other disadvantaged peoples, at the forefront. This last interpretation would be especially reflective of the political and ideological goals of the programs, which were guided by the ideals of collective, self-determination. As Abron's provocative question is portrayed, viewers are left to fill in this gap. Yet, with the image of the national breakfast program at the end of the documentary, and the documentary's final trajectory that moves towards establishment politics, the first interpretation, to push the system to integrate and assimilate these programs seems most fitting.

Cheryl Simmons provides the second commentary on the programs, offering both a more expansive and a more limiting view. She states, "the Panthers were doing something, they were feeding people, they were talking about taking care of the seniors in the community. In some cases, they were providing childcare, and free medical centers were in the making, and those are significant accomplishments." It is especially significant that Simmons informs viewers of the

wider variety of programs that developed, exposing, indirectly, the fact that these essential services were not being provided by the government. Yet, the rhetorical framing that is used, such as the Panthers "provided" or "fed", can also lead to a more limited understanding of the programs as charity or service programs. This is a concern the Panthers had in their own day, as the 1969 comment of Seale illustrates. This framing can take away from the grassroots institution building that was central to the existence of these programs. Part of the consciousness raising was for the people to realize their own political will, since, as the Panthers repeated constantly, the people would be the driving force of revolution, not its leaders. The goal of the programs was to "teach people tools to liberate themselves"[50]; 'serving the people' or only mentioning what the BPP 'provides' cannot capture these radical lessons and can, possibly, invert them.

Episode 9 begins its exposition on the survival programs with a similar tone. The voiceover remarks, "The Black Panthers distributed free food and later developed a free breakfast program for children." Even if the Panther program began as a service that was similar to a food pantry that 'gave' out free food, this was definitely not its goals as the programs developed. Elaine Brown, in the follow-up commentary, begins to explain this development. She states,

> The idea was obviously twofold for the specific purpose of serving those who were directly benefited by our programs, but also secondarily to influence the minds of people to understand not only that the Black Panther Party was providing them this, but more importantly that if they could get food, maybe they would want clothes, and maybe they would want housing, and maybe they would want land, and maybe they would want some abstract thing called freedom.

This commentary importantly provides the multi-layered purposes and goals of the programs: to provide services the government failed to provide, to gain support for the Party, and to, 'most

[50] Interview with Newton in *Black Panther A.K.A. Off the Pig*.

importantly', have the people come to their own consciousness about what they wanted, with freedom as the conclusive desire once these basic needs of survival were met. Though this documentary does not mention the official slogan, 'survival pending revolution', this commentary begins to explain it.

An explanation that more fully exposes the revolutionary socialism at their root would be useful, however, especially for Episode 12, which offers a different perspective on the survival programs. This episode frames the entire segment on the Panthers through a critical lens on the FBI, its nefarious attacks, and its role in the assassination of Chicago BPP Chairman Hampton and BPP Defense Captain Mark Clark. And though Hampton is featured considerably throughout the episode, he is never shown discussing socialism or critiquing capitalism, which would have been especially helpful for viewers to more clearly understand the coverage shown on the survival programs (and as to why the FBI orchestrated Hampton's assassination).

Bond's voiceover re-introduces the breakfast program in Episode 12, though through a very different perspective. He states, "The new breakfast program soon attracted the attention of the FBI. Claiming the program served to indoctrinate children, the bureau directed field offices to quote 'formulate specific counterintelligence techniques to disrupt this nefarious activity'." During the voiceover's statement, the viewer is shown images of the FBI document that directly gave this order. This is soon followed up with footage of the aftermath of a police raid on the Chicago Panther office. This raw footage shows news reporters arriving on the scene with community members explaining how, once all the Panthers were out of the building, the police re-entered and that was when a fire started. This footage is then confirmed in a participant interview with former Black Panther Bobby Rush, who explains: "…just to show you the nature of raiding offices there, they burned boxes of cereal that we had on the third floor. They

deliberately set fire to that. They didn't set fire to the second floor. They set fire to the third floor and that was indicative of what they were thinking and how they were moving." This exposition of the attacks on the breakfast program reveals the massive level of repression the Panthers faced and illustrates the threat they posed to established power through their survival programs. This picture of the breakfast program contradicts the ways in which they were portrayed earlier in Episode 9 and in *Black Power, Black Panthers* as a 'more acceptable' side that countered the BPP's more 'revolutionary' philosophies and practices. Though there has not been a clear articulation of the BPP's radical politics, this critical image presented in Episode 12 offers viewers something that cannot be contained or reconciled within a liberal framework and helps to expose the challenge Black collective power and self-determination posed to established power and the state-sanctioned mandates to crush such efforts.

Fred Hampton

One of the most important leaders in the BPP to effectively articulate the revolutionary dimensions of the Party's politics was Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Chicago BPP. This is why he was so viciously attacked and ultimately assassinated by the FBI. Both documentary projects present strong coverage of Hampton's assassination, as this becomes the most blatant example of the nefarious activities of COINTELPRO in both documentaries. There was also rare, public access to the murder site, which allowed for independent documentarists and news cameras to document the aftermath of the assassination and the botched cover-up by law enforcement, leaving a substantial amount of archival footage behind. At the same time, the coverage of Hampton, in both documentary projects, also reproduces a liberal framing that emphasizes him as an individual in a way that overshadows or substitutes for the larger political

vision of the BPP. A pattern develops in both projects that leaves viewers with very abstract lessons about what made Hampton so special and so targeted by the FBI.

In Episode 12, the framing around Hampton, both his introduction and his death, are delivered by Father George Clements of the Holy Angels Church in Chicago. Father Clements's interview commentary, as well as most of the other commentary on Hampton, does not provide the revolutionary background to describe Hampton, who was a staunch Marxist and revolutionary internationalist. Instead, Clements commentary frames his and the Panthers significance as a group that was "definitely going to be heard", and his last comment to sum up Hampton's purpose as: "…to speak out for liberation, for first-class citizenship". This liberal framing cannot capture the radical perspective of Hampton, who argued for an international proletarian revolution whenever he had the mic, and instead domesticates his teachings to be about recognition (to be heard) and inclusion (first-class citizenship) within the US nationalist project. Yet, the archival footage that follows Father Clements initial statements begin to reveal to viewers this more radical perspective. In Hampton's first appearance, he is seen delivering his most re-played speech in popular media memory:

> We always say in the Black Panther Party, they can do anything they want to us. We might not be back. I might be in jail. I might be anywhere. But when I leave you can remember I said, the last words on my lips: I am (I am) a revolutionary (a revolutionary). And you're going to have to keep on saying that. You are going to have to say I am a proletariat. I am the people. I am not the pig. You've got to make a distinction. And the people are going to have to attack the pigs. The people are going to have to stand up against the pigs. That's what the Panthers are doing here; that's what the Panthers are doing all over the world.

Hampton's appeal "to make a distinction" is about identifying oneself as "the people" and not "the pig". It follows the semantic logic and patterning that makes an associated set of demands: keep saying you're a revolutionary, keep saying you are a proletariat, keep saying you are the people, keep making that distinction. This distinction is what defines the revolutionary,

collective identity of working-class people, what Hampton, following Marx, referred to as "the proletariat", that distinguishes itself from "the pig". This distinction expands the definition of "the pig" to not only be about the police but also about capitalist society in general. Claiming I am not "the pig", as Hampton beckons his listeners, does not just mean, 'I am not a cop'. It means I am not a part of, or complicit with, the exploitative, capitalist class, wherein the police are its military arm. Though there is no commentator to assist in breaking down Hampton's revolutionary politics here, the speech exposes some of this, and the documentary chose to not edit the footage, which is the case in *Black Power, Black Panthers* and many other popular media that feature the speech during the 1990s and beyond.[51]

This exposure lessens as the narrative on Hampton proceeds, however. The next footage shown of Hampton is one that is also featured in *Black Power, Black Panthers*, and the repetition of this footage in both documentaries illustrates how agreeable the ideas are in presenting the historical memory of Hampton. The black and white footage shows him stating:

> People learn by example. I don't think anyone does not agree with that. I think that when Huey P. Newton said that people learn by basically observation and participation, I think everybody caught on to that. So, what we are saying simply is if they learn by observation and participation then we need to do more acting than we need to do writing. And I think the Black Panther Party is doing that. We didn't talk about a breakfast for children program, we've got one.

This axiom about learning by observation and participation is one that Hampton repeated over and over in his speeches, but, here, it is not connected to the specific political lessons in which he used it, which leaves the axiom open for appropriation, as will happen in *Black Power, Black Panthers*. Here, he mentions the need for less writing and more acting, which is referring to radical theory without practice. Hampton used this axiom to argue that the most effective way to

[51] Another popular media object that would soon feature this Hampton speech was Mario Van Peebles' 1994 Hollywood film *Panther*. In this film, the speech is surgically edited to omit Hampton's line about being a proletariat and the important distinction between the proletariat and the pig.

teach people socialism or any other revolutionary practice of collective, self-determination is through observation and participation. He especially used this axiom to talk about how people in the community came to support and endorse socialism through the practice of the breakfast for children program; through practice, he would argue, people can inspect theory themselves. This context is not provided, however, and is left to teach a more abstract lesson about leading by example that leaves out the politics and political possibilities that undergird the lesson.

