The Ties That Bind: The Mutual Identity Crises of Black and Jewish Americans in

the Late 1960s

by

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DEDICATION

To/For anyone who pushed me. Thanks. Sorry I uhh… sorry I took a while.

ABSTRACT

During the late 1960s, American Jews and black Americans went through strikingly similar situations and changes. Each minority struggled with an identity crisis that drove their attention inward to question culture and understand heritage. Both minorities also contended with controversy over racism and prejudice, both within their own ethnic communities and nationally. Furthermore, both groups experienced ideological rifts that sharply divided them in terms of politics and culture. What is even more striking, however, is that these developments were often a product of the tumultuous relationship between each other. Though it is often suggested that the two minorities were allies, I argue that the alliance, even at the best of times, was never clear-cut. This thesis examines the ways in which each group depended on the other for furthering its own purposes and, in doing so, shaped its identities in the process.

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Introduction

In August 1965 it appeared as though the Civil Rights movement had come to its dramatic finale. With the successful "march on ballot boxes" in Selma, Alabama the previous spring, Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers finally closed a crucial gap in the fight for desegregation by marking the first time a significant number of whites actively participated in a demonstration in the American South alongside blacks.[1] White and black Americans endured physical and verbal abuse together on their march from Selma to Montgomery. Between the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which allowed blacks social equality, and the Voting Rights Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson as a result of the Selma march, blacks gained the legal parity they had sought for so long. James Bevel, one of King's staffers, remarked that "the Civil Rights movement ceased to exist as soon as President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Bill."[2]

Five days after President Johnson signed the bill, however, the black community of Watts, Los Angeles erupted. Nearly a week of violence caused thirty-four deaths, some four thousand arrests, and massive amounts of property damage, primarily to white-owned businesses.[3] King went to Los Angeles to stress non-violence but discovered that his integrationist policies and focus on social acceptance meant little to the black urban

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[1] James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcom & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 217.

[2] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 219.

[3] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 218.

poor who were locked in the lowest class by a cyclical process of economic exploitation.[4]

The event propelled a change for King personally, who began to focus increasingly on

economic justice, and signalled the beginning of a new struggle that would aim to give

blacks an equal footing in their lives and communities as well as in the voting booths.[5]

King's discovery that there were "two Americas," one largely wealthy and white

and one predominantly poor and black, galvanized his activism once more. He had been

insensitive to the nature of northern racism, but now began to understand the frustration

voiced by black nationalists such as Malcolm X. He once fought to get blacks the right to

eat alongside whites; now he fought to help them be able to afford to eat. [6] It was

apparent that urban blacks were unhappy with the slow progress and seemingly empty

promises of post-war liberalism. For all that the Civil Rights movement had achieved,

life for many African Americans was just as bad as it had been. The Watts riots

symbolized both the growing frustration of many urban blacks and their unwillingness to

continue down the non-violent path. Following Watts, the previously non-violent

leadership of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) and the

Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) became increasingly intrigued by the ideas of

Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (NOI). The result was the

burgeoning of a movement that stressed a strong and positive image of blacks, one that

would not stand by while whites continued to exploit and abuse poor communities.[7]

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[4] Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics And African American Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 84-85.
[5] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 223.
[6] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 222.
[7] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 60-67.

On June 5, 1966, James Meredith, the first black student allowed to study at the University of Mississippi and a crucial figure in the Civil Rights movement, began a one-man "march against fear" in order to illustrate that blacks could walk free in the South.[8] He hoped to motivate blacks to register to vote. Walking across the state was a way to demonstrate to blacks that it was possible to walk to the courthouse and register to vote. On the second day of his march, an assailant with a shotgun seriously wounded him.[9] Shortly thereafter, members of the Civil Rights leadership met in his hospital room and decided to finish what Meredith had started. During the march the standard Civil Rights rallying cry of "freedom now" was challenged by a new chant.[10] On June 16, Stokely Carmichael, chairman of SNCC, shouted 'black power!' "from the tailgate of a truck."[11] As other members of SNCC and CORE joined in with Carmichael, it became immediately obvious that "Black Power" was not only a rallying cry but also the beginning of a new rift in the movement as a whole. By the fall of 1966 the Black Panthers had been formed and even Martin Luther King began to question the validity and effectiveness of the nonviolent integrationist movement he had fought so hard for.

Indeed, the birth of Black Power marked a tremendous turning point in the history of black American struggle. Though blacks had seemingly gained social and political equality, they now wanted to level the playing field economically and intellectually. They wanted to emphasize their blackness and foster pride in their colour and heritage.

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[8] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 61.
[9] Aram Goudsouzian, "Three Weeks in Mississippi: James Meredith, Aubrey Norvell, and the Politics of Bird Shot," *Journal of The Historical Society* 11:1 (2011), 23-24.
[10] Goudsouzian, "Three Weeks in Mississippi," 23.
[11] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 227.

They also wanted to show how they could survive without the patronage of often manipulative white liberals. They wanted to improve education for their children, preferably through passionate and engaged instruction by those within their community.[12] Following in the footsteps of the Nation of Islam, they adopted a new cultural identity and celebrated their African heritage. Most important, they aimed to take back what it meant to be black; to deny white America its claims of superiority. This new movement aimed to turn old stereotypes on their heads by positively presenting blacks as strong, intelligent, powerful, and even superior.

