

Radical Pacifism and the Black Freedom Movement:  
An Analysis of *Liberation* Magazine, 1956 - 1965

by

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## Abstract

This study explores radical pacifists' intellectual engagement with the black freedom movement by examining the New York-based magazine *Liberation* between 1956 and 1965. It argues that two priorities shaped *Liberation's* responses to the movement: the concern to promote the philosophy and practice of nonviolent direct action, and the concern to advocate radical social change in the United States. Until 1965 *Liberation* promoted the civil rights movement as a potential catalyst for the nonviolent reconstruction of U.S. democracy. *Liberation* became a forum for exploring the common ground as well as the tensions between radical pacifist priorities and those of various black freedom activists. The tensions are particularly apparent in *Liberation's* reflections on the challenges of linking peace activism with the freedom struggle in the early 1960s, and in its 1964-65 debate over civil rights leaders' strategy of coalition with the Democratic Party in the context of the escalating war in Vietnam.

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for my parents,  
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## Chapter One

### Radical Pacifism and Black Protest

The present thesis examines the intellectual engagement of radical pacifists with the black freedom movement during the late 1950s and early 1960s. *Liberation*, a magazine published during these years by a group of intellectuals and activists based in New York, played an important role in linking various peace and justice movements and bridging older traditions of radical activism with the new radical movements that emerged during the 1950s and 60s. From its first year of publication in 1956, *Liberation* was deeply engaged with racial justice issues and particularly with the upsurge of civil rights activism that emerged in the South in these years. I argue that radical pacifists' commentary on the movement for black rights demonstrates the dominant influence of two priorities. First, radical pacifists viewed the black freedom movement as an important vehicle for promoting the method and philosophy of nonviolent resistance. And second, they saw the black freedom movement as a potential catalyst for the radical reconstruction of democracy in the United States.

The compatibility between these radical pacifist priorities and the goals and methods of the civil rights movement inspired radical pacifists to support and publicize the black freedom struggle. It also inspired them to try to link their peace activism with the black freedom movement. This analysis of *Liberation* suggests that while the black freedom movement offered radical pacifists new opportunities to explore the possibilities and limits of nonviolent struggle for radical social change, it also forced them to struggle with the tensions between

their priorities and the needs and priorities of diverse political activists working for black freedom.

Radical pacifism refers to a movement of radicals who view the struggle for social justice as inseparable from the search for peace. The term 'pacifist' in the twentieth century has come to refer to those who assert a principled opposition to all war and violence; the 'radical pacifist' has typically been identified as an activist who combines such absolute opposition to war with efforts to create a more peaceful and just society. Radical pacifism's concern to work for both peace and social justice has a long lineage in the United States. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many early Quaker immigrants upheld testimonies to peace and equality in social relations. In the 1830s, a radical wing of a nascent peace movement emerged under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, whose New England Non-Resistance Society advocated the abolition of all war and all government as inconsistent with the development of Christian society. The Society advocated the abolition of slavery, and even conducted some limited experiments with nonviolent resistance techniques.<sup>1</sup> After the civil war, a tiny group of Garrisonian activists formed the Universal Peace Union, and persisted in working for peace and equality into the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Also in the late nineteenth century antimilitarist socialists articulated a critique of war and inequality, often strongly opposing wars between capitalist powers,

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<sup>1</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 40-5.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 12-3.

which they viewed as imperialist wars.<sup>3</sup> However, prior to 1914, there was little cooperation between pacifists and socialists.

World War I created the conditions for a radicalized peace movement to emerge in the United States. The roots of the radical pacifist movement that developed in the late twentieth century can be found in this new peace movement, which brought together socialists, pacifists, antimilitarists, libertarians, liberal reformers and internationalists influenced by socialism and social Christianity. For pacifists of this period—whether religious, libertarian or socialist in persuasion—conscription became “the harsh midwife of twentieth century pacifism,” prompting many to become conscientious objectors and antiwar resisters in the face of considerable societal hostility.<sup>4</sup> During this period an invigorated activist pacifist wing of this peace movement founded several enduring organizations dedicated to the pursuit of peace and social advocacy: the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the War Resisters League (WRL).<sup>5</sup> While each of these organizations maintained various radical social change goals throughout the interwar period, they largely carried out these goals through educational and political strategies, not direct action. Conditions in the 1930s, however, prompted many activists to embrace more radical methods. The threat of international violence and war spurred diverse groups of activists into broad antiwar coalitions and mass action; desperate economic conditions and class conflict during the Depression fuelled

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Distributed by Syracuse University Press, 1999), 13-5.

<sup>4</sup> Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement*, 27-50.

leftist political movements for revolutionary change. Pacifists were challenged to develop nonviolent methods that could truly confront violent power and oppressive socio-economic relations.<sup>6</sup>

The systematic experimentation with nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience is a particular feature of the radical pacifist movement that emerged during World War II and continued into the postwar period. It is this postwar radical pacifist movement that is the subject of analysis in this study. This postwar movement is associated with a number of radical action organizations in the postwar era, particularly the Committee for Nonviolent Revolution (CNVR), Peacemakers, the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) and the War Resisters League (WRL). These groups involved many of the key people who later edited and wrote for *Liberation*. In the 1940s, the short-lived CNVR tried to fuse pacifism, socialism, and anarcho-syndicalism, calling for “radical elements from the groups devoted to war resistance, socialism, militant labor unionism, consumer cooperation, and racial equality to attempt to come together in a common program of revolutionary action.”<sup>7</sup> Peacemakers was formed in 1948 to advance radical pacifist action against Cold War militarism, attempting to work for revolution at personal, social and political levels through the development of communal living and activism in egalitarian pacifist cells. The main campaigns of this group revolved around tax resistance and resistance to the peacetime draft. It drew together militant former COs with a broader network of radical pacifists, and had a profound influence on the development of

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<sup>6</sup> Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, 136-42.

<sup>7</sup> Rex Corfman et al., “Call to a Conference: Preliminary Announcement” quoted in Scott H. Bennett, *Radical Pacifism: The War Resisters League and Gandhian Nonviolence in America, 1915 - 1963* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 148.

the postwar radical pacifist community.<sup>8</sup> CNVA was formed in 1957 as the radical pacifist wing of a renascent peace movement concerned primarily to oppose the building and testing of nuclear weapons. It worked for an end to nuclear weapons and Cold War militarism using nonviolent direct action strategies.<sup>9</sup> These organizations, along with the anarchist-pacifist Catholic Worker organization established by Dorothy Day, formed the core of the postwar radical pacifist community.

The WRL's history is particularly significant for my analysis of *Liberation* because it was the organization most strongly associated with the magazine.<sup>10</sup> Founded in 1923 by feminist socialist Jessie Wallace Hughan, in the post-World War II era the WRL became the main institutional expression of secular radical pacifism in the U.S. WRL historian Scott Bennett has described the League as "the keystone of the secular, radical pacifist, twentieth-century, democratic American Left,"<sup>11</sup> noting that the WRL, along with other interwar pacifist organizations like the FOR and WILPF, helped to forge a new meaning for pacifism that went beyond the personal refusal of war to include social justice advocacy.<sup>12</sup> During the interwar period through World War II, the WRL was a single issue organization, making no official statements on political issues beyond the issue of war resistance and committed to fostering pluralism in its

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<sup>8</sup> Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 49-72; Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 145-55.

<sup>9</sup> James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism From the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 102-11.

<sup>10</sup> While *Liberation* was an independent publication and not a 'house organ', all of its founding editors were influential members of the League, and it was also staffed and subsidized by the organization. Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 206.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, xiii-iv.

<sup>12</sup> Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, xiii.

membership, attracting a diversity of individuals with various motivations for their absolute opposition to war—humanitarian, religious, and political.<sup>13</sup> Socialist pacifists dominated the leadership and active membership of the organization in the interwar era. The WRL's shift toward nonviolent direct action tactics, and away from a singular focus on the war issue toward a multi-issue program, did not begin until the 1940s, when it supported radical and absolutist conscientious objectors who were experimenting with techniques of nonviolent resistance in the Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps and prisons during the war. In many cases these COs joined their draft resistance with resistance to racial discrimination, using nonviolent direct action strategies to desegregate a number of prison facilities. Encouraged and supported by the WRL during the war, these young activists came to exert significant influence in the organization in the postwar era. These militant WRL activists favoured decentralized, egalitarian forms of organizing over the engagement with institutional socialist politics that characterized the older generation of socialist pacifists, and they infused the WRL with a new commitment to challenging militarism, segregation, imperialism and other forms of injustice using direct action and civil disobedience strategies. These activists were the driving force behind the WRL's transformation into a radical action organization by the early 1950s.<sup>14</sup>

For historian of radical pacifism James Tracy, the postwar radical pacifist movement developed a distinctive set of features that included

a tactical commitment to direct action; an agenda that posited race and militarism (instead of labor) as the central social issues in the United States; an experimental protest style that emphasized media-savvy, symbolic confrontation with institutions deemed oppressive; an ethos that

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<sup>13</sup> Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 134-5.

privileged action over analysis and extolled nonviolent individual resistance, especially when it involved ‘putting one’s body on the line’; and an organizational structure that was nonhierarchical, decentralized, and oriented toward consensus decision making.<sup>15</sup>

Tracy defines radical pacifism primarily in terms of the methods, ethos and organizational style of the movement that took shape in the postwar era, positing that the heart of this radical pacifist approach was a commitment to libertarianism in the face of postwar mass culture and society.<sup>16</sup> He argues that through their involvement with key movement organizations in the 1940s and 1950s, radical pacifists helped to shape a unique form of radicalism that had a formative influence on many of the leftist movements of the 1960s and a significant impact on the postwar culture of dissent in the United States.

Marian Mollin’s study of the postwar radical pacifist movement also notes these distinctive features of the movement and its influence on postwar dissent. For her, an essential aspect of the radical pacifist movement between 1940 and 1970 was its egalitarian and utopian vision:

Radical pacifists ardently believed in what they called human “brotherhood” within the “family of man,” a set of what were then gender-inclusive kin terms for relationships that deliberately disregarded differences based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. This outlook framed their pacifism: in their eyes, violence against another human being was an unconscionable and immoral act akin to fratricide. Uprooting violence in all of its forms, including the myriad varieties of violence that generated, enforced, and resulted from social inequality, defined their political agenda.<sup>17</sup>

This vision and concern to challenge all forms of violence led radical pacifists to challenge multiple sites of oppression. Alongside their advocacy of peace and demilitarization, they also promoted racial justice, cooperative and/or socialist

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<sup>15</sup> Tracy, *Direct Action*, xiii-iv.

<sup>16</sup> Tracy, *Direct Action*, xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 2.

economics, radical labour unions, civil liberties, and anti-imperialist struggles.<sup>18</sup> Mollin's analysis of the movement highlights both the powerful influence of this egalitarian vision and its limits; while the vision inspired individuals to lives of courageous and dedicated activity, it was frequently undermined by unexamined gender and racial assumptions within the movement.<sup>19</sup> Mollin's main interest is to expose these contradictions within the movement by exploring "what radical pacifists discovered and then forgot, as well as what they remembered and passed on" through a comprehensive analysis of several radical pacifist campaigns.<sup>20</sup>

My own approach to this study of *Liberation* is particularly concerned to explore the racial understandings and contradictions within radical pacifist writings, and to draw out the discoveries radical pacifists were making about nonviolence, power, race, and interracial solidarity as they reflected on their experiences of the black freedom movement. In a period when cultural assumptions about race were being thoroughly challenged by black protest, I examine how radical pacifists were attempting to understand their commitment to radicalism and nonviolent action in the context of mass black activism.

*Liberation* began publication alongside the upsurge in civil rights activism during the mid-1950s. The civil rights movement has often been described as a "new" movement that began in December 1955 with the year-long bus boycott by the black community of Montgomery, Alabama. However, while the Montgomery campaign is a significant milestone in that it brought national media exposure to the black struggle for equality and catapulted Martin Luther

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<sup>18</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 2-5.

<sup>20</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 5.

King, Jr. into a leadership role, historians now recognize that the events of 1955-56 emerged from many decades of black activism.<sup>21</sup> As Nikhil Pal Singh in *Black is a Country* points out, the civil rights movement that emerged in the 1950s was part of a much broader phenomenon—“the long civil rights era”—initiated in the 1930s by the social democratic transformation of the U.S. state under Roosevelt’s New Deal, and widespread black migration to cities that resulted in the emergence of urban black social movements fostering national and transnational linkages among black communities.<sup>22</sup>

One of the earliest studies to situate the civil rights movement in a longer tradition of organized black protest was Aldon Morris’ *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. In that book he argued that the civil rights movement, far from being a spontaneous development that burst onto the American scene in 1955, was the product of grassroots community networks and black institutions—including the Southern black church, black educational institutions, and protest organizations like National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)—organizing for change over many decades.<sup>23</sup> Morris’s emphasis on the local origins, heterogeneity and grassroots strength of black organizing in southern communities was an important corrective to early civil rights historiography, which had tended to emphasize the activities of national organizations and high profile leaders.

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<sup>21</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 6-7. Doug McAdam also periodizes the movement in a similar fashion in *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930 - 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 73-116.

<sup>23</sup> Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), xi-xvi, 1-15.

National civil rights organizations did, however, play important roles in the movement, both responding to and channeling the grassroots energy of activists in many locations across the South. The NAACP, the oldest and most prominent black protest organization prior to 1960, was an interracial northern-based organization founded in 1909 to challenge racism through legal mechanisms. Through its many local chapters in the South, it provided experienced leaders and resources to the growing movement in the 1950s.<sup>24</sup> CORE, as will be discussed in more detail shortly, was established in 1942 as an interracial northern-based organization dedicated to using nonviolent direct action against racial segregation. Both of these organizations provided important resources to the Southern movement. However, Morris argues that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was the key organization that emerged from a base of mass black support and played a particularly important role by developing the infrastructure of the movement, operating as “the decentralized political arm of the black church.”<sup>25</sup> Organized in 1957 at the instigation of several seasoned black radical activists, particularly pacifist and *Liberation* editor Bayard Rustin and Ella Baker, the SCLC brought together church and movement leaders from across the South to coordinate actions between movement centres, share information, and prepare people to undertake nonviolent direct action. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to play a critical role in the organization with his powerful ability to communicate a vision of nonviolent black militancy in the language of the black church.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 12-5.

<sup>25</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 75-97.

<sup>26</sup> See David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1986); and

In the late 1950s activists in various movement centres began to experiment with “sit-in” challenges to racial segregation. In early 1960 the civil rights movement took off when thousands of students, building on previous experiments and well-established networks between churches, black educational institutions, and civil rights organizations, sat-in at segregated restaurants across the South, garnering national media attention and making racial equality a prominent issue.<sup>27</sup> The student sit-ins brought new resources to the entire movement and gave rise to a new student-led activist organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The new student organization in the early years operated as a decentralized organization that worked to encourage local grassroots initiatives and leadership.<sup>28</sup> Ella Baker, who had been an organizer for racial justice since the 1930s and was SCLC’s first executive director until 1960, laid the groundwork for SNCC’s founding and played an influential role in advising and nurturing the growing student movement toward a radical democratic orientation.<sup>29</sup>

Historical work of the last several decades has revealed the complexity of the movement. Even while the early Southern-based movement that oriented around Martin Luther King and the SCLC emphasized the demand for basic citizenship rights for black people, more radical priorities coexisted with the

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Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 192-210.

<sup>28</sup> See Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and also Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 239-329; see also Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 210-18.

demand for black inclusion, particularly among the younger generation of activists who formed the backbone of SNCC. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was a large degree of consensus among moderate and radical black freedom activists about the need to focus on the struggle for civil and political equality, and the efficacy of challenging segregation using nonviolent direct action, mass demonstrations, economic boycotts, and voter registration campaigns. While there were tensions within the movement over styles of leadership and organization, the role of whites, the use of nonviolence vs. armed self-defense, and how to address pervasive problems of powerlessness and poverty among blacks, these did not become overt sources of conflict until 1964. By then, years of segregationist terror and federal reluctance to act decisively in support of civil rights had taken its toll on the optimism with which many activists had begun organizing. By the time the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Registration Act were passed in early 1964 and 1965, many activists were quite aware that the achievement of citizenship and voting rights was only a first step in a long struggle to confront entrenched racist structures of power and privilege. Some radicals even began to view the struggle for civil rights as a distraction from the more important work of building forms of black power with which to challenge pervasive socio-economic oppression.

The direction of the movement was hotly debated in 1964 and 1965, as activists struggled to define new goals and strategies to go beyond civil rights. For some civil rights leaders, cooperation with pro-civil rights liberals in the Democratic Party offered the best hope for far-reaching change, given President Johnson's backing of civil rights reform and "Great Society" social welfare initiatives. Others eschewed any coalition with the Democratic Party, believing

that such a coalition would undermine local black organizing and radical priorities. Some of these activists began to articulate the need for community organization and an “interracial movement of the poor” to foster local initiative and militancy among black and poor white communities to challenge the oppressive social, political and economic conditions of their lives.

However, the dominant emphasis in the black freedom movement after 1965 was Black Power. Many black activists began to articulate the need for black self-determination and self-identity as the key to black freedom. This position rejected the rhetoric of integration and assimilation and argued that black people would need to develop independent bases of economic and political power in order to compel the white power structure to address black priorities. Black Power advocates drew on a long history of nationalist thought in the black protest tradition, and were heavily influenced by the ideas of anti-colonial liberation movements around the world. They viewed blacks as a colonized people in a nation colonized by white power; coalitions with white groups were approached with suspicion, since even progressive and radical whites were unavoidably mired in attitudes destructive to the growth of black self-determination. Black Power—often associated with the figure of Malcolm X, the articulate black nationalist leader who was assassinated in 1966—became a powerful framework within the broader black freedom struggle in the years after 1965 within movement organizations like SNCC and CORE, and particularly among black activists working in the urban ghettos.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 34-84; and Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004): 37-67.

Nikhil Pal Singh emphasizes that many black radical intellectuals—from W.E.B. Du Bois to Martin Luther King, Jr. in his last years—have argued that black equality is not simply about the inclusion of blacks into the U.S. nation-state; rather, full black citizenship requires a much broader reconstruction of the American social, political, and economic order. For the radical architects of the black protest tradition, the struggle for black citizenship rights within the American nation-state always existed in tension with larger black freedom dreams that could only be met by going beyond the constraints set by the liberal capitalist state.<sup>31</sup> Singh challenges popular national narratives that celebrate the civil rights movement as a story of racial progress and the fulfillment of American democracy culminating in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, while framing black power/black nationalist movements and violent racial conflict in northern ghettos as a story of the movement's destructive demise, the cause of public backlash against black demands for equality. For Singh, this account ignores the longevity and diversity of black struggles against racist oppression as well as the historical persistence of white opposition.<sup>32</sup> He argues that this separation of black protest into the "virtuous" integrationist discourse of civil rights and the "excessive" separatist discourse of black nationalism obscures the "double-bind" facing all black activists in the United States, in which

a too-honest assessment of U.S. racial exclusion risks looking like a fatalistic disavowal of national progress, while concessions to optimism appear foolish and exaggerated. As hard as achieving affective equanimity has been, it has also been problematic for black freedom

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<sup>31</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 212-19.

<sup>32</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country*, 5-6.

struggles to separate liberal demands for tolerance and individual rights from group demands for recognition and social equalization.<sup>33</sup>

Singh notes that activists in the black freedom struggle, no matter what their political aims, have been forced to constantly negotiate these tensions. Recent scholarship on black protest in the postwar era bears out this insight in its emphasis on the linkages and common ground between the civil rights and black power movements.<sup>34</sup> For Singh, the product of this negotiation by black activists in the long civil rights era was “the emergence of black people as a distinct people and a public—and the concomitant development of race as a political space.”<sup>35</sup> Yet despite the emergence of a black public and the legal, political, and cultural gains achieved between the 1930s and 1970s, Singh emphasizes that the struggle remains unfinished; and in recent decades the steady erosion of antiracist social policies—justified by an ascendant narrative proclaiming the triumph of American colour-blind universalism—has made the renewal of radical black freedom struggle more urgent than ever.<sup>36</sup>

The present thesis analyzes the intellectual engagement of radical pacifists with this black public sphere between 1956 and 1965. In his analysis of the origins of the civil rights movement, Morris argues that pacifist organizations like the FOR, AFSC, and the WRL (along with other small, predominantly white social change organizations like the Highlander Folk School and the Southern Conference Educational Fund) operated as “movement halfway houses,” which

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<sup>33</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights–Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) and Peniel E. Joseph, ed. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights - Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country*, 214.