This happens once more and leads this time to a focus on Hampton as a leader and charismatic individual. The documentary features a short snippet of an iconic Hampton speech, where he is shown stating: “We say all power to all people. We say white power to white people. Brown power to Brown people. Yellow power to Yellow people. Black power to Black people.” What is captured in this phrase is another essential lesson Hampton and many others taught, which was that racism could not be fought with racism, but instead with solidarity in the class struggle against racial capitalism. This anti-capitalist perspective and strategy are what made Hampton such a threat to established power. Yet, this is not necessarily the focus of the lesson learned in the follow-up interview. Instead, Elaine Brown vividly recalls a story about Hampton who could get hundreds of people together early in the morning to prepare for the day’s work. The camera quickly zooms in to a medium close-up as she recounts: “And you would have Fred out there rallying them...And when you saw this, this was twenty-one years old, it was unbelievable. You could not, not be moved by Fred Hampton”. Brown tells the story in a way that is itself moving and conjures up feelings of admiration for Hampton as such a dedicated and courageous leader. Yet, the political lessons behind the man are overshadowed by this emphasis on his dynamic charisma and ability to motivate and inspire. This is not to say that Hampton does not deserve the praise or should not be admired, but it does contribute to a pattern of

analysis and history-telling in the documentary that moves away from the revolutionary politics and political possibilities that made this individual so significant to remember.

This emphasis on individualized heroism and charisma are even more pointed in *Black Power, Black Panthers*. First, the voiceover mentions that it is the success of the community programs that "helped twenty-one-year-old Fred Hampton recruit one-thousand members within four months." The framing places Hampton in a single-handed position of rapidly growing the Party. This is followed by commentary from Deborah Johnson, a former Black Panther Party member and mother of Hampton's child. The interview footage includes her stating:

> Anything that he said could be done, he would show you how it could be done. I'll never forget, people would come into the office, 'Chairman I'm having a problem selling the one-hundred newspapers', and he would say, come on out here with me. He would go out in the street with an arm full of newspapers stopping cars…and his enthusiasm about this publication would just spill over, and people would say, maybe I'll check this out.

This is immediately followed by the same archival footage of Hampton in Episode 12 discussing the Panthers' belief in "participation and observation" or "learning by example". In this documentary, these axioms, meant to denote the idea of learning revolutionary politics through participation in revolutionary acts, is rewritten to be about Hampton's ambitious personality and willingness to 'lead by example'. This character trait may have been extremely important for Hampton in his goals to teach about socialism or revolutionary internationalism or just to motivate people to participate as active members in the Party. Yet, with the revolutionary politics left out, this footage is made to emphasize the man and his individual greatness and not, necessarily, the larger revolutionary vision of the Panthers.

The Party's Downfall: COINTELPRO, Huey P. Newton, & Establishment Politics

COINTELPRO

With decades of debate around the Party's downfall and the growing studies and research surrounding the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), both documentary projects give ample screen time to this topic and provide powerful evidence for COINTELPRO's nefarious behavior and capabilities. These visual demonstrations substantiate claims made by the Panthers and others about the high levels of government repression that many studies, especially Epstein's 1971 influential essay, attempted to discredit. Yet, while these documentaries deliver this vivid evidence, they do so mostly without clear explanations for why. Many times, the explanations provided are either done through a liberal lens of prejudice or are only hinted at in a way that deeper questions about why the Panthers were so targeted are not able to be explored.

Episode 12, its entire segment on the Panthers, is dedicated to exhibiting (not necessarily explaining) the expansion of FBI surveillance techniques and its nefarious activities. In the opening three minutes, Bond's voiceover informs us of the FBI's efforts that were "aimed at crippling the Black Panther Party". This voiceover is paired with a copy of a COINTELPRO document that issued the directive; a pattern that continues throughout the documentary and lends authenticity to the documentary's argument. This segment takes the viewer through multiple nefarious activities, such as instigating discord and disunity between the Panthers and the Chicago Black Stone Rangers (a local Southside gang), the raiding and burning of the Chicago Panther office, and the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

The other central evidence for the FBI's criminal behavior was its expansive surveillance operations. This is most directly presented through the participant interview footage of William O'Neal, a former FBI informant, who was Hampton's personal bodyguard when he was assassinated. O'Neal becomes a central voice in the episode, commenting on, and sometimes discrediting, the BPP's purpose, detailing his recruitment and his involvement in providing key

information used in Hampton's killing, and, finally, a tepid, yet genuine, apology and show of remorse for his involvement. The inclusion of O'Neal elicits multiple, even contradicting, effects on the narrative and on the affective tone of the episode. His commentary adds yet another level of veracity to the documentary's argument about the FBI, but it also feels like the filmmakers opened an opportunity for O'Neal to, in some ways, atone for his misdeeds. His inclusion, and his place as a key voice in the documentary, creates a sense of tension and almost disdain for how much screen time he is allotted. Yet, this makes different sense when one understands that this was the first time O'Neal had ever publicly revealed his role in the killing of Hampton and that the conditions under which he gave the interview were, perhaps, extremely dangerous and even life-threatening; viewers, however, are not privy to this information.[52]

Another figure that adds a complicated voice to the narrative is Howard Saffold, a Black Chicago police officer and member of the Afro-American Patrolmen's League. His commentary throughout is quite supportive of the Panthers, and he articulates the political dimensions of the Party stronger than most of the other interviewees. He aids in explaining the stance of the FBI and its impact on the local police force. He states,

> The police community has a sort of a built-in reward and punishment system, and you get a lot of rewards when you go after who the boss says is the bad guy and you get him. And I think what J. Edgar Hoover was able to do was to give police officers the impression that it was okay, it was open season, you didn't have to worry about the law…it's our ball game guys, we have the authority, we have the capacity, let's crush em'.

Coming from a police officer, it is unclear how to read this commentary. Was Saffold a policeman who was awarded or punished during this time? Similar to O'Neal, one may wonder

[52] See chapter eighteen, "A Great Healing Machine," in Jon Else's *True South: Henry Hampton and Eyes on the Prize, the Landmark Television Series That Reframed the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Viking, 2017).

why the infiltrators or possibly adversaries get to have such a privileged space and whose commentary feel incompatible with their specific historical roles in the narrative.

With this complexity in place, Saffold's commentary on the illegality and 'open season' mentality of the police lays the groundwork for the gripping story that unfolds around Hampton's assassination and the botched cover-up story by the Chicago police authorities. The documentary walks the viewer through a detailed account of the police raid and shooting death of Hampton, presenting images of the floor plans drawn up by police that were based on the information O'Neal provided, and vivid details given by Deborah Johnson, who was next to Hampton in their bed and eight months pregnant with his child. The segment edits footage together of Johnson's interview, a still image shot of Hampton lying dead in a pool of blood, and archival media footage of the arrests and the apartment in disarray. This leads to a montage sequence that juxtaposes the false public statements of State Attorney Edward Hanrahan with archival footage of reporters and interviews that overwhelming debunk Hanrahan's claims. The segment ends with archival footage of Chicago residents standing in lines and touring the murder site, and Bond's voiceover that ends with the final results of the investigation that found all ninety shots but one coming from police, all charges against the Panthers dropped, and no police were ever indicted. This leaves the viewer without resolution or faith in the liberal ideologies that dominate most of the *EOTP* series and effectively achieves the episodes' overall goal to expose the egregious level of repression the Panthers faced.

Though this exposure is clear and effective, the explanations as to why this level of repression took place are really only hinted at. In one example, police officer Saffold explains why the FBI attempted to disrupt an alliance between the Panthers and the Black Stone Rangers. He states:

> The Panthers were pursuing an ideology that said 'we need to take these young minds, this young energy, and turn it into a part of our movement for Black liberation. And I saw a very…intentional effort on the part of the police department to keep that head from hooking up to that body. It was like 'do not let this thing become a part of what could become a political movement, because that's exactly what it was.

Again, complications arise with this commentary coming from a police officer who seemingly witnessed this repression, but it comes closest to describing the larger political force and energy of disenfranchised groups coming together that could actually challenge established power. It was the political possibilities of a coalition and the redirection of energy towards the Black liberation movement that most threatened the social order.

Another comment/explanation comes from Marion Stamps, a community activist in Chicago, who questions why Hampton was murdered. She states: "it was like why, why; this brother has done nothing to none of you all. The only thing this brother has done is to instill a sense of pride, dignity, and self-determination in his people." In some ways, she answers her own question. These instilled senses were a threat to elite power, yet, without any clear explanation of what self-determination means and its political ramifications, this explanation could also fit into a more liberal understanding of Black power that is about personal feeling and self-development and not about collective, grassroots institution building. This definition of Black Power is the one most prominently presented in the series thus far, helping to shape the meaning of Stamps commentary.