Black Power created a rift in the Civil Rights movement that mirrored the identity crisis W.E.B. DuBois called "double consciousness."[13] "What, after all, am I?" asked DuBois in "Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both?"[14] This notion was expressed clearly by the Nation of Islam. They denounced black history or culture derived from the experiences of the United States – anything derived by a shared experience of slavery and repression – instead celebrating African heritage; few movements thus far had been capable of truly expressing a concept of "blackness" like Black Power did.[15]

Over time, the emphasis on black solidarity and strength saw many activists turn against white supporters or colleagues; such support, they felt, was paternalistic. Whereas Civil Rights protesters had once chanted "we shall overcome" some now

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[12] Jane Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait: A Critique of Black-Jewish Conflict Over Community Control of Ocean Hill-Brownsville (1967-1971)*. (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 2-3.
[13] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 3.
[14] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 3.
[15] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 11-36.

chanted "down with whitey!" Even though Carmichael and others insisted that Black

Power was non-violent, it was the sort of slogan that meant "everything to everybody."[16]

As Black Power's influence and popularity increased, so too did anxiety among white

Americans who felt genuinely, physically threatened by the protests and gatherings of

blacks. The media quickly sensationalized the movement, suggesting it was "the most

disruptive force yet in the rights movement." Though occasionally capable of illustrating

the amorphous and somewhat ambiguous nature of Black Power, the media "seemed

certain that its advocates were anti-white and promoters of violence as a means of social

change."[17] At the same time, many blacks were unaware that their chants were alienating

an ethnic community that had been a valuable friend in the fight for Civil Rights.

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Jewish Americans, fuelled by a common desire to see the end of systemic racism

in the United States, had been supporters and allies of the Civil Rights movement for

decades. Providing financial assistance, legal counsel, and feet on the ground, many

Jews put their lives on the line to help end segregation in the American South. They too

suffered a history of ostracism and violence at the hands of bigots. They had been

strongly encouraged to assimilate into American culture and keep their own heritage to

themselves. Those who joined the Civil Rights movement did so believing that a United

States that was safe for black Americans would also be safe for Jewish Americans.

Furthermore, stature of Jews in American society allowed them access to, and influence

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[16] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 228.
[17] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 228.

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within, circles few blacks had yet penetrated. So long as their goals were consistent with those of the Movement, Jewish Americans proved to be invaluable partners.

King's realization that the Movement was focused on the wrong target coincided with the beginning of a rift with its Jewish allies. Though supportive Jews believed in combating racism and bigotry, their focus was never on economics. Many Jewish Americans had enjoyed a quality of living that Southern and urban blacks could only dream of. The Movement fixed its sights on economic stratification and class conflict, it could not help but level some of its guns at those who seemed to benefit from the economic exploitation of the urban black community. To complicate matters further, Black Power encouraged blacks to cast off the paternalist assistance of whites, Jews included. As a result, Jewish Americans quickly found themselves on the receiving end of black frustration.

Since many Jews saw themselves as victims of white discrimination too, they could not understand why black activists seemed to turn on them in the late 1960s. As violence in the cities rose, so too did the destruction of Jewish-owned property. Allegations of anti-Semitic remarks from black militants in 1968 and 1969 alarmed American Jews who, after the 1967 Six Day War, and with memories of the Holocaust still fresh, were on perpetual guard against prejudice on American soil.[18]

To complicate matters further, as American blacks mulled over the crisis of black identity and resulting ideological rifts, so too did Jewish Americans. The early post-war years for American Jews are generally seen as a period of quiet assimilation. Though

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[18] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 148-151.

commentary during the post-war period varied on this score, what emerged was the impression that Jewish refugees and their relatives refrained from sharing their experiences of the Holocaust with the gentile public.[19] This dearth of discussion has been attributed to a number of factors such as war fatigue, a reluctance among North Americans to discuss mass murder after dropping atomic bombs on Japan, and, in some cases, a distrust of the survivors themselves.[20] With little reason to look inward, Jewish culture accommodated American culture and Jews became increasingly assimilated. Assimilation was fostered by a notable decline in overt anti-Semitism. Historians view the years between 1945 and the late 1960s as something of a 'Golden Period' for American Jews as they assimilated into American culture and experienced relatively little in the way of adversity.[21]

By the late 1960s, however, organized Jewish groups had begun to rally for a renewal of Jewish identity. Many Jews, feeling that assimilation had gone too far, sought to re-focus on Jewish culture and, particularly, the experiences of the Holocaust. The publication of *Diary of Anne Frank* in 1959 exposed the Holocaust to Americans as never before. Jews began to ask questions about themselves. What did it mean to be Jewish? What would be the toll of assimilation? What did the Holocaust mean for Jews moving forward? Furthermore, the Eichmann trial of 1961 brought the topic of the Holocaust and Nazi war criminals back into the public eye. Eichmann's execution in 1962 gave Jews

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[19] Hasia Diner, "Post-World War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," *American Jewish History*. Vol.91 (2003): 439-467.

[20] Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 57-67.

[21] Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 150-174.

around the world a sense that justice had been served by an autonomous, powerful, and moral state of Israel.[22]

Most important, the Six Day War of 1967 was a major catalyst for Holocaust awareness among Jews everywhere. The Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, hoping to pressure and weaken Israel with blockades, an arms race, and the threat of a multi-front war, sought a victory without resorting to war. Israeli leader Levi Eshkol, however, considered a pre-emptive strike against the massing Arab forces to be a necessity in the face of aggression. Though Israel was victorious in the engagement and also managed to expand its territory, many Jews saw the event as a stark reminder that anti-Semitism was an ever-present concern and that Jews might never be safe from another Holocaust. Jews began to speak about an enduring existential threat following the Six Day War.[23]

These developments contributed to widening rifts between Jewish groups. Like black Americans in the late 1960s, Jews were increasingly divided by ideological differences.[24] Conservative and orthodox Jews attacked liberal Jews and Jewish "radicals." Those Jews who had offered support to the Civil Rights movement appeared to some to have put the well-being of blacks above that of Jews. These activists were accused of going against their own kind. Whether it was for blindly "licking the boots" of black militants or for not prioritizing Jewish interests and survival, liberal Jews were

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[22] Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 29.

[23] Diner, "Post-World War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," 439-467.