<sup>36</sup> Singh, *Black is a Country*, 215-24.

he defines as “an established group or organization that is only partially integrated into the larger society because its participants are actively involved in efforts to bring about a desired change in society.”<sup>37</sup> Morris emphasizes that the relationship between these halfway houses and the civil rights movement was one of mutual benefit. Pacifist groups, for example, offered certain resources to the black movement, particularly providing skilled activists and training in nonviolent direct action as well as helping to publicize the movement beyond the black community. At the same time, the civil rights movement offered the pacifist organizations access to a much larger audience and opportunities to expand its influence and resources.<sup>38</sup>

Of the pacifist halfway houses involved with civil rights and racial justice, the FOR and WRL were most directly connected to the radical pacifist movement. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, formed in 1915 by radical Christian pacifists and socialists, had a particularly significant influence on the early development of the theory and practice of nonviolent action in the United States.<sup>39</sup> The FOR was from its founding actively concerned to abolish both international war and domestic social inequality, including racial inequality, in U.S. society; its members were animated by Social Gospel ideas and hoped to build a new Christian social order of peace and justice.<sup>40</sup> In the interwar period the FOR advocated racial equality and organized interracial institutes and conferences, and attracted many activists interested in adapting Gandhian

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<sup>37</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 137.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 138-9.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2-7.

<sup>40</sup> Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 7-14; see also Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, 134-42.

nonviolent resistance to the U.S. context. A significant number of FOR activists became active proponents of nonviolent social change; several went to India to learn directly from Gandhi and the independence movement. These FOR activists became interpreters and trainers in Gandhian thought and practice.<sup>41</sup>

FOR pacifists, of course, were not alone in their interest in Gandhi's ideas and movement. The black community was also aware of the Gandhian movement early in the century. W.E.B Du Bois, through his writings, speeches, and editorship of *The Crisis*, the official organ of the NAACP, promoted the Indian struggle for independence and the significance of Gandhian methods of social change. Many other African-American newspapers and journals were also deeply engaged by the Gandhian movement, and a number of black intellectuals and activists traveled to India to learn about nonviolent direct action in the decades before the 1950s.<sup>42</sup>

Racial justice became a site of radical pacifist experimentation in the 1940s. While small groups of radical conscientious objectors protested against segregation in wartime prisons and camps, other racial justice projects engaged the energy of radical pacifists. WRL member and proponent of nonviolent direct action Jay Holmes Smith joined Gandhian ideas to racial justice work in the founding of Harlem Ashram (1940-1947). Supported by the WRL and FOR, members lived communally and dedicated themselves to the transformation of society by nonviolent action, acting in solidarity with the Harlem community by

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<sup>41</sup> Paul R. Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community: A Journey With the Fellowship of Reconciliation* (Telford PA: Cascadia Publishing House & Herald Press, 2005), 91-3.

<sup>42</sup> Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter With Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 4-7. See also Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community*, 93-4.

engaging in racial justice activities and cooperative community projects. Harlem Ashram drew together an interracial group of pacifists committed to working for racial equality using nonviolent direct action strategies, and formed an organizing base of activists who were in the forefront of the struggle for black freedom.<sup>43</sup> Many of these people were active in the 1941 March on Washington Movement (MOWM). Led by A. Philip Randolph—the dynamic labour leader and president of the influential black union the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—the MOWM mobilized mass black protest around a campaign for fair employment practices in the defense industry. A number of radical pacifists associated with the FOR and/or the WRL, particularly A.J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, and Jay Holmes Smith, helped Randolph organize this movement and encouraged its use of nonviolent strategy.<sup>44</sup> As Aldon Morris points out, the MOWM was a significant turning point in the development of civil rights protest in that it “demonstrated conclusively that masses of blacks could be organized for collective protest.” The movement’s success in forcing President Roosevelt to end racial discrimination in the defense industry by executive order inspired the movement’s leaders to believe that further gains could be achieved through mass nonviolent action.<sup>45</sup>

Radical pacifists at the forefront of these developments were inspired to found an organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), to develop the use of nonviolent direct action in racial justice work. A.J. Muste, who had become executive secretary of the FOR in 1940—rejoining the organization after

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<sup>43</sup> Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community*, 97-100; Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 185-6; Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 63-4.

<sup>44</sup> Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 94-6; Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 183-4; Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 63-6.

<sup>45</sup> Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, xii-xiii.

more than a decade of labour activism and socialist political organizing—was instrumental in hiring young radicals James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and George Houser, all committed to nonviolence and black freedom. These men, with other FOR activists and a small group of University of Chicago students, set up CORE in Chicago in 1942 to experiment with using nonviolent resistance against racial injustice.<sup>46</sup> In the following years, CORE chapters formed in many northern cities. Well before the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, CORE activists were pioneering the use of nonviolent resistance to segregation in restaurants, pools, parks and other public amenities. In 1947 interracial teams of activists connected to CORE carried out the first attempt at desegregating interstate bus travel—dubbed the “Journey of Reconciliation”—that was the forerunner to the well-publicized “Freedom Rides” undertaken in the early 1960s.<sup>47</sup> In the 1940s and 50s, CORE and FOR functioned as important institutional networks that fostered a community of black and white leaders steeped in the theory and practice of nonviolent direct action, who went on to play important roles as leaders, strategists and nonviolence trainers in the emergent civil rights movement.

As the above discussion attests, historians of radical pacifism and some historians of the civil rights movement have documented a significant degree of interaction between pacifist organizations and individuals and the civil rights movement in the 1940s and 50s. Many of these accounts emphasize the collaborative dimensions of this relationship. Several recent studies, however,

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<sup>46</sup> Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community*, 96; Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 178-83; Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement*, 80-4; and Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 66-9.

<sup>47</sup> August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975), 3-39; Inge Powell Bell, *CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence* (New York: Random House, 1968), 8-9; Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community*, 103-8; Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 155-58.

also demonstrate that predominantly white pacifist groups were often hampered in their attempts to forge alliances with black activists and movements by a combination of unacknowledged racist assumptions, lack of comprehension of black concerns and priorities, and differing political goals. For example, Joyce Blackwell's study of black women activists in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom shows that while WILPF took a public stand in support of racial justice and some of its leaders actively reached out to black women, black women and their concerns were often marginalized in the organization.<sup>48</sup> And as noted earlier, Marian Mollin's study of postwar radical pacifism points out that racist patterns and dynamics existed within the movement despite the fact that radical pacifists were at the forefront of many early racial justice campaigns and actively participated in the civil rights movement. While radical pacifists placed a high priority on linking peace with black freedom goals and consistently tried to forge alliances with the civil rights struggle, they sometimes unwittingly alienated black freedom activists with their actions.

Many radical pacifists believed that the two movements were a natural fit; yet they frequently discovered that cooperation was fraught with difficulty. For example, when activists attempted to communicate their dual commitment to peace and racial justice through a series of interracial peace walks through the South in the early 1960s, they discovered that trust and collaboration between civil rights activists and peace walkers could not be assumed. Mollin contends that blending "peace and freedom" in the Cold War era was difficult for several reasons. Despite their promotion of the dual concerns of peace and freedom, in

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<sup>48</sup> Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 6-9.

practice many radical pacifists viewed the black freedom struggle as subordinate to peace work, often choosing actions that privileged peace goals over black freedom goals. Even further, many radical pacifists viewed nonviolence as an end in itself and often framed their purpose in moral terms, whereas most black freedom activists viewed nonviolence as a tactic in the struggle for more tangible gains. And finally, there was a basic divergence in political goals; radical pacifists' attacks on militarism and calls for unilateral disarmament seemed unhelpful or irrelevant to many black freedom activists, given that the military was among the first institutions to be desegregated in 1948 and military service had historically served as a road to citizenship for many African American men. Even for those in the black freedom movement who shared radical pacifists' concerns about U.S. militarism, alliances with a movement so clearly opposed to the Cold War risked charges of anti-Americanism that the black movement could ill afford in its struggle for citizenship rights and inclusion into the social and political life of the United States. For Mollin, radical pacifism's attempts to create a mass "peace *and* freedom" movement was fraught with multiple challenges, not least of which was its frequent inability to move beyond priorities particular to its dominant culture of white masculine radical pacifist militancy.<sup>49</sup>

Mollin's analysis is part of a trend in recent sixties scholarship toward critical analyses of relationships and interactions between movements, offering important new insights into movements that have previously been studied as independent phenomena. Simon Hall, like Mollin, finds similar kinds of obstacles to collaboration in his study of the linkages and conflicts between the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements. He argues that the antiwar

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<sup>49</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 182-86.

movement could have done more to build alliances with black militants, and shows how attempts to build interracial coalitions on the left, first initiated by leftists in the 1930s and radical pacifists in the 1940s and 50s,<sup>50</sup> were fraught with challenges in the context of the Vietnam War. Despite the depth and breadth of popular black antiwar sentiment in the Vietnam era, the antiwar movement had difficulty attracting mass black support. Hall demonstrates that the reasons for this were multiple. Leaders of the moderate wing of the black movement considered antiwar activism unwise, jeopardizing efforts to build a progressive Democratic coalition and to support the Johnson administration's civil rights and social welfare initiatives; some moderates even espoused anti-communist beliefs. At a broader level, there was a sense in the black community that the war was a white problem, and that African Americans had more pressing and immediate concerns than antiwar activism. On the other hand, black radicals who came out strongly against the war, especially Black Power advocates, were often distrustful of interracial collaboration, critical of factionalism in the antiwar movement and dismissive of the countercultural dimensions of antiwar protest. Hall argues that ultimately the primary obstacle to a strong interracial antiwar movement was the antiwar movement's inability to embrace an oppositional platform and radical program that addressed the war in Vietnam and domestic racial discrimination in equal measure. For many white peace activists, even those committed to black freedom, the war was the main focus of attention.<sup>51</sup>

Hall's insights into the difficult relationship between the antiwar and black freedom movements are particularly relevant to this study, given that

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<sup>50</sup> Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements of the 1960s* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 2-6.

<sup>51</sup> Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 188-94.

*Liberation's* editors and many of its contributors were at the centre of organizing efforts in the Vietnam antiwar movement as well as the antinuclear peace movement that preceded it, and consistently tried to link these peace activities with the black freedom movement. This study will explore how the radical pacifists of *Liberation* tried to reconcile their peace concerns with their support for black freedom in the early 1960s.

My analysis of *Liberation* in the following chapters will explore radical pacifists' responses to the black freedom movement between 1956 and 1965. I begin in Chapter Two with an orientation to *Liberation* magazine, providing brief biographical sketches of *Liberation's* founders and outlining the vision they had for this magazine. Chapter Three analyzes *Liberation's* exploration of the radical potential of the civil rights movement and the possibilities and limits of its use of nonviolent direct action. Chapter Four examines *Liberation's* reflections on the opportunities and challenges of trying to build alliances between peace and freedom activism. My Conclusion summarizes the argument I have developed in the preceding chapters.

## Chapter Two

### *Liberation's Founders and Vision*

*Liberation* was founded at a time when many movements of dissent in the United States were seeking new forms of expression in the wake of a changing political, social, and cultural climate in the United States. The growth of postwar prosperity and the rise of Cold War militarism and anticommunist political repression had coincided with the decline of radical dissent by the early 1950s; many leftist organizations went into serious decline during the early postwar era. *Liberation* began publication at the historical moment when several radical movements of dissent entered a period of growth. The mid-1950s saw the revitalization of both the black freedom movement in the American South and the transnational peace movement working to end the nuclear arms race, as well as the expansion of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist activism in countries around the globe. The editors and writers of *Liberation* were participants and observers of many of these movements.

*Liberation* was one of the "little magazines" of the era, one of many non-commercial publications inspired by political or cultural concerns, without formal affiliations and addressed to particular audiences.<sup>52</sup> Founded in 1956, its content was a mélange of scholarly and personal essays, movement reportage and analysis, artwork, cultural critiques, commentary on U.S. foreign and domestic policy, poetry, and calls to action. Although subsidized by the War Resisters League, *Liberation* was an independent publication that reflected

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<sup>52</sup> Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 81.

diverse views and attracted a variety of contributors. It featured articles from little known writers as well as prominent artists, intellectuals, and leaders of the non-Stalinist left in the U.S. and internationally. By the end of its twenty years of publication, *Liberation* had published the work of individuals as diverse as Michael Harrington, Martin Luther King, Jr., Paul Goodman, Dorothy Day, Allen Ginsberg, James Baldwin, Noam Chomsky, Kay Boyle, LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), Bertrand Russell, Norman Thomas, and William Appleman Williams, to name only a few. The central role *Liberation* played in publicizing and analyzing the civil rights movement makes it a valuable source in my efforts to understand radical pacifist engagement with race and black freedom activism.

While it is difficult to gage the nature and extent of *Liberation's* audience, circulation statistics and reader responses to a 1959 questionnaire offer some ideas. *Liberation's* average paid circulation per issue had reached 6000 by 1964, peaked at 8000 in 1966, and remained between 7000 and 7500 until 1973 when it dropped back into the 6000s.<sup>53</sup> While these numbers underestimate the full size of the readership (letters from readers indicate that many subscriptions were being shared by groups of people) they do give the impression that *Liberation* was able to attract a healthy readership for a small alternative magazine. The 1959 readers survey, which received 220 responses, gives some indication of the socioeconomic characteristics and political orientation of subscribers in the early years of the magazine: a high proportion of respondents were well educated (often with graduate degrees), urban, tending toward professional occupations (especially in education), and married; and as might be expected, many espoused

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<sup>53</sup> Circulation statistics were published every year starting in 1964. "Average paid circulation" included subscriptions and sales through third party dealers.

leanings toward cooperative community, pacifism, socialism, and anarchism, and a mixture of religious and atheist or agnostic perspectives. About half of the respondents reported that they had engaged in radical action for peace and civil rights, while a high proportion reported membership in one or more peace and civil rights organizations.<sup>54</sup> Without a similar poll conducted in later years it is difficult to gage how the readership may have changed in the 1960s; however, there are indications from both article content and letter responses that *Liberation* was circulating widely among young activists in the black freedom, peace, and new left movements in later years.

Members of *Liberation's* editorial team, and many of its contributors, played key, often behind-the-scenes roles in the antiwar, black freedom, and new left movements of the period. The magazine was founded by a small group of New York radicals espousing a mixture of pacifist, anarchist and socialist views. The original editorial board consisted of Abraham Johannes (A.J.) Muste, Bayard Rustin, David Dellinger, Roy Finch and Charles Walker. Muste, Rustin, Dellinger, and Sidney Lens (who joined the board in Dec 1958) were the main architects of *Liberation's* editorial vision in the first ten years; in later years, after Rustin's departure in 1965 and Muste's death in 1967, Dellinger continued as Editor, with Sidney Lens and new board members Paul Goodman, Barbara Deming and Staughton Lynd playing prominent editorial roles in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Brief biographical sketches of the individuals most centrally involved in producing *Liberation* give some indication of how the magazine linked activists and movements working for peace and justice during this period.

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<sup>54</sup> Roy Finch, "The Liberation Poll," *Liberation* 4, no. 8 (November 1959): 14-15.

A.J. Muste, a well-known radical pacifist with substantial connections to the pacifist left, the labour movement and political old left organizations, played a central role in the magazine. Born in 1885 in Holland, his family immigrated to the United States, settling in Michigan when Muste was a child. He began his career as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, but during World War I his antiwar beliefs and activities pushed him out of that church. By 1918 his growing pacifist and social justice convictions had led him into membership with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). After the war he became a leader in labour and union organizing, directing the Brookwood Labor College for over a decade.<sup>55</sup> He eventually created his own party, the American Workers Party; proponents of his brand of radicalism were known as Musteites for their “allegiance to the American working class, avoidance of entanglement with abstract ideologies, active antagonism to the standpat temperament of the AFL, and advocacy of widespread industrial unionism.”<sup>56</sup> By the early 1930s Muste had moved away from his pacifist commitment, giving qualified support to revolutionary violence. His party merged with the Trotskyist movement in 1934; however, two years later he broke with the movement after becoming disillusioned with its political tactics and aims. Prompted by a profound religious experience in Europe, he returned with renewed commitment to Christian pacifist organizing. From that time until the end of his life in 1967, he was committed to a nonviolent radical vision of social change. Named “The Number One U.S. Pacifist” by *Time* Magazine in 1939, Muste remained an

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<sup>55</sup> Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 32-48. See also Nat Hentoff, *Peace Agitator: The Story of A.J. Muste* (New York: A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, 1982).

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 43.

influential and highly regarded spokesman for the radical pacifist movement in the postwar era. He was the executive secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation from 1940 to 1953 and actively involved with several other pacifist organizations and projects, particularly the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA), the War Resisters League (WRL) and *Liberation*. A tireless coalition builder, movement advisor, political analyst, and respected activist into his eighties, Muste had an enormous influence on the radicalization of pacifism in the postwar era through his consistent support of movements for liberation from militarism, racism, imperialism and economic exploitation. As one of his biographers attests, Muste's advocacy of peace as a struggle requiring the transformation of social, political, economic, and cultural relations widened the appeal of peace activism to those radicals previously unconnected with pacifism.<sup>57</sup>

Dave Dellinger is best known for his leadership role in the anti-Vietnam War movement. He became a "movement celebrity" in the late 1960s as a defendant in the Chicago Eight trial, as one of eight antiwar activists who were charged with conspiracy to disrupt the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.<sup>58</sup> Dellinger was the son of a well-to-do Boston family and a Yale graduate who first became politically active in the 1930s, inspired by social Christianity and socialism to leave his privileged life to live and work with the poor. Dellinger spent significant time in prison for draft refusal during World War II, and while there was a key organizer of hunger strikes and sit-ins. He remained very active in radical pacifist campaigns and projects after the war, and

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<sup>57</sup> Nat Hentoff, "A. J. Continuing," *Liberation* 12, no. 6-7 (Sept/Oct 1967): 66.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew E. Hunt, *David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1-2.

became a strong advocate and practitioner of nonviolent direct action.<sup>59</sup> As a libertarian and persistent advocate of civil disobedience, Dellinger gained respect among new left activists as a militant yet also diplomatic coalition builder; however, he often clashed with moderate peace advocates and old left organizers who disagreed with his approach to social change.<sup>60</sup> He was integral to the editorial team of *Liberation* for most of its twenty-year publication life.

Bayard Rustin is well known in civil rights historiography as a key architect of the civil rights movement, associated particularly with his role as the lead organizer of the historic 1963 March on Washington. Rustin, a black gay man born in 1912 and raised by his grandparents in Pennsylvania, first became involved in social change activism in the 1930s. He started as a peace activist, became a Quaker, and later, after moving to Harlem, worked for racial and economic justice as a member of the Young Communist League. Like Muste, he turned away from old left organizations before WWII, and concentrated his efforts in black freedom and radical pacifist organizing during the war. He started working closely with Muste, who hired him as youth secretary of the FOR, and became deeply involved in the fight against racial discrimination, including playing an active role in the March on Washington Movement that mobilized mass black action during the war years. He spent over two years in prison for draft refusal, helping to lead nonviolent direct actions against segregation while incarcerated. After the war he continued his radical pacifist and racial justice work, working for the FOR, CORE, and later becoming the executive secretary of the WRL. In the 1950s and early 1960s, he became well

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<sup>59</sup> David Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 11-170.

<sup>60</sup> Hunt, *David Dellinger*, 4.

known in movement circles as an advocate of nonviolent direct action and as a talented organizer and strategist in both the civil rights and peace movements.<sup>61</sup> An advisor to the SCLC, SNCC and other civil rights organizations, he had a significant influence on the movement's—and particularly Martin Luther King, Jr.'s—embrace of nonviolent action.<sup>62</sup> After 1964, however, Rustin took a different political course from many of his radical pacifist colleagues, believing that black freedom goals of full social and economic equality could only be achieved by working in coalition with progressive liberal elements to transform the Democratic Party.<sup>63</sup> From 1956 to his resignation from *Liberation* in 1965, Rustin was the *Liberation* editorial board's main link to the black freedom movement.