Black Power, Black Panthers includes many of these same elements as Episode 12 in its powerful portrayal of the FBI's counterintelligence efforts and in its partial explanations for those attacks. In its introduction to COINTELPRO, the documentary shares the same contextual framing of Nixon's administration and, according to the documentary's voiceover, "his vow to crack down on Black militants and other radicals". The documentary begins by exhibiting FBI

communications that were highlighted in Episode 12, such as 'the aim to cripple the BPP'. This is immediately followed with the expert witness testimony of Wes Swearingen, a former FBI Special Agent, who, in talking about J. Edgar Hoover, states: "it was just plain old-fashioned hatred for Blacks. It didn't make any difference if they were Black Panthers, Nation of Islam, or what. He just didn't like Blacks except as chauffeurs and servants." Though this explanation may be true, its liberal reasoning explains racist violence as a result of Hoover's personal prejudice, minimizing the significant challenges Black radicals posed to the power structure and the importance of their political movements. It is clear that Black animus played a major role in Hoover's decision-making, but the repression had to also stem from federal and state authorities' role in quashing social movements and containing the discontent that is necessitated by US imperialism and racial capitalism.

Following Swearingen's interview, the documentary moves into its exposition on Hampton's assassination. Similar to Episode 12, the documentary threads together many pieces of the same archival footage and weaves in present-day interviews. Though the sequence is not as detailed as Episode 12, it gives a clear visual accounting of the egregious levels of violence involved in COINTELPRO operations. Yet, there is only one witness interview in this sequence that focuses on giving an explanation for the assassination. Bobby Rush explains: "We intimidated the police in Chicago, because they knew we would shoot back…and it took the FBI, the justice department, it took them to conspire to eliminate Fred Hampton and the chapter here." Rush importantly addresses the role of armed self-defense in the BPP's repression, but this explanation leaves out the larger political vision that was the real threat to state power (which also underlined why they chose to arm themselves). Especially in Chicago, where Hampton and other leadership espoused revolutionary socialism and were successful in building the original,

multi-racial, Rainbow Coalition around class struggle, where grassroots organizing developed free healthcare clinics and free breakfast programs, and where Panthers were brokering non-aggression pacts with local gangs and redirecting their energies towards social justice organizing, these were the political activities and possibilities that explain the repression and, according to state officials, needed to be crushed.

Huey P. Newton and the Valorization of Establishment Politics

Beyond its coverage on COINTELPRO, *Black Power, Black Panthers* offers another focus for the downfall of the Party, the personal failings and misdeeds of Huey Newton. This focus is simultaneously juxtaposed with the documentary's coverage on the BPP's participation in electoral politics and other more established political channels. This last section creates a strong affective contrast between the two as Newton's negative image amplifies the celebration and valorization of establishment politics and aids in one of the documentary's central arguments about the BPP's legacy: that they had paved the way for more moderate Black elites to rise to power within the established social order.[53]

It is important to note that the argument being made here, or the objective of this analysis, is not to exonerate Newton from his crimes and personal misdeeds. It is also not to downplay the role drugs and alcohol played in exacerbating the problems and challenges that Newton faced and that inevitably impacted the Party. The argument here is to illustrate how the overwhelming focus on Newton as an individual and the demeaning of his character creates a narrative shift that begins to, overwhelming, place the blame of the Party's downfall onto a single individual's

[53] Neither Episode 9 or 12 includes any exposition on Newton, or his death, and this is due to the episodes' designs, which end their coverage in 1968 and 1971. *Black Power, Black Panthers*, however, is a more comprehensive documentary that gives screen time to changes happening in the Party's later years, to its final conclusion, and to the meaning of its legacy. This is why this section will mostly concentrate on *Black Power, Black Panthers*, but will return to the *Eyes II* episodes in the final discussion on legacy.

misbehavior. It very much plays into the vilifying media discourse of the day, laid out in Lule's study, that serves to delegitimize the BPP wholesale. In some ways, it isn't until Newton is purged from the picture that the Party could fulfill its purpose of elevating more moderate Black elites into mainstream politics. Thus, the use of Newton as a counter-example to establishment politics does the work of delegitimizing the Party's more radical objectives in developing revolutionary political consciousness and grassroots, social movement organizing, with the long-term goals of transforming the system.

This singular focus on Newton begins in the aftermath of the COINTELPRO coverage. Many commentators first concentrate on how much the Party grew while Newton was in jail and the changes that took place after his release. Landon Williams states: "When Huey returned from prison, this *gang leader* returned to a multi-million-dollar organization, with offices and chapters spread across this country and internationally, he could not handle it [emphasis added]." With this commentary, the stage is set for a barrage of demeaning statements about his character—ego maniac, paranoid drug addict and alcoholic, and traitor—but the demeaning characterization here, "gang leader", is somewhat confusing, especially since gang members, among other marginalized Black people, were part of the life blood of the Party. The characterization plays into a bourgeois mentality that the Panthers did not embrace, and the comment also implies that Newton was unaware and completely uninvolved in Party operations while in jail.

The segment goes on to explain the internal conflicts in the Party, especially between the Central Committee and the New York chapter, as Newton "consolidating his power", which ignores the role COINTELPRO played in fomenting those fractures and other factors, beyond Newton's hunger for power, that aided in the decision to close offices across the nation—such as a lack of funding. This then leads to a discussion of Newton's drug problems, his alcoholism,

paired with, according to Williams, his “natural paranoia and egotism”. Finally, before the documentary takes a quick break from its focus on Newton, San Francisco journalist, Ed Montgomery, gets to participate alongside Panther members to disparage Newton’s character and his decision to live in a penthouse. Montgomery, who earlier stated that the Panthers deserved to be “open game” for police hostility and referred to Party members as “bums”, is now a confidante, used to corroborate other Panthers’ claims about Newton’s egotism. Again, this is not to make the argument that none of this is true, but to illustrate the lengthiness of this barrage that excludes more nuanced commentary and that legitimizes conservative, hostile perspectives.

This segment is suddenly broken with archival footage of a television commercial, featuring Bobby Seale running for mayor of Oakland and Elaine Brown for City Council. The voiceover uses this abrupt juxtaposition to help frame Newton as a counterpoint for the redemption of the Party and for the elevation of more moderate Black politicians. The voiceover states, “In 1973, Seale ran for mayor to help the Panthers re-make their image.” It continues: “Seale’s strong showing inspired Black politicians around the country.” This view is confirmed in follow-up commentary from Jonina Abron, who states: “…people say, well, if a Black Panther can run for public office, and they were considered a quote/unquote extremist group by many people, then certainly other Black people can run for public office. And I do think it made an impact on the local and national level.” This comparative logic will become a motif, which uses the radical character of the Panthers as leverage for more moderate Black people to enter into established politics. Judge Ramsey completes this section, shifting the power of the people toward conventional, electoral politics. Judge Ramsey states: “The people of Oakland began to see, that look, our votes can make a difference…and that tradition carries on… people felt renewed that they could make a difference and they could bring about change.” This is not to

argue that an electoral strategy could not bring about change, but there is no longer any mention of the need for social protest politics. Electoral politics becomes the horizon for political participation and power, ignoring or downplaying the kinds of power social movement politics had engendered.

With this move towards conventional politics and a turn toward the liberal redemption of the Panthers, the documentary returns to its counter-representation: Newton and his further fall from grace. The voiceover states: "The Party was successfully shutting its violent image, but Newton's took several blows." Here, the documentary seems to align or confirm earlier adversarial, statements that the Panthers were violent, and Newton becomes the focus of condemnation. Following the voiceover, the documentary cuts to interview footage of Lt. Larry Eade of the Oakland Police Department. Eade states:

> [Newton] displayed all the symptoms of a person addicted to cocaine. He was irrational; he was abrasive, inconsistent in his behavior. One day he's in the mood for the people, the next day he's out killing somebody. His victims always seem to be Black people, people he was claiming to protect and further the cause. He evolved from a guy who maybe had a really good intention to a basic common criminal.

What is surprising about this commentary is not only the fact that it seems to be somewhat hyperbolic, 'one day he loves the people, the next day he's killing someone', but also how this extreme instability and egregious behavior can be identified in such standardized terms; "a person addicted to cocaine", "a basic common criminal". A basic, common criminal is an every-other-day killer?

Before the documentary delivers its final condemnation of Newton, it again juxtaposes this negative image with a celebration of liberal politics and Elaine Brown's later leadership in the Party. As Abron explains: "Elaine was getting us involved in what would be considered more traditional, established Black organizations, community organizations. We were trying to

broaden the base…I personally thought it was a smart move, because times change…" Abron is cut off mid-sentence here, disallowing her to explain how times had changed. Nonetheless, this affirmative statement is amplified by the voiceover: "Under Brown's guidance, the Panthers gained access to the halls of power. The government began funding some of their programs." Here, the achievement is the Panthers' ability to gain access to established political channels and to have the government include their programs within its purview. This short, intermediate segment ends with former Panther Ericka Huggins describing the benefits of one of these programs through the Oakland Community School: "We gave the quality of private school education to kids who couldn't even afford to go to public school…We were preparing them for real life, and instilled in them a great sense of self-worth, or, rather than instill, we had them recognize their own self-worth". Though this school, and many of the programs, government-funded or not, made real, positive changes in the lives of many Black people, this celebration of gaining access to US "halls of power" and the lesson of "self-worth" are a far cry from the calls to transform, in a revolutionary way, those halls of power and the necessity of collective liberation and action.