[24] It is worth nothing that this identity crisis and return to the past is seen by many scholars as being reflective of a general turn against progress and liberalism in the late 1960's.

forced on the defensive.[25] Meanwhile, liberal Jews faced growing criticism from the blacks they supported, who accused them of being condescending and patronizing. Liberal Jews had difficulty understanding why black groups no longer wanted Jewish help; they were offended by the indignant attitude of blacks.[26]

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During the late 1960s, American Jews and black Americans went through strikingly similar situations and changes. Each minority struggled with an identity crisis that drove their attention inward to question culture and understand heritage. Both minorities also contended with controversy over racism and prejudice, both within their own ethnic communities and nationally. Furthermore, both groups were riven by ideological rifts that sharply divided them in terms of politics and culture. What is even more striking, however, is that these developments were often a product of the tumultuous relationship between Jews and blacks. Both groups were minorities that suffered racism and prejudice, and both were simultaneously at odds with, and in support of, each other.

Even a brief summary of conflict between the groups can illustrate how they became so intertwined by the late 1960s. The Six Day War, for example, was one of the first events about which the comments of black nationalists raised serious concerns in Jewish communities. In 1959, Malcolm X met with Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser to foster positive relations between black Americans and Arab Muslims. The trip

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[25] Joel Carmichael, in *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America,* ed. Schlomo Katz (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 1-2.
[26] Ben Halpern in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America,* 65-66.

symbolized the solidarity of the Nation of Islam with its eastern Islamic brothers.[27] By 1967 black Muslim leaders strenuously encouraged solidarity between black and Arab Muslims; and black nationalists spoke out against what they regarded as Israeli imperialism. Their anti-Zionist statements were seen by many Jews as little more than anti-Semitism.[28]

Adding further fuel to the fire was a passionate dispute over public schools in the New York community of Ocean-Hill Brownsville. Throughout 1968, this was the front line of the national debate about desegregation of schools; and it produced a direct and well-publicized confrontation between the two groups.[29] The black community, frustrated with the slow pace and uneven implementation of integration, the steady closing of public schools, and the superior condition of schools in white neighbourhoods, sought to acquire more community control over the education system of the Ocean-Hill Brownsville neighbourhood. The city facilitated the formation of an experimental community-run advisory board, which eventually fired a number of Jewish teachers in order to make room for more programs in African-American culture.[30] During the controversy that followed an anti-Semitic flyer appeared that referred to Jews as "Middle East Murderers

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[27] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 163.

[28] It is also worth noting that, while a number of conservative Jewish scholars like Lucy Dawidowicz would disagree, taking issue with Israeli politics and the policies of Zionism is not, for our purposes, tantamount to anti-Semitism. Black intellectual Harold Cruse talked about the frustration of criticizing Jews throughout his experience in communist parties and expressed his anger at being called an anti-Semite when he merely disagreed with those he was talking to. Malcolm X also spoke out against Zionism and was painted as being anti-Semitic. Even today, scholars and politicians are frustrated by the idea that they have to tread lightly on the subject of Israeli politics lest they be accused of being anti-Semitic.

[29] Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait*, 4-5.

[30] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 212-213.

of Coloured People" and ordered Jews to leave their community.[31] To make matters

worse, the student of a teacher who was a militant Black Power advocate wrote a

blatantly anti-Semitic poem that was broadcast over local radio station WBAI by Julius

Lester on his show *The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. The poem, soon touted by

the Anti-Defamation League as proof of existing anti-Semitism,[32] lambasted "Jew boys"

for preaching tolerance and advertising their own history of suffering while ignoring the

plight of and perpetuating racism against African Americans.[33]

The constituents of these respective minorities responded to this rising tension in

different ways. Nonviolent integrationists tended to be confused by the falling out. The

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), for example,

even had some Jewish leaders. The NAACP, indeed, was partly founded by American

Jews and had relied, for decades, on the support of Jewish Americans. Liberal and radical

Jews were key allies of the Civil Rights Movement from the beginning, taking part in

Freedom Rides and protests and fighting for equality for Jews as well as blacks. On the

other hand, more nationalistic blacks saw the participation of Jews in their struggle as a

sign of white control and paternalism. They rejected all symbols of white authority,

Jewish or not. Conversely, many blacks had no ill feelings towards Jews and considered

them to be valuable allies in the struggle for Civil Rights.

Furthermore, some Jews pointed to what they saw as a history of helping blacks

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[31] Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait*, 81.
[32] Julius Lester, "A Response," in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism,* ed. Nat Hentoff (New York: Richard W. Baron, 1969), 235.
[33] Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait*, 89-90.

where other whites had not.[34] Some prominent Jewish figures, such as Norman

Podhoretz, were appalled at what seemed to be new attitudes among blacks since, in their

eyes, Jews had always been just as disadvantaged as blacks but were now lambasted for

beginning to do well for themselves.[35] Others were less surprised. Some Jewish

intellectuals thought that black anti-Semitism was easily explained because black

Americans were largely Christian and Christians were prone to anti-Semitism.[36] Even

members of the Nation of Islam (NOI) were not exempt from this analysis, as Malcolm X

frequently quoted the Bible in his speeches and the type of Islam taught by the NOI was

based not only on the Quran, as James H. Cone argues, but also on the Bible and on

existing traditions of Christianity.[37] Though the emphasis actually placed on the idea

varied, it is significant that anti-Semitism was, sometimes, considered deeply rooted in a

people who had suffered prejudice for as long as they had been American.

If there is a persistent theme emerging from these examples, it is that there were a

variety of organizations involved in black-Jewish relations in the late sixties that had very

little understanding of their minority counterparts. Wherever there was a community of

blacks accusing Jews of exploiting them economically, there was a community of Jews

arguing that blacks burned down Jewish stores during a riot only because they were

Jewish. Even though the communities had all experienced crisis, racism, and

segregation, none of the organizations involved - Black Power groups, the NAACP,

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[34] Rabbi Jay Kaufman, " 'Thou Shalt Surely Rebuke Thy Neighbour,'" in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 44-53.

[35] Norman Podhoretz, "My Negro Problem – And Ours," *Commentary* 35 Feb (1963): 93.

[36] Arthur A. Cohen in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 8.

[37] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 161.