Sidney Lens was a longtime union leader and political activist who began his lifelong engagement with radical activities at a young age. Born in 1912 into a New York family of Russian Jewish immigrants, in the 1930s he became a union organizer and joined a number of political left organizations, first the Communist League of America (Trotskyite), later the Worker's Party following the merger with the Musteites, and then the Revolutionary Worker's League in Chicago.<sup>64</sup> His connection to A.J. Muste, initiated in the Worker's Party, solidified into a long-lasting friendship after World War II; Lens notes that Muste was an important mentor and had a significant influence on his ideas and actions in the postwar era, inspiring him to reframe his radicalism in humanist revolutionary terms. While Lens never identified as a pacifist or as an advocate of Gandhian

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<sup>61</sup> John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 1-392; Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 1-170.

<sup>62</sup> D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 230-38; Bennett, *Radical Pacifism*, 217.

<sup>63</sup> D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 393-416; Levine, *Bayard Rustin*, 171-93.

<sup>64</sup> Sidney Lens, *Unrepentant Radical: An American Activist's Account of Five Turbulent Decades* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), 1-51.

nonviolence, he was a staunch radical peace advocate.<sup>65</sup> In the postwar era Lens continued to work in union organizing and was active in a variety of radical political campaigns from civil liberties to anti-imperialist solidarity activities to antiwar organizing. He played a leadership role in the national Vietnam antiwar movement and was particularly influential in mobilizing his extensive labour contacts in support of the antiwar effort. Throughout his career Lens published many books and wrote for a variety of leftist and progressive publications on topics ranging from histories of labour and revolutionary movements to critiques of the nuclear arms race and American foreign policy in the Cold War era.<sup>66</sup>

An anarchist intellectual, psychotherapist and artist, Paul Goodman became prominent in the 1960s for his social criticism. He was born into a Jewish New York family in 1911, and embarked on a literary career in the 1930s. The book that introduced him to a wide audience, particularly the 1960s generation of young radicals, was *Growing Up Absurd*, published in 1960. In that book Goodman argued that social alienation among young people was the product of a bureaucratic, capitalist society that demanded conformity and denied the possibility of meaningful vocations and creative individual growth. As a strong advocate of alternative, decentralized social and political institutions and social reform in areas from education to community planning, Goodman became very engaged by the student, new left, and antiwar movements of the 1960s, often working with these movements in a supportive, advising role.<sup>67</sup> For example, he

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<sup>65</sup> Lens, *Unrepentant Radical*, 177-80.

<sup>66</sup> Lens, *Unrepentant Radical*, 162-376.

<sup>67</sup> Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945 - 1970* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 97-144; Taylor Stoehr, ed. *Decentralizing Power: Paul Goodman's Social Criticism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1994), x-xiii.

helped students to set up “free university” experiments in a number of locations, and during the Vietnam War he offered adult support to draft dodgers.

Goodman’s activist and intellectual engagement with many radical projects of the decade made him a “movement intellectual” to the younger generation of radical activists.<sup>68</sup>

Barbara Deming was a poet and essayist who emerged in the 1960s as an influential presence in the peace, civil rights, anti-Vietnam war, feminist and lesbian/gay movements. Born in 1917 to a wealthy New York family, she went to a progressive Quaker school as a child, but did not get involved with radical politics until 1960, when she published an article in *The Nation* on the lengthy street interview she had with Fidel Castro while vacationing in Cuba. Soon afterward Deming became deeply involved with the radical pacifist and civil rights movements. She spent significant time in an Albany, Georgia jail for her participation in an integrated peace walk from Canada to Cuba, and made trips to South and North Vietnam as a member of peace delegations in the mid-1960s. Throughout the 1960s and 70s Deming published accounts of her movement experiences in small magazines like *Liberation* and *The Nation*, becoming a strong and articulate advocate of nonviolent action.<sup>69</sup>

Staughton Lynd is best known for his leadership role in the anti-Vietnam war movement. Somewhat younger than the other *Liberation* editors, he was born in 1929 and raised in a progressive, intellectual New York environment (his

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<sup>68</sup> Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, 118, 129-41.

<sup>69</sup> Judith McDaniel, “Shaping the Sixties: The Emergence of Barbara Deming,” in *Impossible to Hold: Women and Culture in the 1960s*, ed. Avital H. Bloch, and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 196-216; see also Jane Meyerding, “Introduction,” in *We Are All Part of One Another: A Barbara Deming Reader* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1984), 1-17.

parents were the prominent sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd). Drafted as a noncombatant in the Korean War, Lynd was later discharged because of his leftist political views. He earned a doctorate in history from Columbia University, taught briefly at Spelman College in Atlanta, and during the summer of 1964 worked for the civil rights movement as the director of the Mississippi Freedom Schools organized by SNCC. After taking a job in the history department at Yale, he was increasingly drawn into the leadership of the growing antiwar movement, taking public stands against the war and making a controversial trip to Hanoi in 1965 that cost him his academic career.<sup>70</sup>

These brief biographical sketches point to a common theme in the lives of *Liberation* editors. Each of these individuals valued both social action and intellectual analysis of social problems. To varying degrees, they all operated as independent activist social critics for whom action and analysis were intertwined: their political activism informed their analyses, and their analyses shaped their actions. *Liberation* modeled this stance, attracting contributors who also valued activist and intellectual engagement. Judith Steihm, an early analyst of the American nonviolent movement, noted that *Liberation* played an important role not only in maintaining connections between different peace and civil rights groups, but also in explicitly linking the theory and practice of nonviolent resistance.<sup>71</sup> More recently, Noel Sturgeon has suggested that “the constant interaction between theory and practice” is one of the central features of the

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<sup>70</sup> Carl Mirra, *The Admirable Radical: Staughton Lynd and Cold War Dissent* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010). See also James Finn, “Interview with Staughton Lynd,” in *Protest: Pacifism and Politics* (New York: Random House, 1967), 223-45.

<sup>71</sup> Judith Stiehm, *Nonviolent Power: Active and Passive Resistance in America* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972), 12.

“nonviolent direct action movement” that developed over the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>72</sup>

Because the relationship between reflection and action is so central to the magazine, *Liberation* offers a way to examine how radical pacifists’ experiences with the black freedom movement shaped their conceptions of radicalism in this period. For the first time in U.S. history, a mass movement demanded “freedom now” through the language, philosophy, and practice of nonviolent action. Prior to the upsurge of the black freedom movement, a small number of radical pacifist proponents had laboured in relative obscurity to achieve a transformed social order using a nonviolent social change strategy. For decades they had been developing the theory of nonviolent resistance by borrowing from both Gandhian and labour movement practice and ideas. The civil rights movement’s popularization of the method offered nonviolence advocates the opportunity to think through the limitations and possibilities of the mass use of the method.

A number of historians have remarked on the magazine’s high quality and its influence on the peace and freedom movements that emerged during the period stretching from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. James Tracy has named *Liberation* “the most important contribution made by radical pacifists to the intellectual content of the American Left.”<sup>73</sup> For peace historian Lawrence Wittner, the magazine “represented the maturation of militant pacifism since its genesis in World War II...quickly [becoming] the organ and focal point of what

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<sup>72</sup> Noël Sturgeon, “Theorizing Movements: Direct Action and Direct Theory,” in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, ed. Marcy Darnovsky, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 36.

<sup>73</sup> Tracy, *Direct Action*, 86.

some have called the 'non-violent movement'."<sup>74</sup> Historians Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield have noted that *Liberation* played an important role in the emergent antiwar movement of the 1960s by articulating key debates and divisions among the varieties of peace activism; the founding of the magazine

signalled a new moment in American radical culture and politics...it crystallized many of the differences between radical pacifists and other peace advocates, thereby defining the terrain on which the evolving antiwar movement would fragment between 1955 and 1975.<sup>75</sup>

New left historians have also noted the influence of radical pacifism and *Liberation* on the emergence of 1960s radicalism. Wini Breines has singled out the small groupings of radical pacifist and anarchist individuals, with their ethical and anti-hierarchical proclivities, as being "among the new left's real forerunners" in the years preceding the growth of student activism.<sup>76</sup> Maurice Isserman's study of the continuity between the old and new lefts echoes Breines in noting the impact of radical pacifist experiments with nonviolent direct action on new left activists; he has argued that the radical pacifist ethos of direct action had a much greater influence on sixties radicalism than conventional old left politics.<sup>77</sup> In Todd Gitlin's account of the 1960s, the former Students for a Democratic Society leader described radical pacifists as one of the "enclaves of elders" that fostered the dissenting ethos of the new left. He noted the importance of *Liberation* as the central medium for conveying the radical pacifist paradigm—which he described as a "synthesis of Gandhian nonviolence and

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<sup>74</sup> Wittner, *Rebels Against War*; 232-37.

<sup>75</sup> Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 25.

<sup>76</sup> Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (New York: Praeger/J.F. Bergin Publishers, 1982), 13-4.

<sup>77</sup> Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*, 128.

‘Third Camp’ plague-on-both-their-houses socialism”—to younger sixties radicals.<sup>78</sup>

*Liberation* was not the first magazine to feature radical pacifist ideas in the postwar era. Penina Migdal Glazer has argued that in the 1940s, radical criticism generated by radical pacifists or “nonviolent leftists” in small magazines and newsletters like *Alternative*, *Pacifica Views*, *the Catholic Worker*, *Fellowship*, and *Politics* was influential in the development of 1960s leftist radicalism. Glazer particularly noted the significance of *Politics*, a little magazine published by the social and cultural critic Dwight Macdonald from 1944 to 1949. An ex-Trotskyist intellectual who espoused anarchist and pacifist ideas, Macdonald wanted to foster a new radicalism that would go beyond the traditional Marxist concern with economics to engage religious and psychoanalytic insights and embrace ethical and humanitarian goals.<sup>79</sup> His magazine attracted a range of prominent intellectuals of the anti-Stalinist Left during the 1940s, including C. Wright Mills and Paul Goodman, two social critics whose works had a tremendous influence on the young radicals of the new left.<sup>80</sup> Cristina Scatamacchia has explored the continuity between *Politics* and *Liberation*, suggesting that the two magazines were “products of disenchantment with the Old Left and harbingers of the New Left”<sup>81</sup> and in the postwar decades became “the primary organs for the debate

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<sup>78</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 28, 86.

<sup>79</sup> Penina Migdal Glazer, “From the Old Left to the New: Radical Criticism in the 1940s,” *American Quarterly* 24, no. 5 (1972): 601-2.

<sup>80</sup> Glazer, “From the Old Left to the New,” 602. See also Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left From the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 210.

<sup>81</sup> Cristina Scatamacchia, “‘Politics’, ‘Liberation’, and Intellectual Radicalism” (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri - Columbia, 1990), ii.

and the diffusion of [the] 'radical pacifist paradigm'" that became so popular in the new left.<sup>82</sup>

*Liberation's* founders aimed to reinvigorate independent radicalism by providing a forum for the reassessment of existing radical ideas in light of mid-twentieth century realities. In "Tract for the times," its manifesto published in the first issue, the editors argued that "the decline of independent radicalism and the gradual falling into silence of prophetic and rebellious voices" indicated that older radical frameworks and ideas were no longer applicable to a world confronted by the emergence of atomic power, the Second Industrial Revolution, and the rise of totalitarianism.<sup>83</sup> "The problems of today" they argued, "must be attacked on a much deeper level than traditional Marxists, Communists, and various kinds of Socialists and Anarchists have realized."<sup>84</sup> *Liberation's* editors articulated an intellectual position based upon four "root traditions": a Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition with its vision of a society of justice, love, and brotherhood; an American tradition espousing liberty and equality for all and asserting that government rests on the consent of its people; the heritage of libertarian, socialist, anarchist, anti-war, and labour movements of Europe and the United States; and finally the tradition of pacifism with its insistence that injustice and violence can only be overcome by just and peaceful means.<sup>85</sup> They positioned *Liberation* as an attempt to build upon the best thinking of both the liberal and Marxist traditions while avoiding the weaknesses of each. They commended the liberal emphasis on "humaneness and tolerance, its support of

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<sup>82</sup> Scatamacchia, "'Politics', 'Liberation', and Intellectual Radicalism," 9.

<sup>83</sup> "Tract for the Times," *Liberation* 1, no. 1 (March 1956): 3.

<sup>84</sup> "Tract for the Times," 3.

<sup>85</sup> "Tract for the Times," 4.

the liberties of the individual and its insistence on the free and inquiring mind and rejection of fanaticism and dogmatism" while condemning its "failure to come to grips with war, poverty, boredom, authoritarianism and other great evils of the modern world."<sup>86</sup> They affirmed the indispensable value of Marxism's "fundamental demand for economic justice and its attack on the problem of poverty"<sup>87</sup> while criticizing Marx's historical determinism and his failure to adequately theorize questions of military and political power, and in particular to recognize that

social betterment cannot be brought about by the same old methods of force and chicanery characterizing the regimes which had to be overthrown precisely because they embodied such evils. It is an illuminating insight of pragmatism that means and ends condition each other reciprocally and that the ends must be built into the means.<sup>88</sup>

Notwithstanding this critique, the editors suggested that Marx was "one of the great visionaries and utopian thinkers of [the nineteenth] century"<sup>89</sup> whose ideas must necessarily be adapted and modified for new social conditions, leading to the creation of new utopias inspiring new directions for social action.

Framed by these critiques and anchored in the four root traditions, *Liberation's* editors proposed a new politics requiring "a creative synthesis of the individual ethical insights of the great religious leaders and the collective social concern of the great revolutionists." This synthesis of political life with ethical concern led to their definition of revolution as "the transformation of society by human decision and action"; they argued that a new society could not be achieved through "dependence upon the machinery of politics, or the violent

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<sup>86</sup> "Tract for the Times," 4.

<sup>87</sup> "Tract for the Times," 4.

<sup>88</sup> "Tract for the Times," 5.

<sup>89</sup> "Tract for the Times," 5.

seizure of power.”<sup>90</sup> Challenging conventional understandings of revolution, power and politics, *Liberation* argued for a much broader conception of political action that would include the creation of cooperative community, emphasize decentralization and “direct participation of workers and citizens in determining conditions of life and work,” and uphold the importance of utopian thinking as that which represents “the growing edge of society and the creative imagination of a culture.”<sup>91</sup>

*Liberation* saw the problem of war and military preparation as central in an age when atomic weapons threatened global annihilation. The editors argued that withdrawing support from the military preparations of both power blocs was essential to the development of a radical movement. In this vein, they championed Third Camp initiatives of nonaligned groups and movements—such as nonviolent anticolonial movements in Africa, Asian Socialist parties, and the Gandhian Constructive Workers in India—as important examples of nonviolent attempts to solve political and economic problems. They viewed *Liberation* as a vehicle for sharing information and developing constructive critiques on such initiatives, paying attention to both international and domestic societal initiatives as well as those at the level of individuals, families and communities.

The statement, as a whole, suggests that *Liberation* was trying to articulate a third way, not only in reference to the Cold War but also in its approach to radicalism. In a final declaration, the editors laid out their hopes for the magazine:

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<sup>90</sup> "Tract for the Times," 5.

<sup>91</sup> "Tract for the Times," 5.

*Liberation* will seek to inspire its readers not only to fresh thinking but to *action now*—refusal to run away or to conform, concrete resistance in the communities in which we live to all the ways in which human beings are regimented and corrupted, dehumanized and deprived of their freedom; experimentation in creative living by individuals, families, and groups; day to day support of movements to abolish colonialism and racism or for the freedom of all individuals from domination, whether military, economic, political, or cultural.<sup>92</sup>

This statement highlights the importance of both “fresh thinking” and “action” as an essential part of *Liberation’s* contribution to radicalism in the sixties era. By identifying multiple sources of oppression and highlighting the role of individual and collective agency in creating change, the editors articulated a vision of radical praxis that anticipated the character of much social change activism of later decades. In their initial statement of purpose, they attempted a synthesis of many traditions and spheres—of ends and means, of Marxism and liberalism, thought and action, politics and morality, religious and secular traditions of activism, and domestic U.S. and transnational concerns. Seen in this light, *Liberation* itself is a utopian project, an effort to articulate a far-reaching vision of a new society and to re-imagine the means to achieve it.

The revolution that *Liberation* sought was one grounded in the lives of people struggling for a better world. Their characteristic emphasis on the “here-and-now” and their programmatic flexibility meant that they were always open to the revolutionary possibilities of any struggle against injustice or exploitation, whether of local, national, or even global proportions. This quality of having ‘ears to the ground,’ often as a result of being directly involved in these struggles, meant that *Liberation* editors and contributors were often prescient in their perceptions of the possibilities of emergent movements and the implications of

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<sup>92</sup> “Tract for the Times,” 6.

shifting political climates well ahead of the mainstream press, and even of some other radical and progressive publications. In the magazine's first ten years, racial injustice and the civil rights/black freedom movement was a central concern of *Liberation's* editors and contributors. *Liberation* viewed the black freedom struggle as significant for the development of radicalism, offering critically supportive coverage and—through the work of several editors and contributors, particularly Bayard Rustin—becoming actively involved in the struggle.

The other central concern during these years was the problem of war and peace. *Liberation's* emphasis on multiple sites of oppression could give the impression that the magazine had no clear “program” at all. However, while *Liberation* was exceptionally inclusive in the range of issues it considered to have radical implications, questions of nonviolence, peace, militarism, and war remained the unifying themes of the magazine. *Liberation's* concern with these issues was one of the distinctive features of its radicalism. Its commentary on the black freedom movement, and other liberation movements in this era, was often shaped by this underlying concern.

## Chapter Three

### The Promise and Challenge of Nonviolent Direct Action in the Civil Rights Movement

When *Liberation* began publication in the spring of 1956, the Montgomery black community's year-long boycott against segregated busing in their city was in full swing. Perhaps it is no accident that *Liberation* began at this juncture. While local in scope, the Montgomery bus boycott sparked enthusiasm among radical pacifists that nonviolent direct action could be applied on a large scale in a struggle for justice. Montgomery injected a sense of new possibility into *Liberation's* efforts to build a new radicalism that could revolutionize society in the Cold War era. Beginning with Montgomery, *Liberation* functioned as a "halfway house" to the black freedom movement: it publicized the struggle to its predominantly northern, white middle class readership, encouraging readers to get involved in the struggle and support it in a variety of ways, including financial; and it offered a forum for the clarification and debate of movement strategy and goals. Thus *Liberation* functioned in a dual capacity, addressing itself to sympathetic observers outside the movement as well as to engaged participants and leaders within the movement.

As would become a characteristic feature of *Liberation's* reportage, the magazine interspersed personal eyewitness accounts with political, economic and socio-psychological analyses of the broader issues. Editor Bayard Rustin went to Montgomery during the boycott and became one of the main *Liberation* conduits for both. His accounts of the boycott convey his deep understanding of the negative psychological and material effects of racism and segregation. His

brief but pithy assessment of the psychological effects of race prejudice that distort black children's development of self—lack of self-respect caused by identification and attempt to fit in with white society, the corrosive impact of white liberal guilt, self-hatred, and the repressed hatred of the white oppressor which may be taken out on other minority groups<sup>93</sup>—is matched by equally clear analysis of the political and economic dimensions of the Southern context. Rustin noted that the old agrarian socioeconomic order in the South was giving way to a new industrial economy marked by the exodus of black and white labour from rural to urban areas and the rise of a new urban middle class. He and co-editor Sidney Lens were quick to point out, in this changing context, the revolutionary potential of a black freedom movement to shake up the long-standing political and economic power structure of the South, and thus alter the politics of the nation as a whole.<sup>94</sup> In response to Montgomery Rustin began to write on a theme that he was to pursue in later years, of the need for a political alliance between black and white labour in order to build a new political force that could challenge the existing power structure. He argued that the use of nonviolence would be crucial in winning white support for this deep change, and in disarming the provocative terror of the white supremacists.<sup>95</sup> His reporting emphasized that the boycott was up against a serious campaign of segregationist terror, yet he was impressed by the dedication he saw in Montgomery: "I had a

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<sup>93</sup> Bayard Rustin, "Getting on with the white folks," *Liberation* 1, no. 7 (September 1956): 9-10.