The documentary then returns to complete the plotline of Newton, giving him some recognition for his later achievements in completing his doctorate degree, but ending his story with the weight of the Party on his shoulders. There is a short clip of Newton on a television program sometime in the 1980s, where he is apparently high on drugs during the interview. The volume on the voiceover sound track is turned up, overlapping this image of Newton, while Newton's dialogue is turned down, and the viewer is made to concentrate on his widened eyes and jerking movements. The voiceover states: "Newton went on to finish his doctorate, but he couldn't escape the twin demons that possessed him: cocaine and alcohol. By the early 1980s,

the Black Panther Party had disappeared." During this last line of the voiceover, the screen slowly fades to black then holds on the black screen in silence. Here, Newton's drug problem is directly linked with the end of the Party, both through the semantics of the voiceover's statement and the visual presentation. This simplified and individualized explanation dramatizes the role Newton played in the Party's downfall and diverts attention away from the massive repression of COINTELPRO and the revolutionary politics that were the basis of this massive repression. This will be a pattern repeated in other documentaries on the Panthers for decades to come.

The final juxtaposition of the documentary follows this low, depressive point to then deliver one of its central liberal lessons surrounding the legacy of the Panthers. Judge Ramsey delivers this lesson in his final interview. He states, "The power structure, which was the word of the day, had to begin to confront people in the Black community who in the past had been considered militant, when compared to the Panthers, were not militant at all." The voiceover comes in next to explain the result of this: "In Oakland, the old guard has been replaced by African American leaders. The Panthers were instrumental in electing the city's first Black mayor, Lionel Wilson, but it was only one step towards their goals." The logic of this legacy segment, then, is that the Panthers role was to create a pathway for less militant Black leaders. The Panthers revolutionary practices and ideas were useful to intimidate the power structure, but not to dismantle it. Instead, as it is here, the Panther's legacy was its ability to lay the path for a more moderate Black political regime to emerge.[54] The final clip exemplifies this in Bobby Rush the night he was elected as a representative on the City Council in Chicago's Southside. Rush

[54] For more on this critical history of the pacification of radical dissent through conventional political channels and the emergence of a Black political elite, see Cedric Johnson's *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders*.

represents, finally, the most literal example of the liberal arch of the narrative —the breakthrough of a Panther into conventional politics.

Though Episode 9 and 12 and not designed to cover the electoral campaigns of Seale and Brown or the election of Bobby Rush, they are also framed in a similar fashion around the valorization of establishment politics. Episode 9 is flanked by two segments that celebrate or embrace conventional politics, and the episode ends with folding all three expositions on Black Power into a more acceptable, colorblind notion of 'Power to the People'. As chapter one details, the final moment of Episode 9 uses this phrase to reiterate mythologies about America's time-honored, nationalist ideals (Bond's voiceover ended the episode: "Power to the People was a promise as old as the nation. Now new voices demanded that the promise be fulfilled"). Moreover, both episodes are also folded into the final legacy segment of Episode 14 that does not distinguish the Panthers' legacy from other forms of Black liberation politics and instead folds them into a larger narrative about the exceptionalist nature of the US and its rightful place as 'leader of the free world'. Overall, the series leaves viewers with the implication that the BPP was one piece of the larger movement in its liberal goals of integration and representation within US institutions, and the embrace of a shift from social movement politics to electoral politics.

Conclusion

Episode 14, the final episode of *Eyes II*, leaves viewers enveloped within a multicultural, imperialist fantasy that effectively mobilizes Black freedom to validate US claims of exceptionalism. This parallels *Black Power, Black Panthers*, which leaves viewers with the sense that even the Panthers', as militant as they were, helped to build toward this more perfect union, as they paved the way for moderate Black politicians to enter into it. As the documentary's argument proposes, the Panthers' legacy was to intimidate the power structure—not to dismantle

it—so that 'less militant' leaders could gain access to that power structure. These endings, and the liberal framing throughout, conceal the important lessons that characterized the BPP's revolutionary politics, obscuring the distinctions between liberal, reformist history and radical history. Most distinctly, they obscure the Panthers long-term goals of transforming the system, rather than finding a way to participate in it.

Yet, these liberal lessons do not wholly encompass the significance of these memory objects or the impact on their audiences. Both memory projects are combatting the cultural attacks on Panthers that began with their historical origin and continued up until the moment these documentaries were made. They attempt to claim their stake in the cultural memory debates around the Panthers that humanizes them rather than wholesale demonizes them. They give voice to former Panther members to craft and reshape the dominate memory that vilifies or delegitimizes the organization. They also allow law enforcement authorities, and others, to speak their sides of the story, which, many times, illustrates their ignorance and bigotry and exposes the levels of violence and dehumanization they were willing to endorse or participate in.

There are also moments of disjuncture that leave viewers with questions and contradictions that do not fit within hegemonic liberal discourses. This is especially the case throughout Episode 12. Though these documentaries may not provide the clearest articulation of revolutionary ideas and political possibilities, they do present contradictions and disruptions, and, at points, hint at the more radical character of the BPP. These complex dynamics complicate the liberal ideologies that frame them and expose, even if for only a moment, how liberal reform politics have not been sufficient to change the conditions for many Black people. In the end, these complicated media objects illustrate the contradictions racial capitalism necessitates, as the continued conditions of violence make it difficult to completely embrace the liberal lessons

being delivered. Moreover, the vestiges of the radical lessons the Panthers taught are still needed under these conditions and thus will continue to haunt the documentaries, both in conscious and unconscious ways. As liberal re-writings can often silence and reshape the revolutionary character of Panther memory, they also open an opportunity to experience these vestiges, to analyze the contradictions, and to better understand the obstacles racial liberalism imposes in the continued struggle for racial justice.

CONCLUSION

In the decades following the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, new forms of racial liberalism were ushered in to help manage the heightened contradictions of racial capitalism. These new hegemonic formations, referred to in this dissertation as racial liberalism, liberal multiculturalism, or multicultural imperialism, have worked against the most radical demands of Black liberation movements and developed liberal antiracist discourses that reframe Black liberation history in ways that are compatible with a neoliberal economy and US imperialist expansion. As such, liberal celebrations of Black liberation in the 1980s and 1990s exist alongside the greatest transfer of wealth upwards, the deindustrialization and devastation of urban centers, the decrease in social wages and living standards, the expansion of the prison, police, and military industrial complexes, and the downsizing of governmental supports and social welfare spending. This paradox inherent in liberal forms of antiracism were simultaneously unable to counter the more direct attacks of the conservative 'New Right' on perceived civil rights gains and, in many ways, helped to reinforce its political efforts and move the entire socio-political system to the right. The 'New Right' was able to appropriate Black liberation history to propagate ideologies of colorblindness and meritocracy while simultaneously tapping into entrenched Black animus, white resentment, and economic insecurity to garner an electoral base of white male (and female) "victims" to support a right-wing agenda. The influence of this white backlash, especially its propagation of "Black criminality", "law and order", and its increased investments in the penal system, deeply impacted the liberal establishment in both their continuation and expansion of these repressive systems and their ineffective, dematerialized responses to the New Right's attacks.

Under these contradictory and violent conditions, Black liberation memory would become a centerpiece of ideological struggle. Because the Black Freedom Struggle, in concert with other social justice movements of the 1960s and 1970s, represented one of the most democratizing moments in American history, it posed, and continues to pose, one of the greatest challenges to established power. These movements illustrated the power of people to organize and transform society, where social justice organizations demanded the redistribution of wealth through law and policy and spoke out and stood up against American imperial power, seeing US domestic racism as deeply connected to its foreign policy. More radical organizations were dedicated to the dismantling of white world supremacist capitalism and to developing collective forms of self-determination that foregrounded the interests and needs of the most exploited and oppressed peoples around the globe. These radical perspectives and transformative goals were a threat to the smooth functioning of racial capitalism in their own historical moment and continued to be as the US was repositioning itself two decades later as the "winner" of the Cold War and as the "lone superpower in a unipolar world".[1] In this pivotal moment of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the ideological forces of racial liberalism attempted to deflect from its transformative goals and, instead rewrite and rearticulate this history to signify and buttress mythologies of US exceptionalism that aligned antiracism with capitalism and helped to legitmize US claims as the rightful 'leader of the free world'.

This was particularly the case in the construction of the dominant, consensus memory of the Civil Rights Movement, which has been used to portray a story of racial progress in the US and serve as 'proof' of the democratic functioning of US political, social, and economic

[1] Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: the Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 160.

institutions. What this officially sanctioned form of Black liberation has offered is a renewal and redemption of the US nationalist project and the opportunity to reveal deeper truths about "the universalizing force of American norms and institutions".[2] The first chapter of this dissertation deeply engages with this well-known, consensus memory through one of its key examples in the canonical PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*. In this chapter, I closely track the representational practices and ideological frameworks used to construct this dominant memory in order to better understand how they are used, negotiated, and contested in the media objects in the following chapters. What I found, however, was that the dominant narrative in *EOTP* did not unfold simply or uniformly, and actually afforded the opportunity to also track when and how liberal frameworks struggle to conceal their own contradictions. As such, there were moments of disjuncture and instability that could not be contained by these liberal frameworks, leaving viewers, at points, without resolution or faith in the liberal lessons offered. These findings would become even more significant in chapters two and three on Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party, as these media portrayals would seemingly be more difficult, if not impossible to contain within a liberal, US-nationalist framework.