Jewish intellectuals and community leaders, the Anti-Defamation League – fully understood what they represented to the other.

For example, Jewish writer Paul Jacobs, writing in Schlomo Katz's 1967 book *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in North America,* interviewed a handful of black women from the same neighbourhood. These women explained to Jacobs that Jews exploited them financially by manipulating them into buying things they did not need on credit. They told him that they could see the difference between whites and Jews. However, when he revealed to them that he was Jewish they did not believe him because he was not what they knew Jews to be.[38] Jacobs argued that all a poorer black community with little education knew about Jews was that the merchant who was taking their money was Jewish. They did not know anything about Jewish culture or Jewish traditions and they extrapolated their understanding across the whole of the Jewish population.

Harry Golden, prominent Jewish author, reporter, publisher of *The Carolina Israelite*, meanwhile, discussed the history of relations between Jewish merchants and blacks in a different light, suggesting that the only reason Jewish stores were attacked in riots was because they were considered to be *white*. He argued that Jews treated blacks better than whites throughout their history and provided examples of Jewish shop owners giving loans to help the community, or Jewish lawyers providing legal advice when no white would be caught dead doing so.[39] He also pointed out that since whites tended not to sell to blacks, black aggression against Jewish stores was actually black aggression

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[38]   Paul Jacobs in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 76-79.
[39]   Harry Golden in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 59-62.

against white stores.

It is clear that the ill feelings between African and Jewish Americans came at a time when Jews were especially susceptible to criticism. The Jewish identity crisis and the increasing preoccupation with the Holocaust made Jews particularly sensitive to the spectre of anti-Semitism in the United States. At the same time, black Americans struggled to put themselves on an equal footing with, at the very least, other American minorities. While many Jews felt it was their moral responsibility to fight for those who were openly discriminated against, other Jews believed that if they had been able to do well for themselves in America, then blacks could do so also.

This 'if we can do it, why can't they?' attitude was subject to serious criticism from blacks and liberal Jews alike. Because Jews *look* white, commentators observed, they enjoyed an enormous advantage in assimilating to white society. Critics pointed out that Jews came to the United States as immigrants on their own accord. They came with their culture and traditions intact, while blacks came to the country as slaves and were forced into a culture that was not their own. When blacks appealed to slavery to justify their entitlement to special consideration among America's minorities, however, the Holocaust was often invoked as the great tragedy that the Jews had to overcome.[40]

The commentary of the time from the years prior to the late sixties informed ill feelings between the two groups. *Commentary* editor-in-chief Norman Podhoretz's 1963 article "My Negro Problem and Ours" discussed his childhood in a poor New York neighborhood. He discussed being jealous of the freewheeling attitudes of the local black

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[40] Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait*, 90.

kids, and reminisced about fights with them. He candidly admitted to hating black people for claiming to be more disadvantaged when he felt he was just as or more disadvantaged than they were.

Conversely, black academic and social critic Harold Cruse, in his 1969 response to Podhoretz, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs", discussed his time as a young militant in the Communist Party. The influential black scholar and lecturer on African-American studies at the University of Michigan spoke of black militants within the party casting aside their white (and in this case Jewish) leadership to form their own group. When the black militants made the split, Cruse recalled, the leadership informed them that they were unqualified because it was white militants who brought communism to them in the first place. Cruse explained that in intellectual circles he always felt as though he was supposed to feel like a beneficiary of a kind of intellectual imperialism by which Jewish whites brought knowledge to blacks. Cruse also expressed his frustration at Jews who accused him of anti-Semitism simply because he disagreed with them. It is clear, then, that even during periods of well-intentioned interaction between these groups, whatever friendship or alliance existed was often tenuous. The reflections of men like Podhoretz and Cruse give the impression that, although each side respected the other, both were jealous and frustrated by elements of the others' experiences and aspirations.

What we have, then, is a complicated set of relationships between multiple factions of two ethnic groups, both at odds with each other and reliant on each other, who shared similar ideological rifts and crises. This thesis examines the ways in which each group depended on the other for furthering its own purposes. Though it is often suggested that the two minorities were allies, I argue that the alliance, even at the best of

times, was never clear-cut. In the case of conservative Jews, the threat of anti-Semitism posed by black nationalism triggered an inward turn, away from assimilation and toward support for Israel, Zionism, and a more assertive American Jewry. In the case of black militants it meant that there could be a more accessible and, in light of common white American views towards Jews, acceptable target for the frustration of black Americans. On the other hand, for Jews everywhere a strong and militant black movement could serve as a lightning rod for racism, taking attention away from Jewish communities and deceasing anti-Semitism. Whether or not the groups were opposed to each other materially or only in their rhetoric, each of them benefited in some way from the antagonism of the other.

Literature Review

The purpose of this thesis is to closely analyze the relationships between Jewish and black Americans. Each minority group experienced an identity crisis that was, in many ways, precipitated as much by the shift from Civil Rights to a broader Freedom Movement as it was by interactions with the other. Illustrating this will involve looking closely at the years 1967 to 1969, the years when tension was at its height and when the groups had the most to gain by exploiting one another. The work of writers such as Harold Cruse, Norman Podhoretz, Lucy Dawidowicz, and James Baldwin, intellectuals and leaders from both minorities spanning several factions, will be analyzed in order to understand more fully the tense symbiotic relationship between blacks and Jews in the late 1960s. It is hoped that looking at this relationship will provide insight into the fragmentation of the remnants of the Movement. Additionally, analysis of this

relationship will provide insight on the impact of Black Power, the decline of post-war

Liberalism, and the emergence of identity politics.

Of course, the work of more contemporary scholars has laid the foundation of the

ideas presented in this thesis. Authors have written at length about liberalism, race,

identity, anti-Semitism, Ocean-Hill Brownsville, and the Civil Rights movement. The

work here was primarily inspired by the work of some six authors in particular.