<sup>94</sup> Bayard Rustin, "New South...old politics," *Liberation* 1, no. 8 (October 1956): 23-6; Sidney Lens, "The dynamics of the New South," *Liberation* 1, no. 2 (April 1956): 11-3.

<sup>95</sup> Rustin, "New South...old politics," 23-6.

feeling that no force on earth can stop this movement. It has all the elements to touch the hearts of men."<sup>96</sup>

*Liberation's* effort to support and broadcast the broad moral and spiritual vision animating the Montgomery struggle is evident in the publication of several articles by Martin Luther King, Jr. King articulated the great significance of the boycott movement for raising up—within black individuals and the black community as a whole—a profound sense of dignity and agency, through a nonviolent struggle that ultimately sought a “brotherhood” based on “the removal of all barriers that divide and alienate mankind, whether racial, economic or psychological.”<sup>97</sup> At the one-year anniversary of the boycott, after the Supreme Court had ruled against the segregation of buses, King noted that the court could not by itself bring about integration and reconciliation between white and black people. “The racial problem, North and South, cannot be solved on a purely political level. It must be approached morally and spiritually. We must ask ourselves as individuals: What is the right thing to do, regardless of the personal sacrifices involved?”<sup>98</sup> King’s assessment and question would find a ready audience among *Liberation* readers, already disposed to view moral questions as crucial determinants of social action.

*Liberation* editors viewed Montgomery as a “profoundly significant” development not only for the integration struggle but also for the Cold War world. In 1957 they editorialized that the “year-long demonstration of the practical effectiveness and the distinctive spiritual quality of mass nonviolence”

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<sup>96</sup> Bayard Rustin, “Montgomery diary,” *Liberation* 1, no. 2 (April 1956): 10.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., “We are still walking,” *Liberation* 1, no. 10 (December 1956): 9.

<sup>98</sup> King Jr., “We are still walking,” 9.

by the Montgomery black community had made nonviolence a topic of public discussion in a way that had not happened since Gandhi. They also expressed the conviction that people would need to “learn and practice nonviolent resistance, which is a matter both of technique and of a spirit free from hate” to address Cold War conflicts and avoid nuclear annihilation.<sup>99</sup>

*Liberation* continued to publish news of the Southern struggle, and urge it in a radical direction, even when the heightened drama of the boycott gave way to a period of slowed momentum. *Liberation's* typical stance toward the civil rights movement was one of supportive criticism and analysis. Dave Dellinger commented in 1958 that

The greatest victory of the Negroes in Montgomery...was not that they won the right to ride on unsegregated buses...The triumph was that thousands of Negroes worked together for over a year, in the face of tremendous provocations without succumbing to either “Uncle Tom-ism” or violence. Negroes gained as much dignity during the struggle, from their perseverance in common action and from their inspired exploration of the tactic and spirit of nonviolence, as they did afterwards from sitting on the buses next to their white brothers.<sup>100</sup>

Here Dellinger emphasized that cooperative, nonviolent action for justice was an important goal, an achievement in itself, as much as it was a means to achieve desegregation of Montgomery buses. This is one expression of the radical pacifist view that “ends are built into the means.” In the same article Dellinger also commended the formation of the SCLC and the significance of its call for a nonviolent campaign for black voting rights in the South, noting that the campaign could become a catalyst to engage large numbers of black across the South, directly challenging the hold of Southern racists on the political system. However, true to his anarchist, nonviolent radical's skepticism of politics-as-

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<sup>99</sup> “Nonviolence and the new year,” *Liberation* 1, no. 11 (January 1957): 3.

<sup>100</sup> Dave Dellinger, “Comment,” *Liberation* 3, no. 1 (March 1958): 15.

usual, Dellinger cautioned that the franchise in itself could do little to address fundamental socioeconomic inequality:

In working for the rights shamefully denied him, let us hope the Negro does not lose perspective and rest content with equality of opportunity in an unsound, unbrotherly system of economic competition and national power politics. The temptation will be great to pledge indiscriminating loyalty to the *mores* of the national power state in return for the right to participate in its elections.<sup>101</sup>

This was one of the first but certainly not the last time that a *Liberation* writer was to caution the civil rights movement of the risks of loyalty to the state.

The appropriate attitude to the state was also at issue in *Liberation's* discussion of the role of federal troops in school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas. When *Liberation* began publication, the editors' concern to challenge the resort to violence had focused primarily on the dangers of the nuclear age and the U.S.-Soviet conflict. The eruption of violence in Little Rock raised in a concrete way the problem of violence in the Southern integration struggle. The carefully planned integration of a local high school by nine black students on September 2, 1957 had prompted mob violence by segregationists. The Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, called out the National Guard on the pretext of preventing the violence, but instead barred the students from entering the school; President Eisenhower responded by sending in federal troops to secure the integration. For the editors, the Little Rock incident was unfortunate from two angles. They worried that some people would interpret the outbreak of violence as "fresh evidence that class struggles and basic social conflicts can only be resolved by violence" while others would conclude from the Presidential action that "when evil and violence are rampant counter-violence has to be used

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<sup>101</sup> Dave Dellinger, "Comment," 19.

to create conditions under which constructive and peaceful programs can be carried out."<sup>102</sup> While they acknowledged the appeal of these conclusions under the circumstances, the editors rejected the idea that violence could be useful in working for change, and asserted that nonviolent action was necessary to prevent other similar tragedies. Sharp criticism was leveled against Faubus for condoning and encouraging the segregationists, and against Eisenhower for his failure to take a stand in support of the students before the crisis came to a head. However, *Liberation*—rarely willing to criticize others' action without considering its own role in encouraging constructive personal action—suggested that pacifists bore a "heavy responsibility" for the fact that no nonviolent action program was developed in Little Rock. "Too often" they wrote,

believers in nonviolence are set apart from the masses by economic and class privileges that make it impossible for them to be effective in helping build a nonviolent movement in day-to-day situations. We must not regard ourselves as pure and noble if we are only unengaged and ineffective.<sup>103</sup>

The need for the nonviolent movement to reaffirm itself and to refuse to surrender its role to the federal government was also uppermost in the mind of contributor David Wieck, who shared the editors' fear of the dangerous precedent set by federal intervention in Little Rock. He felt that the real shame of the situation "was not that a thousand persons gathered from everywhere to surround a school-building, but that another thousand, or two, or five, who might have come to the school to demonstrate their disagreement with the mob, did not come."<sup>104</sup> But not all contributors were concerned with a nonviolent

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<sup>102</sup> Editors, "Silence and Violence," *Liberation* 2, no. 7 (October 1957): 3.

<sup>103</sup> "Silence and Violence," 3.

<sup>104</sup> David Wieck, "The Invention of Responsibility," *Liberation* 2, no. 8 (November 1957): 7.

movement per se. Writer and Southern social critic Lillian Smith, along with reporter L. Alex Wilson, each argued that the use of federal troops was under the circumstances disgraceful but necessary to contain the mob violence.<sup>105</sup> For Smith, helping pro-integration Southern whites to speak up—with the assistance of Northern media networks—would be the best way to prevent the occurrence of future mob violence.<sup>106</sup> Paul Goodman suggested that the most important question revolved not around the use of force (which he viewed as always negative) but rather whether a show of force could have positive psychological effects on the "hoodlum" whose ego would be strengthened by identifying with that force. He argued for the need to deal with the psychological problems of prejudice, not simply address integration as a matter of rights.<sup>107</sup>

All of these writers recognized that de-segregation and an end to racial discrimination would ultimately require strategies other than federal troops and court rulings. One year later, David Wieck analyzed the situation in Little Rock after the intervention. He noted that the federal use of troops, while "a very honest bad guess in a fairly desperate situation" had led to the deterioration of the conflict over de-segregation in that city:

the presence of the troops dramatically confirmed the segregationist dominance: it took the U.S. Army to wrest the city from them (so it seemed). From this, a bandwagon effect; those who go with the stronger party could see the illusory nature of the de-segregationist strength; the Army could put Negroes in Central High but such 'integration' is more technical and juridical than real. A third effect, more complex, was feelings of guilt, and resentment at accusation; this tended to unite all of

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<sup>105</sup> Lillian Smith, "Words and the Mob," *Liberation* 2, no. 8 (November 1957): 4; "L. Alex Wilson is a Man of Courage," *Liberation* 2, no. 7 (November 1957): 8.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, "Words and the Mob," 4-5.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Goodman, "'You gotta be better than somebody,'" *Liberation* 2, no. 8 (November 1957): 9-11.

Little Rock as a persecuted Southern city.<sup>108</sup>

In this context, Wieck emphasized that the most pressing need was the development of a local demand for de-segregation, which he thought would require a minority of white liberal anti-segregationists to develop the will to confront the moral issues and go beyond passively accepting 'law and order' as a solution. He saw the black community as seriously disempowered in its ability to confront the segregation issue, noting that many seemed not to understand the "Montgomery method" as transferable to their situation. Wieck seemed to underestimate the capacity for black people to be a catalyst for change, speculating that the non-violent direct action method was not likely to attract many blacks since leaders and ministers of the community often presented it as "non-retaliation" without conveying the active, dynamic nature of the method.<sup>109</sup>

The case of Robert Williams dramatically highlighted for radical pacifists the problem of framing nonviolence as a method of passivity—"turning the other cheek"—rather than as a proactive and courageous approach to change. Williams was a Southern black activist who had been president of the Monroe, North Carolina branch of the NAACP until he was suspended for advocating that black people resort to armed self-defense against racist violence. A former U.S. Marine, Williams was one of the earliest proponents of armed self-defense in the movement. In his essay, "Can Negroes Afford to be Pacifists?" published in the September 1959 issue of *Liberation*,<sup>110</sup> he expressed disillusionment with the progress of black liberation and frustration with supremacist violence, and

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<sup>108</sup> David Thoreau Wieck, "Report from Little Rock," *Liberation* 3, no. 8 (October 1958): 7.

<sup>109</sup> Wieck, "Report from Little Rock," 8-9.

<sup>110</sup> Robert F. Williams, "Can Negroes afford to be pacifists?" *Liberation* 4, no. 6 (September 1959): 4-7.

argued that the only way to protect Southern blacks from the savagery of the Klu Klux Klan was for black communities to form armed defense units. Nonviolence, he argued, while very effective in dealing with a "civilized" opponent, or in a "struggle for human dignity" such as the one in Montgomery, would not work in some areas of the South where racist terror was rampant. Williams proposed that the movement accept a diversity of tactics, violent and non-violent. While he admired King's leadership, he criticized the "turn-the-other-cheekism" of the NAACP, King and the "cringing Negro ministers" who had made a futile appeal to Monroe city officials to contain the Klan. In support of his case for armed self-defense, Williams noted that a citywide ban on Klan motorcades came only after violent exchanges occurred between Klansmen and armed defenders of black communities.

His critique did not fall on deaf ears. In the opening editorial, Dellinger responded with his own question: "are pacifists willing to be negroes?"<sup>111</sup> He emphasized that it would be "arrogant" of pacifists to preach nonviolence to those, like Williams, who advocated taking up arms, since the nonviolent movement had clearly not reached the point where it could effectively resist segregationist violence. Quoting Gandhi, Dellinger argued that "although nonviolence is the best method of resistance to evil, it is better for persons who have not yet attained the capacity for nonviolence to resist violently than not to resist at all." Contained in the idea of "the capacity for nonviolence" is the notion that the practice of nonviolence requires the inner development of the ability to identify completely with the other:

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<sup>111</sup> Dave Dellinger, "Are pacifists willing to be Negroes?" *Liberation* 4, no. 6 (September 1959): 3.

When nonviolence works, as it sometimes does against seemingly hopeless odds, it succeeds by disarming its opponents. It does this through intensive application of the insight that our worst enemy is actually a friend in disguise. The nonviolent resister identifies so closely with his opponent that he feels his problems as if they were his own, and is therefore unable to hate or hurt him, even in self-defense. This inability to injure an aggressor, even at the risk of one's own life, is based not on a denial of the self in obedience to some external ethical command but on an extension of the self to include one's adversary. "Any man's death diminishes me."<sup>112</sup>

Far from involving passive self-denial or submissive behaviour, this nonviolence required an intentional and active identification with the aggressor. Dellinger argued that Williams "makes a bad mistake when he implies that the only alternative to violence is the approach of the 'cringing, begging Negro ministers' who appealed to the city for protection and then retired in defeat."<sup>113</sup> Dellinger challenged Williams' perception of nonviolence as well as the wisdom of the ministers' appeal, arguing that an appeal for protection to the violent white power structure did not constitute an act of nonviolent resistance. Instead, nonviolence involved the assertion of personal and collective power embodied in nonviolent direct action and non-cooperation in the manner of the Montgomery boycott.

Dellinger's main concern, however, was to point out to the predominantly white, Northern, and middle-class readership of *Liberation* that "it is a perversion of nonviolence to identify only with the aggressor and not with his victims."<sup>114</sup> Instead of judging Williams and other Southern black activists for their resort to arms, northern pacifists and nonviolent radicals should try to understand and identify with black victims of racist violence. He exhorted readers to refuse

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<sup>112</sup> Dellinger, "Are pacifists willing to be Negroes?" 3.

<sup>113</sup> Dellinger, "Are pacifists willing to be Negroes?" 3.

<sup>114</sup> Dellinger, "Are pacifists willing to be Negroes?" 3.

conformity with any form of segregation, in the North or South.<sup>115</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s response to Robert Williams engaged more directly with his criticisms of the movement leadership and the tactics of the nonviolent movement. He agreed with Williams that the civil rights movement had reached a moment of crisis, with segregationists taking advantage of the political opportunity opened up by inadequate Federal government action to support integration and inconsistent mass action by black communities. King viewed calls for violence as rooted in the desire for retaliation, which was a "punitive—not radical or constructive" way to seek change. Instead, he argued for "the development of a wholesome social organization to resist with effective, firm measures any efforts to impede progress."<sup>116</sup> The approach of "socially organized masses on the march" was ultimately a more powerful challenge to the enemies of integration if carried out with persistence:

It is this form of struggle—non-cooperation with evil through mass action—"never letting them rest"—which offers the more effective road for those who have been tempted and goaded to violence. It needs the bold and the brave because it is not free of danger. It faces the vicious and evil enemies squarely. It requires dedicated people, because it is a backbreaking task to arouse, to organize, and to educate tens of thousands for disciplined, sustained action. From this form of struggle more emerges that is permanent and damaging to the enemy than from a few acts of organized violence.<sup>117</sup>

Challenging Williams' either/or formula—either cringing submission or taking up arms—King argued that a distinction must be made between the morally and legally acceptable use of violence in self-defense and the advocacy of violence as a tool of the struggle. While the former was acceptable and sometimes necessary,

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<sup>115</sup> Dellinger, "Are pacifists willing to be Negroes?" 3.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. "'Never let them rest': the social organization of nonviolence," *Liberation* 4, no. 7 (October 1959): 5.

<sup>117</sup> King, Jr. "'Never let them rest,'" 6.

the latter approach he considered to be dangerous, primarily because of the risk that it "will fail to attract Negroes to a real committed struggle, and will confuse the large uncommitted middle group, which as yet has not supported either side."<sup>118</sup> There was also the risk of retaliation by a far stronger adversary. A statement by the NAACP echoed this distinction between self-defense and advocacy of violence, arguing that they had suspended Williams for the latter, and that the NAACP had consistently defended and assisted Negroes who had resorted to violent self-defense.<sup>119</sup>

King and Williams differed dramatically in their interpretation of self-defense. While King and the NAACP supported the right of individuals to armed self-defense, they viewed Williams' call for blacks to *organize* for self-defense as going beyond that right; the advocacy of organized armed defense implied the use of violence as a strategic choice. It was *organized* self-defense that King was concerned would divert black people's allegiance away from the nonviolent struggle. His worry that the strategy would pit blacks against whites in a violent struggle with hopeless odds left unstated a part of the strategy of nonviolence that divided the two perspectives: for King and others in the nonviolent movement, the advantage of nonviolent militancy was its potential for building a climate of support for integration among a majority in white society, while simultaneously turning public opinion against racist extremists.

Williams, however, did not believe that white society could be persuaded to truly support black freedom. He viewed the organization of armed self-defense as a practical measure to prevent lynching and violence against blacks in

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<sup>118</sup> King, Jr. "Never let them rest," 6.

<sup>119</sup> NAACP, "The single issue in the Robert Williams case," *Liberation* 4, no. 7 (October 1959): 7-8.

Southern communities. But he also linked the nonviolent method with unhealthy black dependence on, and submission to, white society; and in contrast, saw the growth of black militancy and self-assertion as inherently connected to the willingness to bear arms. "There is a new Negro coming into manhood on the American scene" wrote Williams. "The Negro is becoming more militant, and pacifism will never be accepted wholeheartedly by the masses of Negroes so long as violence is rampant in Dixie."<sup>120</sup> Williams' use of 'manhood' here, a term understood to be gender-inclusive in the late 1950s, nonetheless reveals gendered dimensions of Williams' construction of armed militancy. As he noted elsewhere in his essay, "I believe that Negroes must be willing to defend themselves, their women, their children and their homes." Historian Simon Wendt has pointed out that long-standing conceptions of masculinity prevalent in the South were closely tied to the willingness to use violence in self-defense and in defense of one's family and honour. African American men, so long denied the expression of this form of masculinity under a white power structure that enforced their submission, were frequently not receptive to the nonviolent movement because of the method's "connotations of effeminate submissiveness."<sup>121</sup> Williams' argument for organized self-defense was as much about asserting the right to be a man—understood as the right to use violence in self-defense—as it was about solving the practical problem of preventing lynchings. His resistance to the nonviolence preached by King and other ministers should be understood as resistance to the language of moral persuasion, which he interpreted as

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<sup>120</sup> Williams, "Can Negroes afford to be pacifists?" 7.

<sup>121</sup> Simon Wendt, "'They Finally Found Out That We Really Are Men': Violence, Non-Violence and Black Manhood in the Civil Rights Era," *Gender & History* 19, no. 3 (2007): 544-64.

submissive in its emphasis on redemptive suffering and love as the vehicles of social change.

Yet as Dellinger hinted in his editorial, and Wendt has argued in his study of nonviolence and black manhood in this era, the nonviolent method was never simply a method of appeal and persuasion; it was, as Wendt put it, “primarily a form of non-violent coercion, which created crises of local, national and even international proportions that actively forced white authorities to yield to black demands.”<sup>122</sup> Civil rights leaders often played down this dimension of nonviolence in the optimistic early years of the movement; yet King’s response to Williams clearly indicates that he was aware that mass nonviolent action was an assertive strategy for mobilizing black power to achieve freedom goals. For Williams, concepts of militancy, manhood, and black assertion seemed diametrically opposed to King’s moral and religious language; yet both men were essentially advocating—from very different positions—the need for greater mass black activism and militancy in the struggle.

Recent research on the relationship of armed self-defense groups to the nonviolent movement in the South emphasizes the common goals animating the two positions and the local collaboration that quietly developed between self-defense and nonviolent civil rights organizations. In the 1960s, groups such as the Deacons for Defense and Justice (DDJ) were formed to provide physical protection of black communities against white vigilantes. These groups often worked quietly and cooperatively with the nonviolent movement. While publicity of violent incidents between the Klan and black self-defense groups could sometimes damage the moral leverage of the nonviolent movement and

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<sup>122</sup> Wendt, “‘They Finally Found Out That We Really Are Men,’” 548.

place black activists at greater risk of arrest, self-defense groups played a positive role in many communities, helping the nonviolent movement to survive by providing safe havens for civil rights workers and inspiring self-esteem and pride among participants and black communities. While members of these groups, along with Williams, often viewed nonviolence as degrading to their manhood and ineffective in situations of vigilante violence, most also acknowledged the value of nonviolent tactics in the struggle against racial discrimination.<sup>123</sup>

Williams' critique of nonviolent civil rights leaders was not simply an assertion of conventional southern masculinity but was also an argument about the black freedom movement's relationship to white society. It was the nonviolent movement's reliance on tactics designed to elicit support from white liberals that Williams ultimately saw as futile and destructive to the development of black militancy. Williams also accused civil rights leaders of being unwilling to directly challenge the U.S. government's pursuit of militarist Cold War foreign policy, which he viewed as further evidence of the weakness of nonviolence. In an embryonic form, his critique foreshadowed later criticisms of Black Power advocates in its emphasis on black pride and the need for independence from white society and the priorities of the nation-state.