Yet, what this dissertation has shown is that the hegemony of racial liberalism, and the entrenchment of this dominant, consensus memory, has similarly impacted on Black radical memory. In chapter two, on the portrayal of Malcolm X in television documentary, many of the same representational practices and ideological frameworks from *EOTP* carry over, especially the guiding trope of American exceptionalism that consistently dulls Malcolm X's radical critique of the US and his internationalist politics that move beyond a Civil Rights framework.

[2] Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.

What I found was that all the documentaries under study attempted to redeem Malcolm X's memory by moving him towards the Civil Rights Movement, using his 'negative' image to forward Civil Rights goals, and contain his legacy within a US nationalist politics; reshaping Malcolm as a liberal American hero.

However, the chapter also illustrated that these liberal discourses work across different documentaries and television networks in different measure, and when bringing these documentaries together and analyzing shared themes, certain contradictions are made more apparent. For example, where one documentary completely erases the significance of the Nation of Islam in Malcolm X's radical education and critique of the US, another exposes it through a piece of archival footage where Malcolm gets to speak for himself. Where one documentary selectively edits a clip to make Malcolm's call for separation unwarranted, absurd, or criminal, another documentary will expose footage that allows him to explain the absurdity or even criminality of integrating within a system owned and governed by white people. This comparative work allows for moments of disjuncture or, at least, awareness of the variety and instability of the framing mechanisms to explain Malcolm's history and politics. Overall, however, even at these intersecting points of disjuncture or instability, and even when a certain exposure of Malcolm's radicalism happens, the liberal frameworks continue to dominate the messaging in the documentaries, diminishing, if not erasing all together, those revolutionary lessons that Malcolm could offer to contemporary audiences. These lessons would not only help to better explain why he was such a threat to established power, but also why the violence Malcolm X fought so hard against has continued into the present.

This lack of critical insight and explanation, the diminishment of radical politics, and the overshadowing of liberal frameworks, even at points of disjuncture, are all also found in the

portrayals of the Black Panther Party in chapter three. Because two of the central objects of analysis are episodes 9 and 12 from *EOTP*, chapter one plays a significant role in establishing the context for these media objects in chapter three. This is especially the case for the ways in which, first, Black Power is conceptualized in simplified and abstract explanations of cultural identity, personal feelings, and interpersonal relationships between Black and white people and, second, the overall legacy of Black liberation that sees electoral politics as the horizon for racial justice. These frameworks, and the overarching liberal ideologies of US exceptionalism in *EOTP*, guide how the BPP's history and legacy are understood within these particular episodes. Yet, these ideological frameworks similarly organize the KQED documentary *Black Power, Black Panthers*, the second documentary analyzed in this chapter, illustrating the hegemony of these frameworks as they cross different networks. Both documentary projects share these and other framing devices that work to contain, sanitize, or even erase the most revolutionary elements of the BPP. They mobilize tropes of style and spectacle to downplay revolutionary ideas and demonstrations; they devalue the BPP's internationalism through their fleeting and dismissive presentations; they use depoliticized explanations of the survival programs to counter the BPP's revolutionary politics and program.

As was seen in both chapter one and two, however, not everything on screen can be contained within a liberal framework, and different documentaries, especially Episode 12 of *EOTP*, and different narrative themes, such as the coverage of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, actually contest these liberal discourses in varying degrees. As the BPP's memory had faced a concerted onslaught of demonization in the years following the Party's demise, both of the documentary projects under study in this chapter were attempting to combat this demonization and offer a counter-memory that especially illustrated the viscous attacks on the

Party by state and federal authorities. Yet, again, these efforts are also constrained by the liberal racial discourses that only allow these counter-memories to go so far. An especially important finding in this chapter was that these documentaries could effectively exhibit the nefarious objectives and activities of state and federal authorities, but they could not provide the types of explanations that would allow contemporary viewers to understand why the BPP was so viciously attacked and the kind of threat their revolutionary politics continue to pose to established power.

These types of restraints, the work of decontextualizing, and the redefinitions of Black radical history and politics, and thus the political possibilities they represent, have been the central focus of this dissertation's analysis. Through close textual analyses of the media objects, I have attempted to give an intimate look at how these operations work, identifying the shared techniques and framing devices both within and across chapters, while also pointing to specific variations and deviations within each particular portrayal of Black radical memory. I have also sought to provide more expansive context and historical information in each chapter to unveil the more radical histories and politics that are restrained, revised, obscured, or omitted in the documentaries. This has included highlighting those moments, especially in the extended archival footage, that do exhibit the revolutionary and transformative character of these histories, which, many times, move in excess of, or harshly contrast with, the liberal framing devices in place. Additionally, I have considered the historical and cultural contexts in which these cultural productions operate, in and of themselves, and how they imagine putting forward an alternative vision, or perhaps counter-memory, within the cultural struggles of their own historical moment.

In looking back at these television documentaries, through this multi-faceted methodology, this dissertation offers many significant insights. It has shown how the liberal re-

writing of Black radical (and Black Power) liberation history in the early to mid-1990s must be seen as part of a much longer American tradition of using Blackness, especially Black liberation, to redefine the US, to normalize claims of the egalitarian nature of the American system of capital, and to buttress mythologies that the US is and, always was, a force for good; even if it has, and continues, to struggle to fulfill that innate goodness.[3] In other words, Black radical history is being used as a "new voice" to rejuvenate the ideological weaponry that works to cover over the violent histories that continue to underwrite the US nationalist project. Yet, what is even more significant is that these "voices" are those that did, and could, represent the greatest challenge to the US project, which makes their re-writing and inclusion with an American liberal politics even more dangerous for ongoing struggles of racial justice today.

This dissertation has contributed to a better understanding and intimate look at the hypocrisy of racial liberalism and how its production of antiracist knowledge actually limits our ability to fight racial injustice. More specifically, the forms of antiracism put forward in the re-telling of Black liberation history disable us from a deeper understanding of the violent conditions of the past, and the present, and disallows us access to the materially transformative politics and programs Black radicals set into motion. These liberal forms of antiracism, disseminated through the cultural technology of television documentary, tap into our desires for "an alternative to the ongoing memories" of Black liberation and for answers as to why those

[3] For more back ground on this history, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997); Mary Duziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2011); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Harvard University Press, 2003); Daulatzai, ""You Remember Dien Bien Phu!" Malcolm X and the Third World Rising" in *Black Star Crescent Moon*. For more on American exceptionalist mythologies, see "Introduction: Civil Rights, Civic Myths" and "Chapter One: Rethinking Race and Nation" in Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) and Singh, "Racial Formation in the Age of Permanent War," *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, Eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 276-301.

racial and social justice fights were left incomplete.[4] They hear the call of the revolutionary past that continues to haunt the present, but they work to mostly contain its political possibilities for the present.

Yet, these liberal re-writings also signal the power of the revolutionary past to not be silenced and never wholly contained. They fail to fully obscure the dehumanizing and violent conditions of racial capitalism, and their liberal forms of antiracism inevitably reveal themselves, at points, to be inadequate to fight these conditions. This revolutionary past creates a crisis for racial capitalism, which is why it continues to haunt the present. And, though the hegemony of liberal discourses constrains this haunting, the radical lessons of this history are still needed and the call for the continuation of its unfinished liberation projects persist. As I will show in this last section, the media projects examined in this dissertation were only the beginning of what would become multiple decades of reengaging this history. What this dissertation has provided is a look at what these memories leave for the next generation of activists, scholars, and filmmakers, both in terms of the obstacles racial liberalism puts in place and the opportunities that arise within this continued struggle.

What Came Next?

As was described in chapter two, the 1990s saw a proliferation of media objects produced on the memory of Malcolm X, especially in television documentaries, but also in Hollywood narrative film (with the release of Spike Lee's *Malcom X*), in hip-hop music and cultural production, and in the VHS documentary market. The memory of the Black Panther Party followed suit in many ways, especially with the 1995 release of Mario Van Peebles' Hollywood

[4] Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 325.

film *Panther* and the widespread reclamation of the Panthers in hip-hop, most visibly seen in artists and music groups, such as Tupac Shakur, the son of a BPP member, Paris, Dead Prez, and Public Enemy. This production of memory for both Malcolm X and the BPP would also continue in television documentary for the next two and half decades, responding to renewed interests and reengagements, especially around thirty-year and beyond anniversaries, and the development and expanded access to research and archival media footage. These productions would introduce new elements in the portrayal of Black radical history, exhibiting new archival materials and featuring more focused, niched presentations that expand and bring complexity to these histories. Some productions would even better disclose the more revolutionary aspects of Black radical history that were missing, obscured, or omitted in earlier portrayals. Yet, many would continue, in varying measure, the liberal representational practices and frameworks established in earlier documentaries.