Primarily, this thesis was born as a response to Peter Novick's book *The*

Holocaust in American Life. Novick's focus on the ubiquity of the Holocaust in modern

Jewish culture covered a broad base of reasons for a Jewish "inward turn."[41] Among the

reasons, Novick expertly described the shift from integration and assimilation as a

product of factors ranging from Zionism, anti-Semitism, Civil Rights, the work of the

Jewish Defence and Anti-Defamation Leagues, and a general identity crisis for American

Jews. His argument was well formed, and his lead up to specific questions about the

utility of Holocaust memorial as a primary focus for Jewish identity was particularly

effective.

However, Novick downplayed the relationship between Jewish and black

Americans. His assertion seemed to be that Jewish identity crises were, in some ways, a

response to anti-Semitism in general and a lapse in the positivism felt during the era of

the mainstream Movement.[42] Although Novick was by no means incorrect in these

assertions, this thesis serves to illustrate that the relationship between, mutual identity

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[41] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 178.
[42] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 112.

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crises of, and subsequent inward turns of both black and Jewish communities were more intertwined and complicated than Novick suggested.

What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance, by Murray Friedman, was also important as early inspiration for this thesis. His book was written in the shadow of black-Jewish tensions in the early 1990s amidst controversy surrounding remarks made by Jessie Jackson, as well as the accidental death of a young black boy in Crown Heights, Brooklyn that lead to a stabbing of a rabbinical student.[43] Seeing that tensions continued to arise, Friedman investigated the history between the two minorities and remarked of the end of their so-called alliance, "the remarkable thing is not that the black-Jewish alliance is now in eclipse but that it held together for so long."[44]

Unfortunately, Friedman also strongly argued that historical revisionism was gradually writing the efforts of Jews out of the Civil Rights history. The narrative, he claimed, was shifting to a focus on what blacks had done for themselves instead of how they were helped by white liberals. Citing Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of The Negro Intellectual*, he suggested that bitterness towards Jews from black scholars had threatened to push their sacrifices out of the story.[45] Ultimately, though Friedman was thorough in his analysis of an "alliance" that spanned nearly a century, his bias was clear. Particularly, his chapter on the conflicts of the late sixties – regarding Ocean Hill-Brownsville and school decentralization – put far too much weight on the seriousness of

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[43] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 2.
[44] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 3.
[45] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 5-7.

black anti-Semitism without considering the scale or propriety of the response of the Anti-Defamation League and Jewish Defence League.[46] Friedman failed to consider the intertwined nature of the growing conflict between black and Jewish Americans as a product of their experiences, complex relationship, culture, and internal identity crises.

Conversely, Jane Gordon's book, *Why They Couldn't Wait: A Critique of the Black-Jewish Conflict over Community Control in Ocean Hill-Brownsville (1967-1971)* pointed largely to political motivations for community control and the fight for better education in black neighbourhoods. Gordon made the argument that no community could begin to improve its situation without improvements in education. She also pointed out that, while race and tension between blacks and Jewish community members was responsible in part for the struggle, perhaps more important was the way that outspoken black and Puerto Rican community efforts were perceived. For Gordon, racial tension was a foregone conclusion. She also argued that the fight to decentralize schools and improve education for black youth was primarily influenced by an impression that local Jews were broadly considered to be a liberal voice of reason while black and Puerto Rican community organizers were seen as antidemocratic, aggressive, and power hungry. This discrepancy in perception was tremendously unfair for those parents of black youth simply looking to provide better education for their children.[47]

Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America, by Michael Staub, was crucial for this thesis in understanding the rifts that grew among

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[46] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 263-264.
[47] Gordon, *Why They Couldn't Wait*, 1.

Jewish communities in the decades between the Second World War and the end of the mainstream Civil Rights movement. His analysis illustrated the Jewish identity crisis as a product of liberalism, anti-Semitism, a survivalist mentality, and a confluence of other complex and complicated factors. Although Staub did not specifically downplay the interaction of black and Jewish Americans, his primary focus on the Jewish perspective fails to demonstrate the impact the black identity crisis had on Jewish supporters of the mainstream movement.

Indeed, there is plenty of content about black anti-Semitism, the effects of liberalism, discord between black and Jewish Americans, and specific struggles. While none of these works are particularly wrong in their assessments, this thesis seeks to show that the relationship and interplay between these two minorities was more complicated than the discourse would suggest.

One of the challenges in discussing the inter-relations of two large ethnic minorities is the difficulty of gaining an understanding of how blacks felt about Jews and vice versa. The Black Power movement was especially amorphous. It claimed adherents who saw it solely as a style of cultural expression, as well as militant nationalists pledged to violent revolution. Similarly, there were a great variety of views within the Jewish community about black anti-Semitism: was it a threat? What, if anything, did it mean for daily life? What can be studied instead, as a preliminary step to understanding the larger picture, are some of the "talking heads" of these groups: the intellectuals, scholars, and leaders who shaped, or at least claimed to represent, public opinion. The views of these spokesmen cannot, of course, be extrapolated to reflect the broader sentiments of even specific political groups, let alone the masses. They do, however, provide insight into the

sources of friction between the minorities. Once the broad themes of the black-Jewish

relationship are understood, it will be possible to pursue a more detailed study of specific

communities. This thesis aims to achieve the former.

The first chapter serves to contextualize the perspective of Jewish Americans. It

looks at the history of Jewish involvement in black communities and the myriad of

reasons for Jewish involvement in Civil Rights struggles. It also looks closely at the

identity issues that, combined with disagreements over the place of Jews in the

Movement, precipitated deep rifts in opinion and sharply contrasting political stances

between various Jewish groups. Finally, the question of "what it means to be Jewish"

arose in a number of ways between 1945 and 1970. This chapter aims to address how

this discourse informed Jewish actions and attitudes in concert with the ebb and flow of

the Civil Rights movement as a whole.