While King's position appeared to carry the day on the subject of black freedom tactics in *Liberation*, the editors' concern to seriously engage with Williams' critique demonstrates their recognition that his views represented a wider trend in the movement, and that bridges needed to be built between self-defense advocates and nonviolent activists. *Liberation* editors were sufficiently

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<sup>123</sup> Wendt, "'They Finally Found Out That We Really Are Men,'" 548-52.

exercised by the issues raised to organize a debate in New York City on the topic of "Should Negroes Meet Violence with Violence?" Robert Williams and his lawyer, Conrad Lynn, argued the Yes position, while *Liberation* editors Bayard Rustin and Dave Dellinger took up the No position.<sup>124</sup> One attendee, Ruth Reynolds, was disappointed that the debaters did not use the opportunity to evaluate the strategic and moral strengths and limitations of different methods of resistance, but ended up focusing on the issue of violence vs. submission as framed by Williams and Lynn. The problem, she noted, was that the pacifist movement had so few successful examples to back up its claims for efficacy. Moreover, freedom fighters such as Williams and Lynn, along with her friends in the Puerto Rican independence movement, were not intent on using violence

except in situations in which they consider all other methods useless. This is really the crux of the issue, both in philosophy and in the concrete struggle. We believe that nonviolent resistance will work in situations where they don't believe it will work, but the proof is in the pudding, not on the platform.<sup>125</sup>

In a similar vein to Dellinger's earlier editorial question "can pacifists afford to be negroes?" Ruth asserted that most pacifists had yet to take the crucial step of unequivocally standing with the cause of freedom, be it independence for Puerto Ricans or racial justice for blacks in the United States.

Events in the civil rights movement after 1959 soon furnished advocates of nonviolence with more opportunities to stand in solidarity with the black freedom movement. *Liberation* published and expressed strong support for A. Philip Randolph's call in January 1960 for mass marches on both Democratic and

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<sup>124</sup> "Public Debate: Should Negroes Meet Violence with Violence?" *Liberation* 4, no. 6 (September 1959): back page.

<sup>125</sup> Ruth M. Reynolds, "Letter to the Editors," *Liberation* 4, no. 9 (December 1959): 18-19.

Republican party conventions to demand full black equality.<sup>126</sup> Randolph's speech was a forceful challenge to liberal and government inaction in the face of the reactionary campaign to terrorize and undermine the civil rights movement. It demonstrated his full awareness of the power of mobilizing masses of black people in an election year and his intent to use that power to make black freedom an election issue. Randolph was also clearly aware of the coercive power of black nonviolent mass action in the global context: "The concrete demands and just grievances of the Negro people presented as they march before these conventions is a weapon that will circle the globe as a moral missile."<sup>127</sup> As scholar Mary Dudziak has demonstrated, the U.S. government during the Cold War was highly concerned to project a positive international image of American democracy as a nation of justice and freedom, particularly to newly independent nations in the global south; mass direct action for racial equality by African Americans threatened to do serious damage to this project and forced U.S. leaders to put the abolition of racial discrimination on the national political agenda.<sup>128</sup> Randolph attempted to mobilize this coercive power by reminding his listeners of the threat mass black action posed to the power structure in terms of its capacity to create bad publicity for American democracy.

The activities of *Liberation's* editors in 1960 highlighted the global dimensions of the black freedom struggle and the importance of nonviolent resistance. Rustin was then on loan from the War Resisters' League to work full-time for Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC, while Muste had just returned

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<sup>126</sup> A. Philip Randolph, "Immediate Mass Action!" *Liberation* 5, no. 1 (March 1960): 5-6.

<sup>127</sup> Randolph, "Immediate Mass Action!" 6.

<sup>128</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 249-52.

from a conference in Accra, Ghana, of leaders of newly independent African nations and African liberation movements who met to debate the viability of nonviolent actions against nuclear testing by imperial powers in Africa.<sup>129</sup>

The new militancy of the student sit-ins that exploded across the South in 1960 was a source of great inspiration to *Liberation* writers, affirming the power and potential of nonviolent direct action. Muste editorialized in April 1960 that “The student movement is not only one of the most hopeful and significant developments in American social and political life, but also of global significance as one phase of the struggle of the Negro people wherever they live for freedom, equality and self-respect.”<sup>130</sup> This infusion of new energy into the Southern movement prompted the editors to write a thorough analysis of civil rights strategy.<sup>131</sup> They heartily affirmed the significance of the student sit-ins, which gave “a lift to the organizations” like the NAACP and SCLC, mired by inaction in the face of pervasive Southern resistance to desegregation. Clearly responding to reactionary allegations that the sit-ins were orchestrated by Northern ‘agitators,’ the editors emphatically asserted that the sit-ins were a spontaneous and Southern phenomenon. Mass direct action embodied in the sit-ins was the principal source of power to achieve black liberation, they argued; this power, if mobilized and organized by the Southern movement, had the potential to transform the social structure and political institutions of the South. But for this power to be truly effective, activists, including leaders, must be willing to face arrest and jail on a mass scale. What was needed was “creative integration of mass need and impulse, on the one hand, and great, dedicated leadership, on the

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<sup>129</sup> A.J. Muste, “Our Editors in the Field,” *Liberation* 5, no. 2 (April 1960): 3.

<sup>130</sup> Muste, “Our Editors in the Field,” 3.

<sup>131</sup> Editors, “Struggle for Integration,” *Liberation* 5, no. 3 (May 1960): 5-9.

other.”<sup>132</sup> The editors urged all civil rights organizations and individuals, particularly the northern-based groups NAACP and CORE, to act in support of the Southern-based movement and to recognize that Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC must carry the primary leadership responsibility, given the importance and power of the black church’s social and economic independence from white control and King’s national prominence as a symbol of the struggle. This call for cooperation between SCLC and other civil rights organizations as well as labour organizations reveals Rustin’s influence on the statement. His concern and talent for building effective political coalitions between civil rights and labour leaders would be showcased several years later in the 1963 March on Washington.

The editors’ statement also asserted the strategic importance of a nonviolent program for radically altering the social structure and relations of the South. Responding to the critiques of armed self-defense advocates, they argued that

Nonviolence is not a negative thing. It does not mean the absence of violence, the renunciation of action, submission. It means resort to a superior form of struggle, the tapping of the reservoirs of moral force—“soul-force”, as Gandhi called it—which lie in human beings who individually and collectively assert their dignity as human beings and, being serenely possessed of their own souls, refuse to strike back at those who oppress and demean them but with equal resoluteness refuse any longer to submit to oppression and humiliation.<sup>133</sup>

The editors noted that many people in the black freedom movement seemed to misunderstand King’s exhortation to “love your enemies.” Their elaboration on the meaning of “love” in terms of nonviolence is worth quoting in full because it offers a fascinating view on the philosophical framework of the method. Far from

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<sup>132</sup> Editors, “Struggle for Integration,” 6.

<sup>133</sup> Editors, “Struggle for Integration,” 9.

a “sentimental liking for people who spit on you,” they affirmed that love in this context was a moral choice with profound social and political implications:

The objective of the integration movement is to remove the present social structure, which makes some masters over others, which is so ordered that human beings whose skin is dark are humiliated, and human beings whose skin is light subject others to humiliation (which means that they, too, are humiliated). This system degrades everyone who lives under it. Community is impossible under such a structure. Suspicion and fear and neurosis are generated by it. Ultimately, the social fabric is torn asunder and individuals rush into hysteria. The objective is, then, to develop in the South, and elsewhere, a truly democratic social structure.

Everybody realizes that if such a society is to be possible, whites have to believe in the capacity of Negroes to be fully human. That is what it means for whites to “love” Negroes. To “hate” them is to refuse to recognize the Negro as fully human. Basically, this is what Southern whites, *operating in the social structure they still want to maintain*, are doing. Conversely, for Negroes to “love” white Southerners means to recognize that whites have the capacity to be fully human. If this is not the case, no genuine new community, no democratic society, is possible in the South...

All this finally means that in carrying on their relentless nonviolent struggle for their own liberation, *Negroes are liberating white Southerners*. This is the basic way in which the former express their “love” for the latter. White Southerners could not hand true freedom to Negroes, even if they wanted to. Nobody can bestow freedom on those who do not want it.<sup>134</sup>

This hopeful vision of the power of nonviolent action was tempered by the recognition that such a nonviolent movement would entail much effort and pain. They did not assume that such a movement was inevitable: “The big ultimate question” they wrote, “is whether Southern Negroes in sufficient numbers have reached that point” of refusing to submit to injustice regardless of the personal consequences.

Months later, at election time in 1960, *Liberation* editors were discouraged by the fact that a mass integration movement had not emerged. They criticized the focus of moderate civil rights leaders on limited political gains and support for the Kennedy/Johnson ticket of the Democratic Party instead of mobilizing for

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<sup>134</sup> Editors, “Struggle for Integration,” 9.

more radical objectives. They lamented that ‘integration’ for many moderate leaders meant “integration into the dominant American culture and into existing political and economic institutions” rather than “integration with rebel and potentially revolutionary elements for the reorganization of political and economic life and the transformation of culture.”<sup>135</sup> In particular, they noted with concern that black civil rights leaders, despite their espousal of nonviolence, were not active on the issue of nuclear war. *Liberation’s* attempt to distinguish a ‘revolutionary’ integration from an integration that simply accepted the current political and economic structures is an early example of radical pacifist efforts to claim the language of integration for radical rather than moderate objectives.

In the early 1960s the integration movement was strongly criticized by leaders of the Nation of Islam (popularly known as the Black Muslim movement) for its middle class character, its lack of attention to the problems of poor blacks in urban ghettos, and its inability to counteract centuries of humiliation by building up black self-respect and pride. Black Muslims advocated separation of the races as the best solution to black oppression. Radical advocates of nonviolence were quick to engage with and challenge their calls for black nationalism. In early 1962 Bayard Rustin—who by then had become an influential strategist and leader in the civil rights movement—debated Malcolm X, national spokesman for the Nation of Islam, before an audience of more than one thousand at Community Church in New York. In his editorial commentary, Muste described how Malcolm X’s call for separatism was countered by Rustin, who argued that “the Moslem dream of setting up a Black State, in this country or elsewhere, is not providing food for the hungry, jobs for the jobless, or

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<sup>135</sup> The Editors, “The Negro Vote,” *Liberation* 5, no. 8 (October 1960): 4.

housing for people living in rat-infested sloms [sic].”<sup>136</sup> Though Muste clearly viewed Black Muslim advocacy of separatism and defensive violence as an impractical and dangerous trend, he also recognized its great visionary power to evoke “a great hope, a vision of another kind of world, another way of life, and not just some amelioration of a life and a regime basically corrupt and inhuman.”<sup>137</sup> It was the obvious power of this appeal that made the development of a truly radical nonviolent movement so urgent for Muste and other radical pacifists.

*Liberation* during the early 1960s published a stream of articles reflecting the radical pacifist concern to publicize and encourage the nonviolent direct action movement in the South. The magazine published reports of the sit-ins in 1960 and participant accounts of the Freedom Rides that took place in 1961. A new tone of militancy emerged in the writers’ descriptions of courageous actions taken in the face of police and mob brutality. Experiences in the South inspired Albert Bigelow, a white pacifist Freedom Rider, to name the segregation system a “white problem” and “a sickness that is chronic, deep-seated, and deadly.”<sup>138</sup> The new militancy was also apparent in Tom Hayden’s strong critique of the Kennedy administration’s unwillingness to take civil rights measures that would conflict with the pro-segregationist agenda of Southern Democrats in the party. Noting the strength and impact of voter registration drives in the South, Hayden argued that the power for change resided in cultivating the “revolutionary

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<sup>136</sup> A.J. Muste, “An Historic Debate,” *Liberation* 6, no. 12 (February 1962): 3.

<sup>137</sup> A.J. Muste, “An Historic Debate,” 4.

<sup>138</sup> Albert Bigelow, “The White Problem,” *Liberation* 6, no. 7 (September 1961): 5-6.

possibilities” and “independent character” of the nonviolent action movement, not in waiting for Kennedy to enact civil rights legislation.<sup>139</sup>

By early 1963 militancy was clearly on the rise in the movement. *Liberation* reported enthusiastically on the “New Mood” emerging among nonviolent activists. The report of a conference of activists from CORE, SNCC, and SCLC (most likely written by attendees Rustin and Muste) highlighted the new emphases of this mood. First, new radical goals were being articulated in the movement. The demand for integration was being connected to other demands for social and economic changes, seen as essential to the achievement of black freedom. In terms of tactical approach, a new emphasis on self-reliance—whether in nonviolent protest actions or cooperative economic initiatives—had begun to displace the tendency to look to federal government intervention as the vehicle for social change. Nonviolence continued to be affirmed as the strategy of the movement; yet even here, issues were raised that reveal concerns about racist violence and greater openness to the influence of self-defense ideas. One of the “perplexing questions” discussed by activists revolved around how to respond appropriately to attacks on fellow activists. “What does a male picketer do, for example, when he sees a female picketer being beaten?”<sup>140</sup> The unexamined gender dimensions of this question reveals the challenge nonviolent action posed to conventional norms of masculine and also feminine behaviour during this era. And finally, a key component of the “New Mood” in the struggle was a new emphasis on black leadership. Whites could participate in the struggle, but were no longer welcome to counsel moderation. As *Liberation* put it,

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<sup>139</sup> Tom Hayden, “Just a Matter of Timing?” *Liberation* 7, no. 8 (October 1962): 24-6.

<sup>140</sup> “Integration Leaders Reveal New Emphases,” *Liberation* 8, no. 2 (April 1963): 7.

Negroes are tired of being told by whites what to do—by white integrationists as well as white segregationists. Men like Adam Clayton Powell and the black nationalists may be exploiting this reaction for their own ends, but there is a genuine need for Negroes to assert their own selfhood.<sup>141</sup>

The demand for black self-determination would grow stronger within the civil rights movement over the decade. Radical pacifists of *Liberation* were very sympathetic to this demand and the other emerging emphases in the civil rights movement.

Several articles published in the early 1960s indicate *Liberation's* efforts to promote challenging black intellectual voices and engage with the new racial consciousness of this era. They published a piece by prominent writer and spokesman for cultural black nationalism Le Roi Jones (who later took the name Amiri Baraka) on the need to interpret jazz music in terms of black culture and history.<sup>142</sup> An essay by the well-known writer and political activist James Baldwin also appeared in the magazine.<sup>143</sup> Baldwin was a prominent advocate of black freedom in the 1960s, and his writings and lectures reflected an ideological position that attempted to bridge King's emphasis on integration through Christian nonviolence and the Black Muslim movement's advocacy of separatism. He argued that "It is time to ask very hard questions and to take very rude positions" in order to challenge unexamined racist ideas at the foundation of white society, held even among those opposed to segregation.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> "Integration Leaders Reveal New Emphases," 6.

<sup>142</sup> Le Roi Jones, "Jazz Criticism and Ideology," *Liberation* 8, no. 12 (February 1964): 28-30.

<sup>143</sup> James Baldwin, "The Artist's Struggle for Integrity," *Liberation* 8, no. 1 (March 1963): 9-11.

<sup>144</sup> Baldwin, "The Artist's Struggle for Integrity," 11.

Not all *Liberation* writers were comfortable with such radical challenges. Wallace Hamilton argued that Baldwin's confrontational approach to challenging white power was no different than Black Muslim promotion of separatism and defensive violence.<sup>145</sup> In his view, such a stance "does not just preclude friendship and communication—it precludes the existence of the other person with whom the relationship can exist." The only answer to the "white problem" was to "keep talking, keep protesting, keep persuading, keep insisting—in other words, keep communicating; in sum, nonviolence."<sup>146</sup>

Wallace's view of Baldwin and the problem of race was not, however, shared by Thomas Merton. Merton argued that dealing with the race issue was not a simple matter of friendship and communication, it required dealing with deeply buried attitudes and unconscious patterns of behaviour.<sup>147</sup> Baldwin, he argued, "has done us all the immense service of raising some of these issues to the conscious level."<sup>148</sup> Far from advocating violence, Baldwin was attempting to get white society to "wake up" to the reality of black difference. For Merton, the message of Baldwin's searing criticism of white society was simply this:

The basic issue is one of rank, crass deeply rooted *injustice*. And the only thing that can right the wrong is justice in every sphere, in every level of society, in public relations and private affairs, in national and international relations, in everything, in every possible branch of social, political, economic and personal life. Can we even begin to face this problem? It is on this, of course, that the survival of our society depends.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Wallace Hamilton, "'The Goddam White Man': Let's Along and Do the Murder First," *Liberation* 8, no. 4 (June 1963): 17-9.

<sup>146</sup> Hamilton, "'The Goddam White Man,'" 19.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas Merton, "Neither Caliban Nor Uncle Tom," *Liberation* 8, no. 4 (June 1963): 20-2.

<sup>148</sup> Merton, "Neither Caliban Nor Uncle Tom," 20.

<sup>149</sup> Merton, "Neither Caliban Nor Uncle Tom," 22.

For Merton, this justice had little to do with fostering racial harmony per se, and everything to do with meaningful social change.

As these articles attest, *Liberation* was concerned to probe questions of race and culture in U.S. society. However, the magazine's dominant focus remained the nonviolent direct action movement unfolding in the South. Radical pacifists were, as ever, concerned to understand the evolution of nonviolent resistance in the movement. In early 1963 Carleton Mabee noted that it was difficult for many young demonstrators to fully accept the demands of the nonviolent method, as shown by some incidents of psychological hostility wielded by nonviolent activists against their opponents. On the other hand, he reported that some young activists who had come into the movement from a history of using violence to solve their personal conflicts reported growth in their ability to be nonviolent both in the movement and in their personal lives.<sup>150</sup> Mabee suggested that nonviolent practitioners in the movement were divided between those who viewed nonviolence as a way of life, and those who saw it as a tactic. Given that most activists approached nonviolence as a tactic, Mabee argued that adherence to the method would be difficult to sustain if successes against segregation were not forthcoming and further nonviolence training was not adopted.<sup>151</sup>

Yet the events that soon transpired in Birmingham, Alabama moved such concerns to the background. The dramatic city-wide protest by the black community of that city was heralded by *Liberation* as a turning-point in the black freedom struggle. Bayard Rustin argued that the Birmingham struggle became "the moment of truth" for black people throughout the nation. It signaled the

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<sup>150</sup> Carleton Mabee, "Will Commitment to Nonviolence Last?" *Liberation* 8, no. 2 (April 1963): 14-6.

<sup>151</sup> Mabee, "Will Commitment to Nonviolence Last?" 16-7.

refusal to accept gradual or token change. “The war cry is ‘unconditional surrender—end *all* Jim Crow now.’ Not next week, not tomorrow—but *now*.”<sup>152</sup> Rustin noted the domino effect of the Birmingham movement, which immediately inspired similar struggles in other cities. What was particularly dramatic, for Rustin, was the absence of fear shown by Birmingham activists of all ages, from young children to teenagers and adults, in the face of Bull Connor’s police dogs, fire hoses, and beatings. He emphasized the power of this fearless “social disruption” of sit-ins and economic boycotting of segregationist stores that forced the white power structure to negotiate with the black movement. Rustin’s optimistic assessment appeared in *Liberation* alongside Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” his now-famous defense of the nonviolent movement written in response to religious leaders critical of the movement’s direct action tactics. In this moving statement demonstrating King’s growing militancy, he wrote of the necessity of breaking unjust laws and his disappointment with white moderates and white church leaders for their unwillingness to stand unequivocally on the side of justice. In response to charges that he had become an “extremist,” he countered:

The question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice—or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?<sup>153</sup>

In this statement King articulated his nonviolent struggle as standing between the forces of complacency and inaction in the black community, on the one hand, and the forces of “bitterness and hatred” expressed in the black nationalist

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<sup>152</sup> Bayard Rustin, “The Meaning of Birmingham,” *Liberation* 8, no. 4 (June 1963): 7.