It is important to note, however, that the media production of the memory of Malcolm X and the memory of the BPP did not continue at an identical pace. The TV memory of Malcolm X would outweigh that of the BPP in the early 1990s, particularly up until 1995, but it would slow down in the years that followed, especially in comparison to the TV memory of the BPP. This peak of Malcolm's memory was most likely connected to the widespread success of Lee's film and the cottage industry of Malcolm X consumer products that exploded on the market in this period. This peak and slowdown may also have been a result of the two-hour magnus opus, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, produced by PBS in 1994. This comprehensive work on Malcolm's life, and its companion guidebook by the same name, have seemed to inhibit the production of other documentaries, at least of this magnitude, over the last twenty years. This is not at all to say that the memory of Malcolm X has been completely ignored, but rather the pace of production

has been slowed for television documentaries that specifically and solely focus on Malcom X. His memory is included in a multitude of other documentaries that focus on Black liberation history or on the 1960s more generally, but a new documentary that fully concentrates on his figuration has only just come out in 2018 on Smithsonian's *Lost Tapes* series.[5]

The story of the Panthers has been quite different. In the mid and late 1990s, multiple television documentaries were released that both included the Panthers in more general histories of the Black Freedom Movement and that singularly focused on portrayals of the Party as a whole or on particular figures within the Party. This latter focus on singular individuals was seen in one of the earliest television documentaries on the Panthers following *Eyes II* and *Black Power, Black Panthers*. In 1994, the documentary *Passin' It On: The Black Panthers' Search for Justice* was released on the PBS television series POV.[6] *Passin' It On* told the story of Dhoruba bin Wahad, a leader of the Black Panther Party in New York, and his battles against the repression of the FBI and state authorities, first through his arrest in the 'Panther 21 Conspiracy' in 1969 and, second, through his time as a political prisoner. Similar to the documentaries under study in chapter three, this portrayal does an effective job of revealing the insidious depths to which federal and state authorities were willing to go in order to cripple and destroy the BPP. The documentary also adds to the larger memory of the Panthers with a focus on the New York chapter and to the important issue of political prisoners that include both ex-Panthers and many other political activists from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The story is also one that is about inspiration, perseverance, and commitment, since bin Wahad and his lawyers never gave up their fight against his conviction and ended up winning his acquittal. bin Wahad's final message in the

[5] "The Lost Tapes: Malcolm X," *Smithsonian Channel*, Showtime, aired February 26, 2018.
[6] Peter Miller and John Valdez, *Passin' It On: The Black Panthers' Search for Justice*, POV, PBS, aired June 19, 1994.

film was to never stop fighting, as he is seen continuing his political activism directly following his release from prison.

With these important additions to Panther memory, there is also the continuation of specific frameworks that obscure this radical history. Similar to early portrayals, the critical analysis and explanation for these massive assaults are missing or under-explored in a way that does not allow the viewer to understand their systemic roots. The explanation that is emphasized is the threat of the extraordinary abilities of bin Wahad as a speaker and leader. The viewer is able to witness these abilities through his inspiring speeches about the human spirit and fulfilling one's destiny. However, they are not allowed to witness his critical analysis of US white supremacist capitalism and imperialism, topics bin Wahad was and is especially known for in his speeches. Another aspect that deters from more radical lessons is the detailed focus on the court cases, which take up the most screen time, and the abstract sketch of the BPP's history, political program, and survival programs. There is no mention of the BPP's internationalism or revolutionary education and politics, and the only figures that actually mention the words revolution or revolutionaries in the documentary are the white authorities. Moreover, the survival programs are left without their revolutionary component and are again juxtaposed against revolutionary ideas and armed struggle. An example is when ex-Panther Jamal Joseph states, "You join the Panthers, and you think, yeah I'm going to learn about weapons and guerilla warfare, and you go in there and someone puts a spatula in one hand and a diaper in the other hand." There seems to be no room for a complexity that includes both of these Party activities and does not pit one element of Party action against the other. Another aspect about the survival programs, that are never mentioned as socialistic programs, was the emphasis on service and not on the building of a grassroots movement and self-determination. It is of course important to

acknowledge that serving the Black community came out of a deep love for the people, but it does not get at the systemic transformations and collective forms of self-determination that explain what was so revolutionary about those programs. Yet, the lesson of building a movement actually does come back at the end of the documentary, where many different voices, especially those of Black youth, are featured making statements about the necessity to continue the struggle of Black liberation and freeing political prisoners. Though many of the deeper political lessons are omitted or obscured, the documentary does leave viewers with a sense of unfinished business and an inspiring call to join the struggle that past and present-day Panthers continue to fight. Unlike earlier documentaries, *Passin' It On* ends with a push for movement politics and not the valorization of establishment or electoral politics.

Passin' It On would be re-aired in 2001 on BET alongside two other documentaries, *Public Enemy: Reflections of the Black Panthers*, and *Power to the People: The Black Panther Party and Beyond*, as a part of the channel's new Black History Month 'Heritage' series.[7] Similar to *Passin' It On*, *Power to the People* presents an extraordinary indictment of government repression and highlights the ongoing struggle to free political prisoners, who have an especially prominent voice in the documentary. Yet, the focus is not on one particular political prisoner, but, instead, provides a much broader picture of the numerous political activists traumatized, imprisoned, and killed by the state in the larger effort to destroy the BPP and severely cripple the US Left as a whole. This is one of the strongest contributions this documentary makes to the media memory of the Panthers, which is to situate their movement within the larger political context of the period and the significance of coalition work across and

[7] Jens Meurer, *Public Enemy: Reflections of the Black Panthers* (New York: Icarus Films, 1999) and Lee Lew-Lee, *All Power to the People!: The Black Panther Party and Beyond* (Los Angeles: Electronic News Group, 1996) The Heritage, BET, aired February 9, February 13, and February 19, 2001.

within different social justice organizations. This includes a strong exposition on the relationships between the Panthers, the Young Lords, the Red Guard, the Brown Berets, the Young Patriots, and the American Indian Movement, and the revolutionary politics that drew them together. Archival footage of Fred Hampton is featured in the documentary where he explains the willingness of the Panthers to “form a coalition with anybody who has revolution on their mind”, since “racism is just an excuse used for capitalism”; and later in the documentary, an extended clip that features Hampton stating: “Black people need some peace, white people need some peace…, and we are going to have to struggle relentlessly to bring about some peace, because the people we are asking for peace, they are a bunch of megalomaniac warmongers, and they don’t even understand what peace means.” Both of these archival clips are extended versions of footage that are edited out in both documentary projects in chapter three, and they illustrate the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist principles that were at the heart of the coalitional politics of the period.

Other important contributions include the comprehensive nature of the documentary, which, in many ways fills some of the gaps left open in earlier documentaries. The beginning of the documentary gives an ample amount of screen time to Malcolm X, allowing him to speak about the white power structure, about the difference between freedom and integration, about the need to dismantle social, political, and economic systems, and about the need for coalition among different races in order to “change [these] miserable conditions”. This differs quite starkly from many of the presentations seen in chapter two where pieces of Malcolm’s speeches or ideas were spliced together to fit liberal frameworks or to buttress anti-black discourses about criminality. The presentation here of Malcolm is accompanied by an opening montage of images that depict a visual history of the violence the nation was built upon and, thus, provides an

important historical foundation that disallows American exceptionalist ideologies to either enter or dominate the narrative. This background is either missing or abstractly explained in most of the documentaries under study in this dissertation. Moreover, the documentary is much more widespread in scope, covering the different regions and branches of the BPP that are not a part of the earlier documentaries, which mostly focus on Oakland and Chicago. This opens up, and brings together, voices from across the nation, illustrating some of the diversity in regional perspectives, but also spotlighting the BPP's more revolutionary character, such as a discussion of the Party's identification with revolutionary nationalism and its role within a larger world revolution. These varied perspectives and presentations do come from new footage not seen in earlier documentaries, but they also come out of either extended or un-edited versions of the same footage that are seen in those earlier documentaries; in many ways, illuminating the kinds of selective editing choices these earlier documentaries made in crafting their narratives.

Though this documentary could arguably be one of the most comprehensive and empowering representations on the Panthers, and the larger liberation movement and its repression, there are some issues that may have impeded its effective delivery for a broader audience. In some ways, if the viewer is not already somewhat familiar with Black radical history, there may be some difficulty in following the narrative thread. Part of this is the exhaustive amount of archival footage show, which is also one of the documentary's strengths, and the lack of context given for some of the footage. At points, the interviews and archival footage are somewhat mish-mashed together and the links and associations between them unclear. This may also have something to do with the lack of a consistent voiceover, which rarely enters the narrative and is usually autobiographical in nature, coming directly from the filmmaker, ex-Panther Lee Lew-Lee. This lack of framing is very different from the

documentaries under study, and though it may have brought some clarity and organization to Lew-Lee's documentary, it was also shown in earlier documentaries as one of the distinct mechanisms used in depoliticizing the archival footage. In many ways, Lew-Lee's style allowed the footage to speak for itself, though, many times, it may have also been overwhelming and disorganized. Part of this overwhelming tone of the documentary may also be due to the exhaustive focus on the film's indictment of the government, and the extensive amount of screen time given to government whistleblowers and conspiracy journalists and researchers. Though this exposure is extremely important for understanding both what happened to the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s and why current conditions exist as they do, this focus does become overpowering at points, where even Panther scholar Jane Rhodes made the claim that "*All Power to the People* is less a tribute to the Panthers than an indictment of the government."[8]

Lew-Lee's film, and its exposure to the more radical elements of the Party and liberation history more generally, did not seem to have as much of a lasting impact on multiple documentaries that would follow it in the next decade and a half. One of these was the VH1 Rock Docs documentary, *Lords of the Revolution: The Black Panther*, aired in August of 2009.[9] This documentary picks up many of the common liberal tropes seen in earlier documentaries. This was especially the case in the way the organization was contextualized historically, as coming into being "during the era of Black pride" and where Black Power is described as "a huge cultural earthquake". This redefinition of the period as a primarily cultural phenomenon, with a focus on cultural identity, then lends itself to the legacy section at the end of the documentary that focuses mainly on the memory of the Panthers as inspiration for art and music.