The purpose of the second chapter is to analyse questions similar to those

addressed in chapter one, but from the perspective of black communities. It discusses the

differences between urban north and rural south, the peaks and valleys of the Civil Rights

movement, and the looming frustration and persistent identity crises that led to the

creation of the more militant Black Power movement. It serves as an analogous analysis

of the weakening grip of post-war liberalism and its impact on group unity. Additionally,

it attempts to discern whether black hostility toward former Jewish allies occurred

specifically because they were Jewish, or whether the backlash was directed at white

Americans as a whole.

The third and final chapter is a culmination of the first two. It seeks to answer the

questions they raise. Context is provided for the events that generated the greatest

friction between the two groups. Furthermore, an analysis of the discourse among black

and Jewish intellectuals within academic journals and partisan publications sheds light on

the fragmentation of the groups themselves. Ultimately, the goal of the this chapter is to

illustrate how the development of the black identity crisis and rift helped precipitate a

congruent identity crisis among Jews, which placed the two groups at odds with one

another in what eventually became the beginning of what we know today as identity

politics.

Chapter 1

The "March on Ballot Boxes" from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama throughout March of 1965 was a tremendously symbolic event for the Civil Rights Movement. It marked a return to the city where Rosa Parks's defiance and a year-long bus boycott signaled the beginning of the mainstream Civil Rights movement. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. spearheaded the strategy of non-violence there as many blacks clogged state and county prisons in the struggle to desegregate the transit system. In some ways, despite ten years of protest, little had changed. Protestors still faced physical violence and casualties at the hands of the state police, local opposition, and the Ku Klux Klan. And they faced systemic racism through bureaucratic red-tape and firmly entrenched political opposition. However, over those ten years, support for the mainstream movement had exploded. Numbering between 8,000 and 25,000 participants, the Selma-to-Montgomery marches symbolized the emotional and political peak of the Civil Rights movement. This precipitated the signing of the Voter Rights Act – a huge victory. Additionally, the march represented unparalleled unity within the movement as the optimism and momentum from the 1963 March On Washington brought supporters from all walks of life and all corners of the United States to Alabama. Marching alongside southern blacks and the usual suspects – SCLC's Martin Luther King Jr. and Jim Bevel,

SNCC's Stokely Carmichael, and CORE's John Lewis and James Foreman – were a significant mix of white supporters ranging from local Christians to northern Jews.

While the attendance of Christian whites truly illustrated the progress of the movement, the presence of Jewish supporters during the Selma to Montgomery marches was nothing new. The return to Montgomery was as much of a homecoming for Jewish Civil Rights activists – many of whom had fought for desegregation in the south for years – as it was for blacks. It was here that American Jews stood alongside yarmulke-clad blacks, who called the headwear "Freedom Caps," while Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his speech "How Long, Not Long."[48] The presence of Jewish students, rabbis, and liberals at the Selma march indicated a significant Jewish commitment to the mainstream movement. Most importantly, though, it represented the apex of the relationship between black and Jewish Americans.

Though the popular narrative of the Civil Rights movement will always focus on the hardships and triumphs of African Americans, the movement could well have been a failure were it not for the efforts of innumerable Jewish supporters who gave time, money, dedication and, in some cases, their lives to the cause. Jews co-founded the NAACP. Jewish lawyers fought court battles on behalf of blacks for greater civil and constitutional rights. Jews rode with blacks on the Freedom Rides, took part in voter drives, and put themselves at risk of physical harm by angry segregationists and the Ku Klux Klan. From the 1950s until the late 1960s, Jewish patrons consistently kept groups

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[48] Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 111. (Note: The Orthodox Jewish headwear was referred to by black activists as "freedom caps," and was worn as a symbol of solidarity.)

like CORE and SNCC alive with financial assistance. Jews supported Martin Luther

King's SCLC and closely followed the mainstream Civil Rights movement, even as

CORE and SNCC became more nationalist and militant. Rabbinical groups spoke out

against anti-black violence throughout the country and joined protests as early as the

1940s.[49] Passionate Jewish student activists saw their "black brothers" as inspirational

for standing up against the establishment, bigotry and systemic racism. Individually,

each minority had legitimate motivations for voicing their ethnic pride and intolerance of

racism. Together, their partnership opened up many doors that might not have been

accessible otherwise.

    As the Civil Rights movement gradually shifted in focus from voter-rights and

social equality to economics and class struggle, so too did the role of Jews within the

movement. With African Americans beginning to focus on a culture- and identity-centric

movement in Black Power, the goals and themes of the mainstream movement

increasingly drifted out of sync with Jewish motives. Rifts opened during the Mississippi

Freedom Summer in 1964 – stemming from disproportionate attention paid to the deaths

of two Jewish activists – began to widen further. To make matters worse, many black

communities increasingly focused their efforts inwards for strength, solidarity and

motivation, dismissing white support as unnecessary or patronizing.

    Not coincidentally, Jews also found themselves turning inward during this period.

Their support for Civil Rights had hardly been unanimous. Critics questioned the

wisdom of spending time and effort on a movement not aimed at helping Jews directly.

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[49] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 20-26.

Faced with the realities of life after the Holocaust, survivor's guilt, cultural assimilation, the failure of and threats to liberalism, ongoing racism and anti-Semitism, McCarthyism, Zionism, threats to Israel, and, ultimately, a question of what makes one a "good Jew," America's Jewish population had much to think about. These concerns, coupled with the shifting relationship with African Americans, framed the onset of a Jewish identity crisis. To complicate things further, these crises were only magnified by the Arab-Israeli War in June of 1967. Although the Civil Rights movement did not necessarily address such issues, its politically and ethically divisive nature among Jewish communities caused it to become the backdrop through which many struggled to find their function and purpose in American society.

The first half of 1965 marked the apex of black/Jewish relations, culminating at the Selma march. This harmony, though, was short-lived. An eruption of violence in the African American community of Watts, Los Angeles, mere days after the signing of the Voting Rights Act, brought attention to the fact that many black communities had seen no changes of consequence due to the movement.[50] This riot was the product of poverty and frustration, not legal inequality. It was a dramatic symbol of an increasingly impatient populace; an impatience born from countless setbacks within the mainstream movement and persistent systemic racism. A number of Jewish stores were destroyed during the commotion, causing many Jews to question their role in the fight for "negro rights."[51] Within a year of Watts, SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael's chants of "black power" – an

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[50] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 218.
[51] Arthur Hertzberg in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 70.