<sup>153</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” *Liberation* 8, no. 4 (June 1963): 14.

movement. This statement is a clear indicator not only of the growing division between the nonviolent and black nationalist movements, but also of King's play upon white fear of black violence implied in black nationalist rhetoric to build his case for white moderate support of the nonviolent movement. But more than this, the statement articulated his conviction that black freedom in the U.S. would be achieved through the efforts of black nonviolent activists of Birmingham and throughout the United States.

Above all, the practice of nonviolence by black activists in Birmingham had an inspiring effect on *Liberation's* radical pacifists. Dave Dellinger, buoyed by his visit to the city during the campaign, wrote that the activists were "so permeated by the sense of fulfillment and well-being that comes from their meetings, demonstrations, and triumphant nonviolent encounters with superior physical force that there is practically no room left for fear and hate."<sup>154</sup> He noted with enthusiasm the "indigenous, improvisatory character" of the nonviolence practiced in Birmingham; the involvement of the children, the absence of Gandhian asceticism, and activists' refusal to grant any moral authority to the law when undertaking civil disobedience were innovations that made nonviolence more vital and powerful than the "orthodox" nonviolence often promoted by some pacifists. He particularly defended and celebrated the controversial innovation of involving children in the protests, asserting that it was a "major breakthrough in the development of nonviolence"; the children's willingness to face police brutality had a mobilizing and uniting effect on the

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<sup>154</sup> Dave Dellinger, "The Negroes of Birmingham," *Liberation* 8, no. 5-6 (Summer 1963): 18.

black community, and helped to cut through the complicity and indifference of the white community.

*Liberation* conveyed the powerful sense of forward momentum and hope in the civil rights movement in the summer of 1963, embodied not only in the Birmingham movement but also in the March on Washington that took place on August 28. The March was by all accounts a remarkable event. Attended by over two hundred thousand people, black and white, it was the largest mass demonstration of black protest that had ever been organized in the United States—the product of a coalition effort between moderate and radical civil rights leaders and organizations as well as white liberal and labour organizations. Uniting diverse constituencies with the demand for “Jobs and Freedom Now,” the March was an impressive demonstration of the strategy of political coalition that came to be closely associated with its key organizer, Bayard Rustin.

Unlike the Birmingham movement, however, the March raised some questions for at least one *Liberation* editor. David Dellinger alerted readers to the tensions that existed in the March coalition in the months preceding the event. He noted that the original plan to include civil disobedience in the event had been dropped in order to appeal to a wider range of black leaders and white supporters. “What remains to be seen” he mused, “is whether the gains in numbers will outweigh the losses in direct action.” For Dellinger, nonviolent direct action was the most effective way to communicate the urgency of black demands for freedom, and he viewed with concern the possibility that the March’s “relatively respectable program” would lull people away from

recognizing that continued, militant pressure at the local level was still necessary for meaningful change to occur.<sup>155</sup>

Dellinger's fears were to a large degree alleviated by the experience of the March itself, which he felt gave voice to the deeply felt cry of "freedom now" in ways that would be truly heard in the nation. His commentary expressed particular relief at the inclusion of radical voices, particularly that of John Lewis of SNCC. Lewis's speech, which was reprinted in *Liberation*, offered a searing indictment of police brutality, black poverty, and the hypocrisy of a federal government that promised civil rights action but in practice undermined its commitment to ending racial discrimination. Dellinger's effort to emphasize the views of the militant students of the movement is an early indication of the direction *Liberation* would take in the tumultuous years to come.

In his post-March analysis, Bayard Rustin too made a compelling case for the radical nature and implications of the event.<sup>156</sup> He emphasized that the March needed to take place because black protest had moved from a revolt to the beginnings of a revolution. And because economic issues were at the root of racial discrimination, this black revolution needed allies among the progressive white community. For Rustin, the March was a breakthrough in terms of method: "It forced people to see the necessity for masses in the street. It underlined the inevitability of nonviolent mass action. It pointed the way to massive civil disobedience, by both blacks and whites."<sup>157</sup> Rustin argued that the March should be understood as a first step in a far-reaching challenge to politics-

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<sup>155</sup> Dave Dellinger, "Freedom Now!" *Liberation* 8, no. 5-6 (Summer 1963): 4.

<sup>156</sup> Bayard Rustin, "The Meaning of the March on Washington," *Liberation* 8, no. 8 (October 1963): 11-3.

<sup>157</sup> Rustin, "The Meaning of the March," 12.

as-usual and “the total structure of the economy, including the war economy.”<sup>158</sup> Yet he clearly recognized that the risks, and stakes, were high, as demonstrated by the campaign of police brutality being waged against the nonviolent demonstrators in the South and its tacit acceptance by both political parties. Given the immense discrepancy between, on the one hand, reactionary white violence and federal government inaction, and on the other hand, the needs and aroused freedom expectations of the black community, Rustin believed that “disruption is inevitable.” “There is no longer any viability for a *minority* nonviolent movement,” he argued, and suggested that the inevitable demand for disruption in black communities could be channeled into mass nonviolent action if the leaders of the nonviolent movement who came together in the March worked together to put forward a program of mass action. Proclaimed Rustin:

We need to go into the streets all over the country and to make a mountain of creative social confusion until the power structure is altered. We need in every community a group of loving troublemakers, who will disrupt the ability of the government to operate until it finally turns its back on the Dixiecrats and embraces progress.<sup>159</sup>

Despite Rustin’s call for unity, the divisions in the civil rights movement would prove increasingly difficult to avoid after 1963. A.J. Muste’s reflections in the spring of 1964 give some indication of the growing tensions. The title of his article, “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community” speaks eloquently of his radical pacifist perspective on the choices available to the movement.<sup>160</sup> Muste echoed Rustin’s concern about a potential mass outbreak of violence in black communities and his urgent call for mass nonviolent action. At this stage Muste’s

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<sup>158</sup> Rustin, “The Meaning of the March,” 12.

<sup>159</sup> Rustin, “The Meaning of the March,” 13.

<sup>160</sup> A.J. Muste, “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community,” *Liberation* 9, no. 3 (May 1964): 7-12.

dominant concern was the possibility of the movement being derailed by riots. While he argued that no pacifist should urge nonviolence on black communities without thinking hard about the psychological legacy of white conquest and the flagrant obstruction of justice by the white power structure, Muste nonetheless challenged the call for violent defensive tactics by Malcolm X and other black nationalist leaders. He suggested that while violent self-defense against racist attack was understandable and possibly useful in certain local situations, it was irresponsible for movement leaders to advocate violent self-defense, calling such advocacy a “demagogic or manipulative device.”<sup>161</sup> Muste countered black nationalist advocacy of violent revolution by arguing that the social conditions required for a traditional revolution, i.e., “the transfer of power from one class or social element to another,”<sup>162</sup> did not exist in the current set-up of the United States. He pointed out that even if these conditions did exist, violence was not necessarily required for a traditional revolution; historically the transfer of power in many revolutions required minimal violence, involving the weakening and collapse of an old order making room for a new element to take power.

But the burden of Muste’s argument for nonviolent revolution was that the problem of racial oppression in American society could not be solved by the seizure of power of a traditional revolution. Instead, he saw the building of the beloved community as the essential task. For Muste, the creation of the beloved community, a “multi-racial or *truly* integrated society”<sup>163</sup> in the United States, implied radical changes not only at the economic and political level but also at the psychological and social level. All of the dimensions of racism needed to be

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<sup>161</sup> Muste, “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community,” 9.

<sup>162</sup> Muste, “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community,” 11.

<sup>163</sup> Muste, “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community,” 10.

addressed. As he put it, "It is necessary that the reality and shame, the deep roots, of the present rift be exposed and not slurred over. But this can only be for the purpose of obliterating the rift, not for deepening it or making it permanent and utterly rigid."<sup>164</sup> Muste's conviction about the unity of ends and means in the struggle meant that the radical goal of beloved community was inseparable from the nonviolent approach.

In the early years of the nonviolent movement for civil rights, *Liberation's* engagement with the integration movement reflected in many ways Aldon Morris' "halfway house" model. As a small, predominantly white northern magazine dominated by long-time radical pacifists, *Liberation* encouraged the nonviolent civil rights movement in the South by publicizing its struggle to a sympathetic readership and by offering strategic and critical observations at key points in the struggle. *Liberation* editors were consistently concerned to highlight the potential of black protest to radically restructure of U.S. society. In their concern to promote radical voices, they paid particular attention to black activists and intellectuals who articulated a critique of racism in U.S. society not necessarily in the language of nonviolence. However, in the first eight years of *Liberation's* existence, the rise of a nonviolent mass movement for integration inspired radical pacifists to see the nonviolent method as a viable, powerful way to address the multiple dimensions of racial discrimination in the United States.

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<sup>164</sup> Muste, "Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community," 10.

## Chapter Four

### Two Issues or One? Radical Peace Activism and Black Freedom Struggle

*Liberation's* engagement with the civil rights movement occurred alongside its engagement with the peace movement of this era. It viewed both of these movements as significant vehicles through which to build a new social order of peace and justice, not only in the United States but also in the world. In the peak years of nonviolent civil rights activity in the early 1960s, a radicalized peace movement agitated for an end to the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. These two movements functioned independently of one another for the most part; what they had in common was the use of nonviolent direct action to achieve social change. The radicals of *Liberation*, with their commitment to nonviolence as an approach to social change, were among the minority of activists who were connected to both movements. A few, particularly Bayard Rustin, played key roles in both movements in the early 1960s. The effort to link liberation struggles around the world to the struggle to end the international pursuit of Cold War militarism was a feature of *Liberation* throughout its existence. On the domestic front, it appeared self-evident to many radical pacifists that the struggle for a radically transformed U.S. society must include an end to racial discrimination, war, and poverty. Yet in the course of working for the twin goals of civil rights and peace in this turbulent era, they discovered that many obstacles stood in the way of an alliance between the two movements.

Radical pacifist peace walks undertaken in the early 1960s inspired *Liberation's* earliest reflections on the potential and challenge of linking peace and civil rights. The 1962 Walk for Peace from Nashville, Tennessee to Washington,

D.C., organized by the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA), was planned as an integrated action; it included one black and twelve white activists, and refused the use of segregated facilities en route. Participant Barbara Deming wrote a fascinating report for *Liberation* that discussed the challenges and insights that came with this concrete effort to link peace with integration.<sup>165</sup> From the beginning, the Walk's organizers and participants viewed peace—in terms of an end to Cold War militarism—as the main message. Deming noted that many of their advisors had strong reservations about trying to explicitly link the issues in the South:

Most of those advising us felt that the battle on the two issues simply could not be combined. Of course we ought never to deny our belief in racial brotherhood; but Robert's presence was enough to confirm it. We should try to avoid talking about it; we were there to talk about *peace*. And it would be folly to seek to associate ourselves too closely with the people down there who were struggling for integration. Many people would then shy away from us. And they, the Negroes, could be harmed by it even more than we. They had enough of a burden to bear, already, without our giving their opponents added ammunition—the charge of their being “unpatriotic.”

“I supposed that the advice was practical,” commented Deming, “but it depressed me.”

I think we all left the meeting feeling unsatisfied—wondering a little why, then the walk *was* to be integrated. We'd talked about the fact that this could lead us into danger. The South was unpredictable, it was stressed: we might not run into any trouble at all; on the other hand, we just might all get killed. In a cause we were not to appear to be battling for?<sup>166</sup>

Deming's commentary demonstrates that radical pacifists viewed the prospect of combining peace and integration during this era primarily in terms of the strategy's risks and liabilities for both movements. The fact that the Nashville to

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<sup>165</sup> Barbara Deming, "Two Issues or One?" *Liberation* 7, no. 5-6 (July-Aug 1962): 5-10.

<sup>166</sup> Deming, "Two Issues or One?" 5.

Washington Peace Walk was integrated in spite of these reservations is a testament to the impact of the integration movement on radical pacifists. In the context of the black freedom movement it was not an option to exclude black radical pacifists from the peace walk; the moral pressure exerted by the sit-ins and Freedom Rides of this period compelled the walkers to demonstrate their commitment to racial integration or risk compromising the integrity of their belief in the inseparability of peace and freedom. For Deming, this belief meant that

the two struggles—for disarmament and for Negro rights—were properly parts of the one struggle. The same nonviolent tactic joined us, but more than this: our struggles were fundamentally one—to commit our country in act as well as in word to the extraordinary faith announced in our Declaration of Independence: that all men are endowed with certain rights that must not be denied them.<sup>167</sup>

Deming's convictions about the unity of the two struggles did not prevent her from realizing that "it is possible to hold a faith and yet not recognize all its implications, to be struggling side by side with others and yet be unaware of them."<sup>168</sup> The fact that there was only one black radical pacifist, Robert Gore, willing and able to participate in the entire Walk speaks eloquently to the difficulties and challenging implications of combining peace and integration.

However, Deming's experience of the Walk, while it did confirm that linking peace and black freedom was risky, also opened up unexpected opportunities for solidarity and communication. While Robert Gore's presence on the Walk was a lightning rod for hostility and violent threats in many Southern communities, it also inspired many black students active in the integration movement to join the walk for short stretches. Moments of "the

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<sup>167</sup> Deming, "Two Issues or One?" 5-6.

<sup>168</sup> Deming, "Two Issues or One?" 6.

beloved community" unexpectedly arose when black communities in several towns openly supported the peace walkers and embraced them with hospitality. And in one situation, a violent confrontation became an opportunity for conversation. The walkers were confronted one evening by a hostile group of young white men who, angered by the presence of a black man on the walk team, arrived at their lodgings bent on violence. The walkers were eventually able to persuade the men to talk rather than throw rocks. It was Deming's strong feeling that

these men listened to us as they did, on the subject of peace, just *because* Robert Gore was travelling with us. It made it more difficult for them to listen, of course; it made the talk more painful; but it also snatched it from the realm of the merely abstract. For the issue of war and peace remains fundamentally the issue of whether or not one is going to be willing to respect one's fellow man.<sup>169</sup>

Experiences like these affirmed for Deming that the benefits of linking peace with civil rights were worth the risks. Her comment also reveals the impulse of radical pacifists to use the issue of black freedom as a way to explain the issue of disarmament in concrete terms. Radical pacifists often seemed unaware of the fact that they were drawn to support racial integration not only for moral reasons but for practical ones also; the chief one was the credibility and enlarged audience their support for civil rights gave them in trying to build support for the peace movement. This radical pacifist impulse to use the integration issue in the service of the peace issue raises a question that was not articulated by Deming in 1962: how could radical pacifists build genuine alliances with the civil rights movement if they ultimately viewed peace as their main issue? While the strategic choices of the two movements did not conflict in the early 1960s, the

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<sup>169</sup> Deming, "Two Issues or One?" 10.

political opportunities and challenges that emerged by mid-decade would make it even more difficult to build alliances between the peace and black freedom movements.

The Quebec-Washington-Guantanamo Walk for Peace, also organized by CNVA, offered further opportunities for *Liberation* to reflect on the challenges of linking peace and black freedom. Participants of the twenty seven hundred mile walk began in Quebec City in May 1963 with the intention of walking all the way to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In undertaking the Walk the activists aimed to

deepen their own understanding of nonviolence, strengthen the forces of peace and good will along the route, challenge the willingness of many Americans to risk nuclear annihilation in order to regain U.S. control of Cuba, and win sufficient respect from Cuba itself to gain admission to that besieged and understandably suspicious island.<sup>170</sup>

As in the previous walk the main purpose of the project was promoting a peace agenda; however, the planners of the interracial walk clearly anticipated engaging once again with the integration issue in the South. They planned the route to include several key centres of the integration movement such as Albany and Atlanta, Georgia, carried "Freedom Now" signs along with their peace signs, handed out leaflets advocating both disarmament and integration, and attended meetings of the integration movement. Throughout the walk, which continued for over a year, the walkers experienced the full range of reactions from welcome and support to verbal threats and physical attacks. In the South they were arrested and jailed several times for refusing to comply with segregationist town ordinances that were enforced to prevent the walkers from leafleting or walking in black communities. *Liberation* published their report on a particularly harrowing incident of police brutality in the town of Griffin, Georgia where the

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<sup>170</sup> "Quebec to Guantanamo March," *Liberation* 8, no. 1 (March 1963): 4-5.

walkers were arrested for attempting to distribute leaflets in a black residential district at the edge of town. When many of walkers practiced noncooperation with their arrest by sitting down, police officers burned them with electric cattle prodders.<sup>171</sup> The heightened risks faced by the walkers in Georgia prompted several to reconsider their commitment. Six of the twenty-two walkers departed the project at this point. Dave Dellinger, who spent ten days with the Walk, reported the comment of one departing walker: "I am willing to face death for my views on peace, but I am not prepared to die just yet for insisting on my right to walk through the towns of Georgia with Negroes and carrying signs against racial discrimination."<sup>172</sup> For at least a few of the walkers, advocacy of black rights was secondary to their peace advocacy.

Yet the ones who stayed with the project became more engaged with the civil rights struggle. Some weeks later the peace walkers engaged in a protracted nonviolent struggle with the City of Albany, Georgia. Albany had gained a reputation as a segregationist stronghold since 1961, when the white power structure had successfully blocked the mass nonviolent integration campaign of the Albany Movement. The interracial peace team was arrested for trying to walk through the downtown shopping district against the orders of the city authorities. This district was also off-limits to integration demonstrations; what was at stake appeared to be the city's attempt to suppress civil rights activity.<sup>173</sup> Upon their first arrest twenty-two walkers were jailed for over three weeks in the

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<sup>171</sup> The Quebec-Washington-Guantanamo Walkers, "Nonviolence and Police Brutality: A Document," *Liberation* 8 no. 10 (December 1963): 9-17.

<sup>172</sup> Reported in Dave Dellinger, "Ten Days with the Cuba Walk," *Liberation* 8, no. 11 (January 1964): 5.

<sup>173</sup> Bradford Lyttle, "Walk Leader Describes Albany's Police State," *Liberation* 8, no. 12 (February 1964): 6-8.

filthy and overcrowded Albany prison. Most of them engaged in a hunger strike until their release. Eleven days after their release, they once again challenged the ordinance forbidding demonstrations and parades in the shopping district by trying to continue their walk through the area; seventeen walkers were again arrested and jailed, and many began a second hunger strike that lasted the twenty-six days of their incarceration. Meanwhile, other walkers and supporters set up an office in Albany, writing news releases and communiqués, speaking with local community leaders, negotiating with city officials and coordinating support for the walkers. Through the negotiations of these activists (among them Dellinger and Muste), a compromise agreement was reached in which Albany authorities agreed to release all the walkers and allow an integrated group of five walkers to walk through the forbidden area.<sup>174</sup>

The Albany action brought the radical pacifists of the Walk to a new level of involvement in civil rights activity. Comments by Walk coordinator Bradford Lyttle prior to the second civil disobedience action offer some insight into the motivation and mood of the walkers who undertook these actions:

Why risk your health and life to walk through downtown Albany? For those of us who probably will go to prison, the answer is that we believe we owe it to the struggle against racial injustice to do so. The horrible evil for which Albany has become a symbol is intolerable and must be ended even at great cost. If God, fate, or the science of nonviolence permits truth to win, we shall have shown that Albany's hitherto invincible system of oppression has a flaw: that a few people willing and able to couple prolonged, deliberately accepted suffering with an efficient medium of public communication and interpretation can generate enough sympathy in the hearts of their opponents and enough public support to make this carefully constructed machinery of oppression ineffective. The achievement of this in Albany would help the Negro people here—and the white too, by freeing them partly from the bonds of an inhuman system. But its larger implications may be even more important, for we

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<sup>174</sup> Ralph DiGia, "Cuba Walkers Win Major Concessions From Ga. Officials," *Liberation* 9, no. 1 (March 1964): 6-7.

will have created a technique of nonviolent struggle that can be used by others in other cities.<sup>175</sup>

Lyttle went on to emphasize that experiments in nonviolent struggle were important and necessary if the world was to discover alternatives to Cold War militarism. He also noted that the Albany struggle was a demonstration to the Cuban people and government of the peace walkers' opposition to U.S. racism and commitment to civil liberties, which he hoped would "win their deep respect and increase the likelihood that we will be welcomed in Cuba even if we maintain a critical attitude towards some policies of the Cuban government."<sup>176</sup> Significantly, while Lyttle framed the Albany struggle as important in terms of the struggle for peace, it is clear that he viewed its significance for the black freedom movement as important on its own terms. This was a subtle yet notable shift in emphasis from earlier Walk statements, no doubt forged by the intensity of their engagement with the racist system of law and order in Albany.