[8] Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 325.
[9] Martin Torgoff, "Lords of the Revolution: The Black Panther," VH1 Rock Docs, VH1, aired August 12, 2009.

This makes sense for this particular network and for its audiences, but it also repeats a similar pattern, found especially in the memory of Malcolm X. This pattern is one that obscures the BPP's radical analysis of race as a political and economic function of power, domination, and exploitation, to one that sees race as a form of expression, aesthetics, style, and cultural property. The overall structure of the documentary's form is, in many ways, mobilizing BPP memory in these ways, especially in its use of rapid cuts and selective editing that highlights the most spectacular sound bites and images, cutting and splicing Panther history to fit within the quick pace and spectacular display of commercial television.

Yet, this style and aesthetic fits the expectations of the network's viewing audience and does signal the importance of cultural producers in carrying on the memory of Black radical history. With a much broader and younger audience than many of the public networks that are more likely to feature these documentaries, this documentary presents a significant opportunity for a much broader reach and speaks a common language its viewers can easily consume and relate to. Moreover, there are also important additions to the re-telling of the Panther story that breaks away from the liberal frameworks of earlier documentaries and delivers a few radical lessons that were lost for earlier audiences. One of these lessons include a mention of the more radical elements in the Panthers' Ten Point Program, such as exemption from the military. Another is an explanation of the use of the term and imagery of the pig that not only included "the cop" but was also meant to signify the "greedy avaricious businessman and the fascist politicians". Additionally, the documentary did not valorize establishment politics at its end or point to Black political elites as the logical legacy of the BPP, and there is mention of the BPP's International Section in Algeria, a rare addition that was not even part of the Lew-Lee film. Yet, this introduction to the international section was not accompanied by any explanation of the role

the Panthers played in a larger world revolution or how they saw themselves in solidarity with struggling peoples across the globe. Instead, this mention was overshadowed by the growing conflict between “El-rage” Cleaver and Newton, and Cleaver’s “crazy” personality. This focus on extraordinary, dramatic individual behavior is consistent throughout as is the constant distraction of quick cuts and spectacular displays. Yet, this style is also one that draws younger viewers into the program and exposes them to Panther history and has, overall, a tone that is unquestionably supportive of the BPP and meant to attract viewers to continue that support.

Another documentary that followed *Lords of the Revolution* was the *Black Power Mixtape* by Goran Olsson, which was aired on PBS in 2012, then available for streaming on Netflix in 2015.[10] Similar to *Lords of the Revolution*, *Mixtape* emphasized the importance of cultural producers in its re-telling of Black liberation history, with musical artists such as Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu, Quest Love, Kenneth Gamble and others, who serve as central, voiceover commentators in the documentary. This connection to popular, especially contemporary, artists similarly helps to attract and broaden the reach of the audience beyond its airing on public television and also helps to make more palpable links between the past and the present. Yet, this documentary is quite extraordinary in many ways. It is constructed out of found footage from Swedish filmmakers in the US between the years 1967 and 1975 and, thus, brings a unique perspective to Black Power history and exposes audiences to never-seen-before footage. In this way, it offers many of the same benefits as Lew-Lee’s film (though it is more organized), since viewers are able to experience an abundance of rare archival footage that, at points, reveal to viewers the more radical politics practiced especially by the Panthers, but also by other figures,

[10] Goran Olsson, The *Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975: A Documentary in Nine Chapters* (New York: Sundance Selects, 2011) Independent Lens, PBS, aired February 9, 2012.

such as Angela Davis, who is both featured in the archival footage and as a voiceover commentator. In this new footage, the documentary shows a BPP political education and recruitment class, led by an unnamed Black Panther woman, who explains how the Party is "making revolution by educating the people to what the power structure is doing to them," which, she distinctly explains, is to focus on "racism [as] the primary object that the people have to deal with, when we mainly have to deal with capitalism". This introductory, recruitment-level event exposes viewers to the foundational, anti-capitalist political education that is omitted or distorted in most media memories on the Panthers. This continues with commentary from Kathleen Cleaver about the "not capitalist oriented" solutions the Panthers attempted to model, and archival footage of Seale explaining the survival programs as "international in character" and that "socialism is the order of the day, and not Nixon's Black capitalism." Other notable, radical footage is of Davis giving an interview from prison that provides a clear and scathing critique of violence in America and, again, of Davis giving an impassioned speech behind bulletproof glass in which she lays out the interconnected struggles of ending racism in the US, ending war in Vietnam, ending neocolonialism in Africa, freeing all political prisoners, and closing all "the dungeons" in the US.

This radical messaging is met, however, with some liberal tropes and abstract commentary that, at points, contradicts or clashes with this extraordinary footage. This happens in the opening and closing commentary that rehearses liberal ideologies of American exceptionalism. The very opening commentary from *The Last Poets* artist Abiodum Oyewole states: "you have many dedicated Black Americans who would die a million deaths to save America". Then there is closing commentary at the very end of the documentary from musician Kenny Gamble who states that "[Black people] have been able to utilize the government here,

and the rules and regulations, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and utilize this in a non-violent way to be a part of one of the greatest countries that's ever been: the United States of America". These framing bookends clash with the footage surrounding them and with some of the other commentary, especially that of activist/scholar Robin D.G. Kelley, artist/activist Sonia Sanchez, and, again Davis, who belie these exceptionalist statements with commentary on the massive violence that takes over in the 1970s, the continuation of war, racism, prisons, and the growing concentration of a small ruling elite. Yet, this mixed messaging is also accompanied by liberal tropes about the role of Black militancy as most significantly forwarding the goals of the Civil Rights Movement, or explanations of revolution that are confined to the realms of aesthetics and personal feeling (such as the explanation by Kweli: "the sixties was very revolutionary in terms of thought…imagery, Black is beautiful, and we love ourselves"). As this dissertation has shown, all these media memories have consisted of a blend of messaging and ideologies, and all are impacted by the hegemony of liberalism, but to varying degrees, and this particular documentary presents this mix with a heightened complexity, especially with its extraordinary footage that is not only rare, but effective in its presentation of Black radical politics and history.

Following *Mixtape*, PBS released another documentary a year later that also portrays the BPP, yet its presentation is far less complex. In 2013, PBS aired its final episode of Henry Louis Gates' television series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, the final episode titled *A More Perfect Union: 1968-2013*.[11] Part of this portrayal's lack of complexity is due to its short screen time, only about six minutes, but also from its repetition of many of the liberal framing

[11] Henry Louis Gates, "A More Perfect Union: 1968-2013," *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, PBS, November 13, 2013.

mechanisms seen in earlier documentaries. This episode especially emphasizes the spectacular elements of the BPP, explaining that the "in your face attitude" is what drew people to the Party and what "infuriated authorities". This framing empties Panther memory of its politics, which also happens, quite awkwardly, in the way its primary participant interviewee, Kathleen Cleaver, is cut off when asked what type of future the Panthers saw for Black people. Cleaver is allowed, importantly, to describe the philosophy of self-defense and charmingly boast about the Oakland police departments unreadiness for the BPP's practice of armed self-defense, but neither she, nor any of the other commentators (nor the footage) was able to provide deeper explanations for what "revolutionary change" meant to the Panthers outside of "access to resources" and an abstract definition of "equality". The episode does mention the community programs and shows footage of the free breakfast program and a free ambulance service, but it omits the political ideologies that undergirded these programs, leaving viewers with more abstract definitions of "independence" and "self-empowerment".

However, the episode's larger goal is to illustrate how the Panthers fit within a much larger and longer history, which does include some important context for the social, economic, and political conditions that were current and followed the existence of the BPP. In Gates' fashion, there is the inclusion of academic experts who explain the growing economic inequality and poverty among the masses of Black people alongside the elevation of a much smaller portion of the Black population into the middle class. This does the work of engaging the growing contradictions in the years following the BPP and, significantly, illustrates the lack of power of Black political elites as they entered into, rather than transformed, the US political system. This, in many ways, contrasts the many documentaries throughout the dissertation that valorized Black electoral politics as the horizon for racial equality. Yet, this important lesson and context is

somewhat inverted by the end of the documentary that exhibits an intense celebration of the election of Barack Obama, who is then used as evidence for the episode's, and the series' overall, main thesis: "to never lose sight of the dream that one day the United States will achieve that more perfect union." As Gates' voiceover admits, Obama represented the belief "in the promise of America" and "offered [a moment] to renew that creed". This exemplifies one of the main concerns of this dissertation: the mobilization of Blackness and Black struggle to strengthen mythologies of American exceptionalism. Just including the Panthers within this narrative arch does the work of eliding their call for the dismantling of US institutions and neutralizing the radically democratic possibilities their history represents. Yet, as with all the documentaries under study, this appropriation does not happen smoothly and is wrought with contradictions and complications, as Gates' simultaneously asks critical questions and explores the continued violence in the present, especially around the prison industrial complex and the continued killing of Black people by the police. These important current critiques are also part of the narrative and link the coverage of the BPP to the present moment, which also defies the teleological thrust and the exceptionalist ideology that guide the program's main thesis.