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expression of frustration towards the increasingly ineffective philosophy of non-violence, the roles of whites, and a perception that King was too soft - began to create unease in the movement.[52] A rejection of white aid included, of course, rejecting the help of supportive Jews. Throughout 1965-1967, race riots erupted throughout the country and more Jewish store owners or landlords became subject to violence and criticism from urban black communities.[53] Additionally, black nationalist groups publicly spoke out against "Jewish Imperialism" in the Arab-Israeli war.[54] In 1968 tempers flared once more, this time in New York, as the debate over desegregation of schools in the community of Ocean Hill-Brownsville led to the distribution of anti-Semitic poems and fliers throughout the city.[55]

Though on the surface it appeared as though black anti-Semitism and the rising militancy of urban blacks was specifically the culprit for the erosion of black-Jewish relations, the truth is that the actions, experiences, and internal crises of the two minorities were largely analogous and intertwined.[56] Certainly, many Jews were deeply offended by what they regarded as "anti-Semitism" from a group they had clearly supported and assisted. At the same time many blacks had seen the actions of Jews or

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[52] Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1984), 201-205.

[53] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "Civil Rights and Intergroup Tensions," *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965): 187-188.

[54] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "The Arab-Israel War of 1967: American Public Opinion," *American Jewish Yearbook* 69 (1968): 288-289.

[55] Lester, "A Response," 229.

[56] For example, in *The Holocaust in American Life*, Peter Novick discusses the idea that black anti-Semitism was largely responsible for a new outburst among Jews on Holocaust memorialization and awareness. This view is somewhat short sighted. It fails to properly address the complex emotions raised by the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, a rise in Jewish conservatism, threats of assimilation, and the dawn of post-modernism as equal players in the shifting mindset of American Jews. Novick dismisses the primary instances of black anti-Semitism as "trivial" when in reality they were anything but.

neighborhood whites as equally offensive. Furthermore, the downfall of Johnson-era

liberalism precipitated a deep rift for American Jews and blacks alike as they shifted from

an optimistic, progressive political outlook to a more inward-focused and identity-centric

one. Those who tired of liberal appeals for patience, non-violence, optimism, and

government intervention began a shift to a more militant, nationalist tack. The result

brought fractures within each community, further complicating black-Jewish relations

and questions of identity.

This chapter explores the various events, encounters, and political tensions

experienced by American Jews throughout the course of the mainstream Civil Rights

movement until the most precipitous events of Watts, the rise of Black Power, and the

Six Day War. More importantly, it seeks to frame these events with the backdrop of an

overarching Jewish-American identity crisis that was simultaneously caused by, and

affected relations with, the black neighbors and oft-dubbed "allies."

A Legacy of Anti-Semitism

It is impossible to understand the relationship between blacks and Jews in the

United States without discussing the prejudice and racism historically suffered by both

groups. For generations, the two groups have been pitted against each other in what is

sometimes referred to as an "Olympics of Suffering."[57] Historians of memory such as

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[57] Ian Buruma, "The Joys and Perils of Victimhood," *The New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1999,

Charles Maier and Ian Buruma suggest that legacies of suffering hold political weight that can influence governments and populations in profound ways; many have observed that African Americans and Jews have long jockeyed for the position of America's most prominent victim. Indeed, the interactions between black and Jewish communities in the late 1960s led directly to the birth of what we now call "identity politics."

Most important here, however, is the historical context of anti-Semitism in the United States. Whatever the levels of anti-Semitism during the period of the Civil Rights movement, the history of anti-Semitism preceding, during, and following the Second World War had a profound impact on the willingness of Jews to aid blacks in the fight for equality. A country that was safe and non-discriminatory for blacks would very likely be the same for Jews. Ironically, the racism and prejudice that drew the two groups together played a significant role in driving them apart.

While it is not controversial to contend that anti-Semitism existed in the United States in some capacity throughout the twentieth century, the degree to which it existed and its relevance are certainly debatable. Though the scholarly emphasis on memory and the Holocaust has tended to overshadow the study of America's history of anti-Semitism in more recent years, it is absolutely crucial for anyone discussing the Civil Rights movement to understand that Jews experienced overt racism at the hands of white Americans just as African Americans did.[58] Certainly, Jews did not have to endure

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http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1999/apr/08/the-joys-and-perils-of-victimhood/.

[58] It is appropriate to mention that there is a question as to whether anti-Semitism ever really disappears or erodes in the United States but, instead, simply goes out of fashion due to politics or social guilt. There really should be no time where anti-Semitism can be dismissed as 'irrelevant.' However, relevance here is determined by the weight of the Jewish response. There have been periods in American history,

slavery, and they came to the United States by choice instead of by force, but that does

not diminish the significance of the real obstacles faced by America's Jewish minority.

In *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*, for example, author Charles

E. Silberman recalled violence against Jews in 1930's New York:

> Brown-shirted members of the German-American Bund used to sell their
> virulently anti-Semitic newspaper just a few blocks from where I now live; the
> synagogue my family attended was frequently defaced with swastikas and
> crosses; an elementary school classmate who ventured onto alien turf had a
> swastika cut into his hand with a penknife.[59]

Anti-Semitism was rampant in America even as United States officials were

decrying Hitler for his treatment of German Jews. In *Anti-Semitism in America* Leonard

Dinnerstein argued that anti-Semitism was at a high during the years of the Second World

War because a number of average Americans felt that Jews would eventually bring the

United States into the war. Republican representative Gerald Nye of North Dakota, for

example, argued that Jews used Hollywood movies and their influence over the media to

raise support for a war effort in 1941. A month later, aviator hero Charles Lindbergh

publicly blamed Jews for dragging America closer to war through their influence in the

press and government. In 1942, opinion surveys indicated that 42% of Americans would

least like to see Jews, out of any ethnic group, move into their neighborhoods. Only

African Americans ranked higher at 72%.[60] In 1943, a report was issued by a northern

newspaper that indicated that Boston police had, for years, ignored the beatings of Jewish

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such as the early and mid-1960s, where anti-Semitism was potentially low enough to warrant less
concern from Jewish groups.