*Liberation* editors A.J. Muste and Dave Dellinger were both laudatory and critical of the peace walkers' actions. Muste noted that both supporters and opponents of the Walk raised questions about the necessity of using such tactics as prolonged hunger strikes. Muste himself was somewhat equivocal about the practice of noncooperation, suggesting that the moral power generated by fasting needed to be considered in the context of the particular political situation at hand. Given Albany's entrenched system of racial discrimination and its "utterly arbitrary and tyrannical method of enforcing it," Muste concluded that the peace walkers' approach of total noncooperation was warranted. Even so, he thought mistakes had been made, the principal one being that the Walkers had not

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<sup>175</sup> Lyttle, "Walk Leader Describes Albany's Police State," 8.

<sup>176</sup> Lyttle, "Walk Leader Describes Albany's Police State," 8.

sufficiently researched the local conditions nor made contacts in black and white communities prior to arriving in the city. But Muste reflected that in the end, the concessions won by the walkers' struggle appeared to be a "modest breakthrough" for the Albany civil rights movement. On the day of the peace walkers' release from prison, civil rights activists working on a voter registration campaign carried out a picket in the forbidden district, and, for the first time, were not arrested.<sup>177</sup> Dellinger also celebrated the achievement and the tenacity to the peace walkers. But he stressed that uncompromising action and moral conviction were not enough by themselves; such action needed to be accompanied by serious efforts to understand the sensitivities of the situation and to build trust with potential allies as well as opponents.<sup>178</sup> In Dellinger's view, some of the young white peace walkers showed themselves to be quite insensitive to the dynamics of racial oppression:

Once, during the brief period I was in jail, I woke up from a nap to hear a conversation between one of the white walkers, in an adjoining cell, and C. B. King, visiting Negro attorney, which made me wonder at first if I were not having a nightmare. The walker was saying: "The greatest evil in Albany is the Air Force base. Militarism threatens far more people than segregation." Statistically, no doubt he was correct. But, as King pointed out, "When you are down in a ditch with someone's foot on your neck, you can't respond to some other evil the same way you might if you were free. You are more apt to say, 'Help me get this man's foot off my neck, and then we can face up to the other evil together.'"<sup>179</sup>

The need for humility and understanding, Dellinger stressed, was necessary not only with respect to the black community and the integration movement but also with respect to the white community. He asserted that it was only when efforts

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<sup>177</sup> A.J. Muste, "The Meaning of Albany: A Modest Breakthrough," *Liberation* 9, no. 2 (April 1964):

<sup>178</sup> Dave Dellinger, "A Plea for Understanding," *Liberation* 9, no. 2 (April 1964): 22-3.

<sup>179</sup> Dellinger, "A Plea for Understanding," 22.

were made by several peace walkers and radical pacifist negotiators to communicate understanding and openness to the views of the entire Albany community, black and white, did a real breakthrough in the impasse begin to occur; only then were black activists able to develop some confidence that the peace walkers were sincere in their desire to support the integration movement, and only then were moderate white leaders no longer able to dismiss the peace walkers' action as the work of extremist outsiders and instead forced to admit the legitimacy of their challenge to segregation. For Dellinger, both determined action and humility were required for effective nonviolent action.

Imprisoned walker Barbara Deming offered some of the most fascinating reflections on the peace walkers' prison ordeal. Her "Prison Notes," published by *Liberation* in nine parts, is an extended reflection on the psychological dynamics of the jail experience and of the practice of nonviolent noncooperation. She wrote about her experience of a system whose intent is to dehumanize the individuals it imprisons, of the unrelenting nature of the effort to break the will of the fasters, and of the walkers' efforts to maintain their humanity and goodwill under those very difficult conditions. Her reflections offer insight into the dynamics of race in the struggle. At one point, she observed that the willingness of many white peace walkers to take daring actions to challenge segregation was inspired by the attitude of one of the black participants, Ray Robinson. Deming explained that trust between Robinson and the white walkers on the team had to be built through resolute action:

Ray is an ex-prize-fighter who says he once hated white men so that "I decided to take up boxing where the world could watch and see me beat one with my hands...So now come a new thing to me that's called nonviolence and I'm trying it." But when he joined the walk in Philadelphia it was hard for him to feel much faith in the rest of us who

were white. As we've lived through all these days together, he's come more and more to trust us and to believe in the possibility of living at peace with white people, but he's easily shaken in that belief. Every time we dare to act out, ourselves, the way of life we call for, it makes it easier for him to believe. And for others too, of course. Every time we hesitate, we do him and them violence in spite of ourselves.<sup>180</sup>

Deming also described the painstaking process of building trust with black leaders in the Albany Movement. She admitted that in the beginning, many of the walkers had assumed that they would receive a warm welcome from Movement people, and that black activists would embrace the opportunity to coordinate with the peace walkers' action to invigorate their own civil rights activities. Instead, wariness and skepticism greeted them. The Albany Movement had suffered many setbacks in recent months, including being prosecuted by the federal government for starting a boycott; many in the black community were quite wary of the peace walkers' motives. Deming's description of the walkers' relations with C. B. King, the black attorney representing them, speaks particularly to this initial wariness and Deming's consciousness of the social barriers of race. During the walkers' first prison term, Deming was working outside to support the peace walkers. Before their trial she needed to call King to ask him some questions:

This was Sunday; the trial was set for Tuesday; C.B. could sometimes vanish for a day to appear at court in another town. Afraid of missing him if I waited to call him at his office the next morning, I called him at his home. In a voice that was quiet and courteous and cool, he told me that he did like to reserve Sunday as a day to spend with his family. Again I felt with a pang; perhaps he thinks: she wouldn't have disturbed a white attorney.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Barbara Deming, "Prison Notes (part 6)," *Liberation* 10, no. 3 (May 1965): 23.

<sup>181</sup> Barbara Deming, "Prison Notes (part 8)," *Liberation* 10, no. 8 (November 1965): 29.

But later, some weeks into the second prison term, Deming noted “the constraint there has been between us...has at last dissolved.” She did not elaborate on the reasons for the change, simply observing that “C.B.” arrived to visit them in the prison, uncharacteristically, on a Sunday morning:

He was dressed as I had never seen him, in the slacks and loose shirt and slippers he wore about the house...All the panic I had felt in the past about what he might think, feel, doubt, subsided as he stood there. His words were as usual lightly teasing, but his look put no distance between us. I thought: at last you don't mind our seeing you without a mask. I stared at his face as though I had never seen it before. It seemed suddenly rounder than I had thought it to be, and softer in outline. I thought: now I dare look at you, too.<sup>182</sup>

The development of trust in this relationship between King and the walkers was perhaps symbolic of the growth of trust between the walkers and the Albany Movement. The extent to which some of the peace walkers had become sensitized to the integration struggle and built relationships with civil rights activists is demonstrated by the fact that a group of walkers decided to stay in Albany to continue working with the civil rights struggle instead of continuing on to Miami.<sup>183</sup> For these walkers, black freedom had clearly become much more than a “secondary” issue. As Marian Mollin has pointed out, the notable feature of the Albany protests was “not that radical pacifists faced obstacles in trying to make connections with the local freedom struggle but that they were able to foster any connection at all.”<sup>184</sup> Deming’s reflections demonstrate that an alliance between the peace and freedom movements could not be assumed, but yet it was possible for white radical pacifists, with dedicated effort, sensitivity, and a willingness to learn, to build relationships with civil rights activists.

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<sup>182</sup> Deming, “Prison Notes (part 8),” 29.

<sup>183</sup> G. Christiansen, “The Spirit of Freedom,” *Liberation* 9, no. 8 (November 1964): 29.

<sup>184</sup> Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 148-9.

While peace walkers worked to build bridges between peace and freedom in Albany, *Liberation* editors expressed hope that a peace and freedom alliance would emerge at the national level. The enactment of the Civil Rights Bill in mid 1964 marked a significant victory for the civil rights movement. *Liberation* writers celebrated the success but were quick to note that it was only a first step and to urge the movement to continue its drive for more far-reaching changes. They argued that the problems of black poverty, unemployment, and discrimination in housing and education could not be remedied by civil rights legislation alone; these were issues that required broader changes in social policy. As Rustin noted, "The historical significance of the struggle over the civil-rights bill may turn out to be not the passage of the bill itself, which is woefully inadequate, but the destruction of the political alliance that has throttled the democratic process in the Senate."<sup>185</sup> Thus this was a "crucial time" for the movement, he argued. Nonviolent action had initiated significant developments in U.S. society by making racial oppression and poverty visible, creating awareness of the inadequacy of the education system and undemocratic nature of the political system, and inspiring radical activism on colleges campuses and social justice advocacy in religious communities. "Will the Negro continue to press on for justice by means that are consistent with his goals, despite the frustrations attendant upon his failure up till now to win large-scale tangible victories?"<sup>186</sup> Rustin reiterated his conviction that a nonviolent, broad-based coalition of progressive forces would be necessary to attain such victories that would bring social justice for blacks as well as for other oppressed groups. Sidney Lens

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<sup>185</sup> Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence in Perspective," *Liberation* 9, no. 4 (June-July 1964): 6.

<sup>186</sup> Rustin, "Nonviolence in Perspective," 6.

echoed his call for continued militancy and a broad-based coalition. The civil rights bill was an important victory, but “civil rights, vitally necessary though they are, are not an end in themselves, but a beginning towards the good society in which man will really be equal—economically and socially *as well as* politically.”<sup>187</sup> He urged that the three movements for freedom, jobs, and peace be “integrated” in the pursuit of this goal.

*Liberation’s* hopes for a broad, militant, and radical movement coalition were soon discouraged by changes in the political climate that gripped the nation in the months preceding the 1964 federal election. The nomination of Senator Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential challenger to President Lyndon Johnson introduced a new political dynamic that would produce significant political realignments in the civil rights movement. Muste observed that the tentative growth of a national liberal consensus supporting the need to expand the welfare state and limit Cold War militarism was directly challenged by the appearance of Goldwater and his supporters, who advocated a return to a more aggressive anticommunist foreign policy and opposed Johnson’s social welfare and civil rights legislation.<sup>188</sup> For Muste, Goldwater’s popularity and the emergence of polarization in U.S. politics was no surprise. It occurred because

fundamental problems can no longer be evaded and are being posed before the American people; forces for change are in motion. The most obvious of these forces is the Negro people and their struggle for “Freedom Now.” When a revolutionary or potentially revolutionary force gets into motion, a counter-revolutionary effort emerges.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Sidney Lens, “The Lesson of Labor,” *Liberation* 9, no. 5 (August 1964): 4.

<sup>188</sup> A.J. Muste, “Because Joe McCarthy Lived,” *Liberation* 9, no. 5 (August 1964): 5-6.

<sup>189</sup> Muste, “Because Joe McCarthy Lived,” 6.

Muste's perspective offers an astute counterpoint to claims made by some 1960s commentators and scholars that the Far Right movement emerged in large part as a reaction to the explosion of rioting in black urban areas in last half of the decade. Muste's comments points toward the argument that the Right's emergence and growing popularity was initiated not by white fear of black violence, but rather by the desire to maintain the status quo in the face of the black freedom movement's insistent demand for sweeping changes to the organization of U.S. social, political and economic life.

In response to the Goldwater challenge, the new focus of a large majority of civil rights and liberal-labour constituencies was support for Johnson's re-election. From *Liberation's* perspective, this shift was damaging to the prospects of building the beloved community through a mass, nonviolent, broad-based coalition effort for radical change. As Paul Goodman argued in his post-election comment, the "United Front" strategy ended up being entirely unnecessary given Johnson's sweeping victory; but serious damage had been done by widespread liberal unwillingness to critique Johnson's program and by the halting of civil rights demonstrations for fear of fuelling anti-Johnson sentiment. "It is hard to assay what damage to civil rights the interruption has caused," Goodman noted, adding presciently that "unless the victorious candidates come across in a real way, the Liberals will have a good deal to repent of."<sup>190</sup>

But the alienation of a significant portion of the civil rights movement—especially many young activists working for the Movement in Southern communities and black activists working in urban ghettos—from the white liberal establishment was under way well before the 1964 election. These activists

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<sup>190</sup> Paul Goodman, "Post-Election Test," *Liberation* 9, no. 9 (December 1964): 4.

were highly skeptical of the liberal establishment's ability to effect more than token change. The long history of inaction on civil rights by the federal government and white liberal institutions led them to view the Johnson political establishment as part of the system of white power, not a vehicle for change. Advocates of black nationalism, such as Malcolm X, were also very critical of the civil rights leaders' turn toward Johnson; they had argued for years that whites could not be trusted and that black freedom could only be achieved through black independence from all white institutions. Yet for many national civil rights leaders, the left-liberal coalition in the Democratic Party that supported the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and Johnson's Great Society social welfare initiatives represented a significant break with the previous pattern of federal inaction. Many of these leaders perceived the strategic benefit of black support for Johnson and the progressive forces in Democratic Party in order to lay the foundations for systemic long-term change that would address the socioeconomic barriers facing the majority of the black community.

At the heart of this division in the black freedom forces was a struggle to define the most effective way to address the persistent barriers of race and class in the United States, and particularly the appropriate relationship of the black movement to the white liberal power structure of the United States. *Liberation's* assessment of the choices available to the black freedom movement was heavily influenced by its critique of U.S. foreign policy. In a 1965 essay that marks a turning point in *Liberation's* commentary on the black freedom struggle, A.J. Muste outlined his perspective on the dangers of an alignment of the civil rights

movement with Johnson's political priorities.<sup>191</sup> Muste argued that the strong ties that had developed between the Johnson administration and key leaders of the civil rights movement were undermining continued militant activity and the movement's objective of meaningful black freedom. He observed that civil rights leaders' cooperation with the administration raised the problem of how the movement could maintain independence from the government's Cold War agenda. A case in point for Muste was the journey of James Farmer, national director of CORE, who traveled to Africa with the stated goals of making linkages between the civil rights movement and the new African nations, interpreting the civil rights movement to Africans and African national liberation movements to Americans, and trying to influence U.S. foreign policy in Africa. Muste pointed out that in the context of U.S. efforts to promote its Cold War agenda in Africa, Farmer's claim to being a "free agent" was suspect:

There can be no mistaking the intention to do a service to the United States and the Administration in connection with the current power struggle over Africa in Farmer's remark that twenty million American Negroes constitute a "great reservoir of goodwill" and could be used with greater effectiveness in various diplomatic posts in African countries. The same applies to the idea of offering new nations the services of trained American Negroes in a type of Peace Corps operation. It was not necessary for Farmer, after all this, to say that on his return he would present a report with recommendations to the President and the State Department, but his having said it serves to nail down the political character of his mission and indicates the extent to which the civil-rights movement, except for its left and fringe elements, is tied in with the current American regime and in no small measure its tool.<sup>192</sup>

This statement is indicative of the growing tension between those civil rights leaders like Farmer who saw potential benefit to some level of co-operation with the federal government, and radicals, like Muste, who thought such co-operation

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<sup>191</sup> A.J. Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement and the American Establishment," *Liberation* 9, no. 11 (February 1965): 7-11.

<sup>192</sup> Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement," 8.

would seriously compromise the movement's radical demands. His critique also foreshadowed the growing tensions between the civil rights movement and the radical peace movement.

Yet Muste did not ground his critique of the Johnson administration solely in his foreign policy concerns. He argued that there were multiple reasons to question the wisdom of relying on federal government support to achieve black freedom. Chief among them was the very nature of the U.S. political economy, in which democratic political institutions were rapidly becoming subordinated to the interests of "private, state-supported corporations." Borrowing from the argument of SDS leader Tom Hayden, Muste argued that in this "era of post-revolution" the corporate state had the capacity to undercut real dissent, since the political debate was no longer over actual alternatives to capitalist society but rather over "more or less welfare."<sup>193</sup> For Muste, the myriad problems of inequality and poverty in the U.S. required fundamental changes that could not be achieved by the corporate state.

However, the burden of Muste's argument against relying on federal government action to achieve black freedom was rooted in his opposition to U.S. actions on the world stage. All the evidence pointed to the U.S. operating as a counterrevolutionary force, working to suppress national liberation and radical movements around the world in order to "maintain Western economic, political and military hegemony in Asia, Africa and Latin America."<sup>194</sup> For Muste, the clearest demonstration of this agenda was the U.S. war in South Vietnam. The real source of conflict in the world, he asserted, was not conflicting ideologies but

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<sup>193</sup> Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement," 9.

<sup>194</sup> Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement," 10.

rather the growing disparity between the wealthy and powerful Western nations and the underdeveloped regions of the world. That this disparity was inextricably linked to race and the centuries-old practice of white supremacy through colonial conquest was indisputable:

I sometimes think that the gulf between the peoples who have experienced humiliation as a people and those who have not is the deepest and most significant we have to face and that contemplation of it and awareness of its meaning is the chief essential for dealing with contemporary problems. When one undertakes to do that, one comes to see that most people are on one side of that gulf and that almost alone, perhaps, on the other side are the white Americans. They could shove other people off the sidewalk in their own country and virtually anywhere else in the world; no one could shove them off the sidewalk—until recently.<sup>195</sup>

Here Muste poignantly demonstrated his heightened perception of the political economy of racism and its relationship to U.S. domestic and foreign policy. He suggested that a worldwide struggle between the white forces of the status quo and non-white forces for revolution was inevitable and that the wealthy white nations were “bound to be on the losing end of the struggle that will be waged to wipe it out.”<sup>196</sup> His rather apocalyptic view of a racial conflagration is somewhat startling in light of the global changes of recent decades, particularly the consolidation of global capitalism and the power of multinational corporations to mobilize symbols of racial difference for their own agendas. But in 1965, the growth of black freedom demands in the U.S. and radical resistance movements around the world encouraged Muste to believe that massive conflict was inevitable.

Perhaps this can help make sense of his new appreciation for the black nationalist critique of the U.S. state. Though he still disagreed with their

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<sup>195</sup> Muste, “The Civil-Rights Movement,” 10.

<sup>196</sup> Muste, “The Civil-Rights Movement,” 10.

advocacy of violence, Muste emphasized that black nationalists were quite accurate in their assessment of the corrupt and exploitative nature of the U.S. regime and argued that the nonviolent civil rights advocates needed to take seriously their direct challenge to the pro-government tendency of much of the civil rights movement. Black nationalist critiques raised important questions about the civil rights movement's advocacy of nonviolence and its stated goal of ending racial subjugation. In the case of the former, Muste asked "How can the leaders of a movement which is based on nonviolence associate themselves, tacitly or openly, with the nuclear build-up of this Administration or the war in South Vietnam?"<sup>197</sup> On issue of black freedom, he proposed that a freedom movement must not differentiate between freedom at home and freedom in the rest of the world. Given the U.S. government's role in obstructing liberation movements around the globe, Muste argued that the civil rights movement could not avoid the implications of the U.S. Cold War agenda in its pursuit of domestic social reform.<sup>198</sup>

A heated debate over movement strategy that erupted in the pages of *Liberation* in 1965 clearly demonstrates the tension between radical pacifists' peace concerns and civil rights leaders' cooperation with Administration priorities in the context of the U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War. This debate offers a window into the difficult choices facing radical pacifists as they attempted to advocate both peace and freedom by nonviolent means in this era. The catalyst for the debate was the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam held on April 17, 1965. Organized by Students for a Democratic Society

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<sup>197</sup> Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement," 11.

<sup>198</sup> Muste, "The Civil-Rights Movement," 11.