Three years following *A More Perfect Union: 1968-2013*, PBS aired Stanley Nelson's two-hour magnus opus *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*.[12] A documentary of this scale had not been attempted since Lew-Lee's 1996 documentary (which was not allowed on television until 2001); thus, the excitement around this film was palpable. Nelson and his research team discuss the film's exhaustive production process, as they travelled the globe seeking out never-seen-before still and moving archival images. As Rhodes points out in her new preface to *Framing the Black Panthers*, the film presented itself as the definitive film on the

[12] Stanley Nelson, *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, Independent Lens, PBS, February 16, 2016.

Panthers, and many mainstream media outlets echoed this sentiment. This build up would materialize in the highest viewership ever for a film in PBS's Independent Lens series, and Nelson delivered on his reputation as a masterful filmmaker, especially the outstanding craftsmanship of the editing and soundtrack that skillfully transports viewers through the narrative with an abundance of still and moving archival images. Like earlier documentaries, *Vanguard of the Revolution* provided extraordinary coverage of the vicious state and federal attacks on the Panthers, adding to this filmic legacy the intimate stories of ex-Panthers and the FBI's malicious meddling and misinformation campaigns not only on BPP leadership but also on the personal lives and family relationships among many of its rank-and-file members. Unlike earlier documentaries, *Vanguard of the Revolution* also newly contributes a focus on the role women played in the Party and features a large number of female voices and a purposeful confrontation with the Party's misogyny and sexism.

With all of these important and new contributions, however, the film also reproduces and replays many of the liberal tropes and frameworks that empty Panther memory of its radical history and politics. What is even more significant is how this happens even with the access to decades of research and the expanded availability of digitized media footage. *Vanguard of the Revolution* elides any engagement with the radical ideas, history, and political organizing that were foundational to the emergence of the Party. The documentary does not even mention the influence of Malcolm X, who was literally the principal architect for the founding of the Party. It features a very cursory presentation of the Ten Point Program that, like earlier documentaries, leaves out the more radical dimensions of these founding principles and, at the very end, even explains the Panthers' radical demand for education "that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society…[and] teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society" to

be simply a "demand for education". The explanation for the Party's growth and attraction to other groups and organizations follows earlier depictions that emphasizes their bold look and style, yet this time with even more still images rapidly cut together and paired skillfully with funk-era protest music. The survival programs are never described as socialism or part of an alternative economic-political model and are instead explained as "showing love for the people" and used to dismiss the Party's politics of armed struggle; even where one of the documentary's historians claimed that they turned toward community programs and "repudiated this earlier advocacy of armed self-defense and police patrols". Though it was true that the Panthers deemphasized armed struggle in their later years, they never repudiated it, and many pieces of footage and interviews in the documentary actually belie this statement.

The documentary does depict the Panthers' anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist stances, but in contradictory and dismissive ways. In less than thirty seconds, the documentary features two splices of interview footage from former Panthers Phyllis Jackson and Elaine Brown who explain how the Party saw their struggle as against capitalism. Though it is significant that this information is even shown, its very terse presentation devalues its significance. This devaluation also happens in the way it is stated by Jackson, who delivers her statement in a kind of surprised manner. There seems to be a hint of absurdity when she states, "we actually thought that the way in which capitalism created a working class that was kept absolutely destitute, that was wrong". Because there is no mention of capitalism again in the documentary, this confounding tone and passing engagement leaves viewers without a sense of the deeper analysis and political positioning the Panthers had on capitalism and its relationship to racism. This is also the case because of the liberal refashioning of Fred Hampton in the documentary, which cuts out any of his anti-capitalist critique and his consistent lessons in revolutionary socialism for, instead, an

individualized focus on his genius as an orator and organizer; a pattern seen many times in earlier documentaries.

In the documentary's coverage of the Panthers' internationalism and anti-imperialism, similar techniques are used, but with more complexity and contradiction. Like its coverage on capitalism, and similar to earlier documentaries, there is only passing engagement with these politics and practices; just over two minutes to be exact. The Panthers' internationalism is framed as something Cleaver did while in Algeria setting up the International Section, yet it does show him meeting with different leaders from Third World countries. Yet, this important footage is met with a very condescending commentary from a white researcher who explains the Panthers' international solidarities as 'loving to be accepted' and as sharing a kind of "anti-American sentiment". This commentary distorts the violent forms of extraction, exploitation, militarism, and geo-political domination that make up American imperialism to instead be about a sentiment or rebellious feeling that helps to erase or lessen the impacts of US empire and the courageous fights against it. Interestingly, there are later clips, mostly of Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver that do disclose the anti-imperialist stance of the Panthers and their commitments to and role in world revolution against white supremacist, American capitalism; yet, they are overshadowed, or framed within, a subplot of the internal conflicts between Newton and Cleaver. Moreover, if one reads between the lines of the COINTELPRO coverage, especially the FBI documents that are shown on screen, viewers can get a glimpse of what it was that made the Panthers so threatening to established power, such as becoming vanguards of a world revolution. Though a deeper engagement with what this meant is not provided in any participant or researcher interviews, these pieces are included visually and can be deciphered by the close watcher of the film.

There are many more missed opportunities, distortions, omissions, and liberal re-framings in the documentary that have their precedents in earlier depictions, but this cannot dismiss the successful impact this film had on a broader audience, especially many social justice organizations that mobilized the documentary for their own ends. As Rhodes points out in her new preface, the film "circulated…between festivals like Sundance, through organizations such as the NAACP, the Million Hoodies Movement, and Black Youth Project 100, and at community screenings in nearly one hundred cities. These events included panel discussion, speakers, and talk-back events to help viewers process the film's content."[13] This broader impact and these extra-filmic events illustrate the ways in which the past can be mobilized for present struggles and inaugurate a deeper engagement with Panther history and politics that go beyond the film. One salient example of this was an after-screening discussion of the film, where an audience member asked Stanley Nelson to speak more about the internationalist dimensions of the Party, and Nelson responded stating that internationalism was just one branch of the larger Panther narrative and that this was not the story he or his team chose to focus on. In many ways, this shows how the film can generate interest and curiosity about pieces of the film that were only cursorily introduced. In other ways, this reveals the way selective memory works, as it requires a substantial re-writing of Panther history to leave this aspect out, everything from the Panthers' origins, their critique of the US, their identification as 'colonial subjects', their coalitions with anti-war activists, their alignment with socialist principles, their influences and engagements with Third World movements, and their vision of themselves as a vanguard in the struggle for world revolution.

[13] Rhodes, "Preface to the New Edition," in *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), (ebook).

In a time with so much accessibility to research, to digitized copies of all the BPP newspapers (which is the greatest source for all of my arguments about the Panthers' revolutionary philosophies and programs), to digitized copies of archival footage of Hampton, Newton, the Cleavers, Seale and many more who discuss the revolutionary, internationalist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist aspects of the Party, Nelson's documentary chooses to primarily re-tell a depoliticized, liberal story of Panther history, though in a more polished fashion (though with some important updates about women in the Party). In an era of great contradiction and growing violence, with a Black president and the greatest loss of Black wealth and growing inequality, with a ten-year anniversary of the war in Iraq, with the poisoning of water in Flint, Michigan, with the hottest year on record and extreme weather events, with the police murder of Lacquan McDonald, the bombing of Syria, and the rapid growth of right-wing authoritarianism and white nationalism within the US and across the globe, viewers, in 2015 and now, are in need of the radical histories and lessons the Panthers had to offer.

As memory scholar Ross Poole wrote in 2008:

> It is the project of memory to understand the past as a source of present responsibilities. In memory, we reach into the past, and make that past a presence in our current moral and political agenda…[Memory] is especially concerned with those aspects of the past that remain unfinished business. For memory, an event only becomes past when the responsibilities associated with it have been satisfied.[14]

The Panthers, Malcolm X, and other Black radicals called for an end to racial capitalism and the growth of solidarity with oppressed peoples and struggles across the globe, as these struggles are all deeply tied to one another and determine the success of the collective liberation of all human beings. The memories of these calls are the unfinished business that is our responsibility to carry forward. If these calls are left out, side-lined, de-valued, or re-written to fit within a liberal

[14] Ross Poole, "Memory, history, and the claims of the past," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2, 2008: 160.

politics, we will be at risk of abandoning our responsibilities to the past and unable to mobilize its lessons of resistance as resources for present and future struggle.

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