(SDS) and endorsed by a variety of leftist and peace groups, the March criticized the Johnson administration's policy in Vietnam as immoral, self-defeating and dangerous.<sup>199</sup> Prior to the March a group of national peace leaders, including *Liberation* editors Bayard Rustin and A.J. Muste, were concerned about the anti-American tone of the March and the participation of several Communist groups. They issued a statement to register their concern about the necessity of an independent peace movement "not committed to any form of totalitarianism or drawing inspiration from the foreign policy of any government."<sup>200</sup> This statement sparked a debate over the strategic choices involved in working for nonviolent radical change. Dave Dellinger defended SDS's policy of non-exclusion and the importance of the March's direct attacks on U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam. Dellinger argued that the speeches at the March were "forthright and realistic" in their criticism of American policies in Vietnam. Nonetheless he admitted that the criticisms of his long-time radical pacifist colleagues called attention to the need for ongoing consideration of the problem of how the antiwar movement should relate to guerrilla liberation movements and the fact that "the believer in revolutionary nonviolence faces many difficult decisions in trying to be both adequately revolutionary and genuinely nonviolent."<sup>201</sup>

But Dellinger's critique extended even further, to include a comment on the civil rights movement. He pointedly commented that he had found the March on Washington "even more inspiring" than the 1963 March on

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<sup>199</sup> Students for a Democratic Society, "A Call to All Students to March on Washington Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> to End the War in Vietnam," *Liberation* 10, no. 1 (March 1965): 46.

<sup>200</sup> Dave Dellinger, "The March on Washington and Its Critics," *Liberation* 10, no. 3 (May 1965): 7.

<sup>201</sup> Dellinger, "The March on Washington and Its Critics," 31.

Washington for Jobs and Freedom because it had successfully resisted pressures to dampen criticism of the federal government:

On that occasion [of the 1963 March] the tremendous turnout and marvelous spirit of blacks and whites of all ages and classes were deeply moving, but the top-level response to external pressures muted direct criticisms of the Kennedy administration and paved the way for an unhealthy alliance of the civil-rights leadership with the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic administration, that has troubled and confused the movement ever since.<sup>202</sup>

Dellinger noted that he was discouraged by “the equivocations and divided loyalties of some peace leaders tragically compromised by their devotion to a liberal-labor-Negro coalition within the Democratic Party.”<sup>203</sup> This comment was a reference to the strategy advocated by Bayard Rustin in his February 1965 article, “From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement” published in *Commentary*.<sup>204</sup> In this article Rustin argued that the civil rights movement needed to move from a protest movement to a political movement in order to address the socioeconomic issues that were the key to improving the lives of black people. While direct action techniques—sit-ins and Freedom Rides—had successfully brought down legalized Jim Crow, political action within the Democratic Party was necessary to bring about change on issues of poverty, unemployment, housing and education. For Rustin, addressing the growing socioeconomic gap between blacks and whites was the most important challenge facing the movement. “The very decade which has witnessed the decline of legal Jim Crow has also seen the rise of *de facto* segregation in our most fundamental socioeconomic institutions” he noted. He saw the widening gap in

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<sup>202</sup> Dellinger, “The March on Washington and Its Critics,” 6.

<sup>203</sup> Dellinger, “The March on Washington and Its Critics,” 6.

<sup>204</sup> Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 111-22.

employment rates and income between blacks and whites, the growth of racial slums and *de facto* segregated schools, as problems that would only intensify in the context of a “technological revolution which is altering the fundamental structure of the labor force, destroying unskilled and semi-skilled jobs—jobs in which Negroes are disproportionately concentrated.”<sup>205</sup> Rustin argued that federal government action was necessary to address this crisis. He argued that the black movement would need to enter into coalition with progressive segments of the white community to build a political majority in the Democratic Party that could bring about the necessary far-reaching changes. He directly challenged moderates who argued that change on such a large scale would be impossible; and he also challenged those he termed the “moralists” of the movement who, he argued, substituted “militancy” for a viable strategy to achieve change. These radicals “seek to change white hearts—by traumatizing them. Frequently abetted by white self-flagellants, they may gleefully applaud (though not really agreeing with) Malcolm X because, while they admit he has no program, they think he can frighten white people into doing the right thing.”<sup>206</sup> Rustin argued that the real enemies of black freedom were not, as radicals suggested, white liberals but rather the opponents of civil rights and social welfare policies who had coalesced around the Goldwater presidential nomination. He saw the Johnson landslide victory in the 1964 election as a political opportunity for the civil rights movement to play an important role in building a left-liberal majority coalition capable of bringing about fundamental change.

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<sup>205</sup> Rustin, “From Protest to Politics,” 114.

<sup>206</sup> Rustin, “From Protest to Politics,” 117.

Rustin's advocacy of coalition politics was not new. He had for years argued that satisfying the freedom demands of the black people in the United States would require fundamental social changes that could only be brought about through a broad political coalition. His interest—and talent—for building such a coalition was clearly demonstrated in the 1963 March on Washington that successfully brought together a wide spectrum of the black community with white liberal, labour, and religious organizations. At the heart of his perspective was a belief in the potential of this coalition to bring about a social democracy in the United States.

For Staughton Lynd, however, the most notable feature of Rustin's argument for coalition politics, when viewed in light of his prominent role in the peace leaders' statement criticizing the April 17 SDS March, was its implication that criticism of Johnson's foreign policy should be curtailed. In "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" Lynd criticized Rustin's strategic proposal for the direction of the civil rights movement on two points.<sup>207</sup> First, Rustin's coalition politics "turns out to mean implicit acceptance of Administration foreign policy, to be coalition with the marines."<sup>208</sup> For Lynd, Rustin had essentially sold out to the White House in order to achieve domestic reforms:

Coalitionism, then, is pro-Americanism...It is a posture which subordinates foreign to domestic politics, which mutes criticism of American imperialism so as to keep open its channels to the White House, which tacitly assumes that no major war will occur. But war is occurring in Vietnam, major enough for the innocent people which it has killed. How can one reconcile virtual silence on Vietnam with the screams of Vietnamese women and children?<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Staughton Lynd, "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" *Liberation* 10, no. 4 (June-July 1965): 18-21.

<sup>208</sup> Lynd, "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" 18.

<sup>209</sup> Lynd, "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" 19.

While this critique had surfaced less directly in the earlier commentaries of both Muste and Dellinger, Lynd did not mince words with his pointed accusation. Lynd's second objection to Rustin's coalition politics was rooted in his concern for participatory democracy. He argued that the kind of political coalition Rustin proposed implied "a kind of elitism," a political approach "in which rank-and-file persons would cease to act on their own behalf."<sup>210</sup> Lynd emphasized that that role played by Rustin and other civil rights leaders at the August 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City was a turning point for many activists of SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The integrated MFDP delegation had gone to Atlantic City to challenge the seating of the white, pro-segregation Mississippi delegation on the grounds that blacks had been excluded from the political process that had elected the official delegation. When Rustin, Martin Luther King, and Roy Wilkins encouraged the MFDP to accept the compromise offer of having two MFDP delegates (rather than the entire delegation) seated, the MFDP refused. This split between the civil rights leaders and the MFDP was, for Lynd, the product of two different perspectives on the question of democracy. In Lynd's view, what was at stake for the activists at Atlantic City was the question: "Are plain people from Mississippi competent to decide?"<sup>211</sup> For Lynd, the attempt by Rustin and others to urge compromise meant that they had answered this question in the negative, thus demonstrating that they could no longer be trusted by activists who valued popular, decentralized grassroots organizing for change.

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<sup>210</sup> Lynd, "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" 18.

<sup>211</sup> Lynd, "Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution?" 19.

As an alternative to “coalition with the marines” Lynd advocated nonviolent revolution. Instead of relying on the “illusory” hope that change could be achieved through the Democratic Party, he suggested that ongoing nonviolent direct action challenges to immoral and unconstitutional U.S. actions be pursued alongside grassroots political action and the creation of alternative institutions, all in the effort to shift citizen allegiance away from the militarist agenda of the U.S. nation-state. Lynd’s argument for nonviolent direct action and decentralized organizing was based on his belief that the militarist and elitist nature of the U.S. political system would subvert all efforts to achieve radical social change through its channels. For Lynd, the actions of the federal administration in Vietnam raised fundamental questions about the state of American democracy that required citizen direct action to stimulate a national public debate.

Not all *Liberation* contributors agreed completely with Lynd’s critique. A letter signed by nineteen of Rustin’s associates protested Lynd’s personal accusation, arguing that there was a big difference between the politics Rustin was advocating and a “coalition with the marines.”<sup>212</sup> *Liberation* Associate Editor Dave McReynolds defended Rustin by pointing out that Rustin had publicly asserted his opposition to U.S. militarism and support of draft resistance by signing the Declaration of Conscience, and that the coalition he advocated included many others with serious reservations about the Johnson administration’s foreign policies. Paul Goodman noted that there are “many distinctions” to the concept of coalition. While he did see a problem with supporting an uncritical political coalition—like the one that had brought

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<sup>212</sup> Letter to the Editors, *Liberation* 10, no. 7 (October 1965): 29.

Johnson a sweeping victory in 1964 and which had given the administration a “dangerous consensus” in matters of domestic and foreign policy—he thought Rustin was proposing a useful type of coalition, essentially an effort to “bargain for legislation and for control of foundation poverty money.” Goodman argued that working for change within government and liberal institutions was a viable radical strategy so long as one refused to “cooperate” on issues of principle, like Vietnam policy. He noted that Rustin had been “less than forthright” on the question of U.S. foreign policy since the 1963 March on Washington, and speculated that “his deals have tied his own hands.”<sup>213</sup>

Bayard Rustin’s stature in the radical pacifist movement and the civil rights movement makes the debate about his new political stance a particularly interesting lens through which to analyze the tension between the radical peace movement and the civil rights movement at this historical juncture. Rustin’s decision to focus on the domestic black struggle at the expense of criticizing the U.S. war in Vietnam cannot simply be attributed to race. There were many black radicals, among them the activists of SNCC and advocates of Black Power, who believed that racism in U.S. foreign and domestic policy could not be separated, and who came out strongly against the Vietnam War. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the last several years of his life, eventually adopted a radical stand against the war as a part of a more radical critique of American democracy. Black nationalists had always had a radical critique of white power; they also took a strong stand against the war. In hindsight, Rustin perhaps underestimated the degree to which Johnson’s disastrous war policies would undermine the left-liberal consensus he hoped would bring about radical changes in the structure of

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<sup>213</sup> Paul Goodman, Letter to the Editors, *Liberation* 10, no. 8 (November 1965): 31.

U.S. society. His position in 1965 clearly demonstrates the “double bind” that, for Nikhil Pal Singh, confronts all black activists in the United States: the tension between optimistically believing in the possibilities for change within the boundaries of American democratic process, and the need to be realistic about all the ways that racial exclusion is perpetuated by that same process. Rustin—along with other black moderates—believed that the political opportunities and risks of 1965 required him to work within the U.S. political system for black freedom; too much criticism of that system (using protest strategies) was a “no-win” position. But at this particular historical moment, at the beginning of Johnson’s escalation of the war in South Vietnam, Rustin’s decision to advocate coalition with the Democratic Party had deep implications for his ability to remain a leader in the radical peace movement, and also for his ability to achieve significant gains for black citizens in the United States.

*Liberation’s* diverse responses to Rustin’s strategy for the civil rights movement demonstrates that U.S. actions in Vietnam had tightened the linkages between U.S. foreign and domestic policy for most radical pacifists. Sensitized by the black freedom struggle to see the American nation-state as deeply racist, radical pacifists attacked the U.S. war in Vietnam as a war of a white, powerful nation against a poor, non-white nation. Their heightened awareness of the role of race and class in U.S. foreign policy as well as domestic policy is particularly evident in Staughton Lynd’s call for nonviolent revolution, which essentially proposed that the radicals of the black freedom movement and peace movement should unite in challenging the Johnson administration through nonviolent direct action and the creation of participatory democratic institutions. For Lynd as for other radical pacifists, the goals of both black freedom movement and the

peace movement would be best served by a radical reconstruction of American democracy.

It is not surprising that the antiwar movement became the main focus for the radical pacifists of *Liberation* in the latter half of the decade. There were many reasons for this shift. First, radical pacifists had always viewed peace as a core priority. Second, changes in the black freedom movement meant that radical pacifists were less clear about their contribution to, and role in, the black freedom movement. As David McReynolds commented in 1965,

The years from 1955 to 1965 have been extraordinary from any viewpoint, but perhaps most extraordinary of all when viewed from the viewpoint of the pacifist. For after years of our preaching about the use of nonviolence, we saw, starting in 1955, the birth of a mass nonviolent movement for civil rights. This struggle has shaken the political fabric of the United States. Today the pacifist finds that he is largely irrelevant to the civil rights movement. The most significant thing we pacifists ever had to say, as far as civil rights goes, was that nonviolence would work. That method having been adopted, we now find ourselves either fighting as soldiers in the ranks under other leadership than our own, or standing aside and watching with awe as we see the mass application of nonviolence to domestic politics.<sup>214</sup>

Faced with the sense that the civil rights movement no longer needed their contributions—particularly at a point when strategies other than nonviolent direct action were being advocated, and white leadership in the movement was being questioned—many radical pacifists may have seen the antiwar movement as a place where they could contribute their experience and leadership skills. Finally, the third factor that influenced this shift toward the antiwar movement was the fact that the struggle against the U.S. war in Vietnam appeared to be a way to combine the struggle for peace and freedom. The radical antiwar movement was in many ways a product of the civil rights movement's

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<sup>214</sup> David McReynolds, "Transition: Personal and Political Notes," *Liberation* 10, no. 5 (August 1965): 5.

radicalizing influence on the 1960s generation. In linking the U.S. administration's war in Vietnam with the persistence of poverty and racial oppression in U.S., it presented radical pacifists with a new opportunity to link peace and freedom. Dismayed by the implications of civil rights leaders' turn toward cooperation with the liberal Democratic establishment, many radical pacifists writing for *Liberation* in 1965 began to view the emerging radical antiwar movement, not the civil rights movement, as the best vehicle for achieving nonviolent radical social change in the United States. Their debates over radical strategy in 1965, along with their attempts to foster alliances between peace and civil rights activists in the early 1960s, demonstrate that radical pacifists' efforts to link black freedom and peace in this era presented many challenges as well as opportunities for solidarity.

## Conclusion

The civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s presented new opportunities for *Liberation's* advocacy of nonviolent revolution. The emergence of nonviolent radical militancy in the Southern movement against racial segregation affirmed for radical pacifists that the method of nonviolent resistance could work on a mass scale in the United States. Their commentary in *Liberation* reveals that they were inspired by the Southern civil rights movement, and saw it as a vehicle to promote both the nonviolent method and the need for a radical reconstruction of American society. Radical pacifists had spent many years trying to promote these priorities from the margins. The emerging civil rights movement appeared to them as a particularly hopeful development in terms of its potential to radicalize the black community and its allies. They recognized that the goal of ending *de jure* segregation would not in itself achieve full equality for black Americans or transform the U.S. social order. They argued that ending racism in all its forms—cultural, socioeconomic, and political—would entail profound alterations in the assumptions and structures of culture and society. The radical pacifists of *Liberation* supported the civil rights movement's call for "freedom now" as a call for the abolition of racism in this comprehensive sense; they hoped that the black movement to abolish segregation could be a catalyst for the broader transformation of U.S. democracy and social organization.

While the black freedom movement provided radical pacifists with new opportunities for their advocacy of nonviolent revolution, it also required them to engage with the significant challenges facing the movement. Radical pacifists commented on the many external obstacles faced by the black freedom

movement in this period: the unwillingness of the federal government to take a proactive stance for civil rights, the opposition of Southern segregationists, and the reluctance of the majority of white Americans to speak out in support of black rights. Their response to these challenges typically emphasized the need for more nonviolent action in support of racial justice, particularly by those white progressives that formed the basis of *Liberation's* readership.

Along with these external challenges, radical pacifists were also confronted with growing criticism of nonviolent integration from some black activists within the movement. In an effort to clarify their own support of the nonviolent integration movement, radical pacifists took seriously the criticisms of advocates of armed self-defense who did not believe that nonviolent resistance was sufficient to achieve black freedom. Radical pacifist commentary reveals their awareness of the sensitivities of race, particularly that white radicals were in no position to counsel nonviolence to black activists. Their defense and interpretation of nonviolence as a strategy of great moral and practical power was frequently framed by an acknowledgment of the difficulties involved in trying to challenge a system of entrenched discrimination through nonviolent means, and by calls for greater militancy by both whites and blacks.

This study suggests that radical pacifists were engaged in an ongoing effort to articulate and comprehend the obstacles to their collaboration with black freedom activists. *Liberation's* reflections on radical pacifist efforts to link peace advocacy with the black freedom movement clearly demonstrate this effort. For many radical pacifists, the connections between peace and freedom seemed obvious. Barbara Deming expressed a common sentiment when she noted in 1962 that the struggles for peace and civil rights were joined by the common

concern to foster respect between peoples. Yet when radical pacifists tried to build alliances between the two movements in their peace walks through the South, they discovered that common goals and trust could not be assumed. The tendency to privilege peace in the minds of some white radical pacifists meant that they could be insensitive to the priorities of black activists concerned with the struggle for basic dignity and survival in black communities. Racial tensions and assumptions also complicated the relations between radical pacifists, most of whom were white, and black freedom activists. Yet radical pacifists also experienced unexpected solidarity and generosity from members of the black freedom movement, and discovered that patient effort and a willingness to listen could go a long way toward overcoming distrust and building understanding.

By 1965 radical pacifists' emphasis on working for the radical transformation of U.S. society using nonviolent direct action was increasingly in tension with the priorities of many civil rights leaders. The emergence of a radical antiwar movement in opposition to President Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War had significant implications for *Liberation* writers' perceptions of the linkages between peace and freedom. As civil rights leaders, including *Liberation* editor Bayard Rustin, moved toward greater cooperation with liberal and labour institutions supportive of civil rights legislation and social welfare reform in the Democratic Party, many radical pacifists increasingly questioned the wisdom of trying to work for social change in cooperation with the liberal Democratic establishment. Attempts by some civil rights leaders to soften criticism of Johnson's foreign policy provoked heated debates about radical strategy among radical pacifists writing in *Liberation*. These debates demonstrate that radical pacifists were trying to come to terms with the widening gap

between the priorities of the civil rights leadership and their own advocacy of nonviolent revolution. In search of antiwar allies in the civil rights movement, radical pacifists after 1965 began to orient toward the radicals of the black freedom movement, particularly those in SNCC. And somewhat ironically—given their strong criticism of black nationalists' advocacy of armed self-defense—radical pacifists found the black nationalist critique of white power increasingly relevant in the context of U.S. actions in Vietnam.

From 1965 until the end of the decade, most of *Liberation's* editors were drawn into active participation and leadership in the radical antiwar struggle to end the U.S. war in Vietnam. This broad antiwar movement was largely non-pacifist, drawing on a wide spectrum of students, black freedom activists, and a variety of left groups. The black freedom movement had a strong influence on the development of the antiwar movement, which connected black oppression in the U.S. with the suffering of the Vietnamese people. As a consequence of the editors' involvement in the radical antiwar struggle, the character of *Liberation* changed after 1965. It became a forum for radicals active in the broad antiwar movement, rather than a forum dominated by a small community of radical pacifists. Radical pacifists had founded *Liberation* as a forum for radical debate and dialogue. After 1965 the magazine did remain a forum for radical dialogue, but the radical pacifist perspective became more difficult to discern due to the diversity of voices appearing in its pages.

Through their engagement with the black freedom movement, radical pacifists of *Liberation* came to new understandings of the possibilities and dilemmas of advocating nonviolent resistance to achieve a radical reconstruction of the U.S. social order. In their efforts to support the black freedom movement

and build linkages between the freedom movement and their radical peace activism, radical pacifists struggled with the tensions between their priorities and those of diverse black activists working in the freedom movement in the early 1960s. They consistently tried to adapt their nonviolent revolutionary goals and methods to the changing political landscape in the United States. Between 1956 and 1965 radical pacifists looked with hope to the black freedom movement as a potential catalyst for the nonviolent radical transformation of American democracy. When many civil rights leaders shifted toward greater cooperation with the liberal establishment at the expense of foreign policy criticism in the mid 1960s, radical pacifists began to look to the radical antiwar movement as their best hope for achieving nonviolent revolution in the United States.

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