[59] Charles E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit,
1985), 22, 57.

[60] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 128-133.

youth by Irish "Christian Fronters." Such groups met frequently throughout the north

while negligent police turned the other cheek, both encouraging the violent perpetrators

and ignoring the plight of their victims.[61] The violence was severe enough that one

White House staff member said of Irish Catholics in Boston: "so far as the Jew is

concerned, it would be a simple matter to organize them into the Ku Klux Klan."[62]

In 1950 more than fifty anti-Semitic groups existed in the United States. Though

their numbers were in marked decline, this did not end the problem of violence against

Jews throughout the country. In Boston, again, Jewish teens were set upon by violent

adolescents in a number of incidents between 1950 and 1952 as they had been in 1943.[63]

The adolescents vandalized synagogues and wore swastika pins while preying upon

young Jews. Furthermore, just as they had before, policemen ignored the criminals,

arrested the victims, and turned a blind eye to anti-Semitic violence.[64] The violence was

not just relegated to the north, either, as southern Jews faced bombings of their

synagogues and racist attitudes in many communities.

Anti-Semitism appeared frequently in print throughout the 1950s and 1960s as

well, as people like America First leader Gerald L.K. Smith, a well-known white

supremacist, linked Zionism with Communism. His publications, such as *The Cross and

the Flag* and *The Jewish Problem*, argued that Jews were an international economic threat

to American life. One publication from the *Huron Church News* in 1957 even suggested

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[61] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 132-133.
[62] Jonathan Daniels, *White House Witness, 1942-1945* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975), 106 as
    cited in Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 133.
[63] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 133.
[64] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 162.

that "Jews are at the very root of all troubles, all conflicts, all revolts of the modern world."[65] In the early sixties George Lincoln Rockwell and his organization of American neo-Nazis preached hatred towards Jews and committed acts of vandalism across North America. Even though scholars such as Dinnerstein and Peter Novick have argued that the early 1960s were something of a "golden period" for American Jews, a time in which anti-Semitism appeared to be in steep decline, there were clearly plenty of reasons for Jews to continue worrying about the threat of anti-Semitism.

In this post-Holocaust environment, threats to Jewish well-being were keenly observed by a people particularly sensitive to the potential outcomes of anti-Semitism. The result of this sensitivity is one of the most important factors in the eventual split of the American Jewry between conservative and liberal forces as self-preservation and proactive activism pulled people in two directions. In an effort to stand out as little as possible, it became common for Jews to downplay their Jewishness and embrace assimilation into American culture. Charles E. Silberman, for example, recalled frequently being told "Shah! [be quiet]" throughout his childhood. He was given the impression that "Jewishness was a source of anxiety and discomfort."[66] Similarly, prominent Jewish neoconservative Norman Podhoretz wrote in 1946 that the trick to success as an American Jew was to "become a facsimile WASP!"[67] Selma Hirsch, of the American Jewish Committee, "recalled that her first assignment, in the late forties, was promoting stories in the press that would show 'Jews were as nice as anybody else; show

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[65] Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 163.
[66] Silberman, *A Certain People*, 22, 57.
[67] Norman Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York: Random House, 1967), 50.

them that they're football players, they're not all intellectuals.'"[68] Though there is still

debate about the prevalence of silence amongst American Jews on subjects such as the

Holocaust, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Jews were making an effort to lay

low and fit in during this era so as not to garner attention or aggression.[69] Assimilation

became a critical factor in the widespread identity crisis amongst American Jews that

developed over the course of the sixties.

It should be clear, then, that Jewish participation in the Civil Rights movement

had, at the very least, a solid basis in simple pragmatism. By joining forces with blacks

who wanted equal rights, Jews hoped to enhance their own social equality in the hope

that the prejudice and racism they had endured could be put to rest. Conversely, it was in

their best interests to support Civil Rights because a society that was hostile towards one

minority would always have the potential to be hostile to another; in the words of Roland

B. Gittelsohn, Rabbi emeritus at Boston's Temple Israel, it was "a truism that a society

which is unstable or unsafe for either [would] be at best precarious for both."[70] More

important, however, is the fact both Jewish and African American experiences with overt

racism caused segments of each group to think about how to harmonize their ethnicity

and culture with their nationality. The response to this duality helped to shape the

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[68] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 114.

[69] Where many authors have argued that Jews were silent about the Holocaust in the post-war period, prominent Holocaust scholar Hasia Diner argued in her paper "Post-World War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe" that Jews were quite vocal about the importance of the legacy of the Holocaust and how Jews should appropriately react to it. Her evidence is compelling and raises further questions about some of the generalities assumed about the priorities of post-war American Jews.

[70] Roland B Gittelsohn in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 46.

character and actions of the groups that would emerge from political rifts while fueling the deeper concern over ethnic identity and meaning.

Early Relations Between Jews and African Americans

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was formed in 1909 by a group of African and Jewish Americans as a response to prevailing racial violence in the South and as a platform for obtaining the rights laid out in the United States Constitution. This is a convenient signpost for marking the beginning of an "alliance" between the two groups, despite an existing history of mutual respect and similarities in hardship. As such, many of the events that occurred between the formation of the NAACP and the surge of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s shine a light on the political and social association of the two minorities. Though the period of the 1940s offered a different set of challenges to Jewish Americans than the 1960s, there are parallels between the periods that point to a consistency in attitudes and assumptions. Patterns established by mid-century set precedents that would inform Jewish-Black relations and widen rifts in the late sixties. This period framed a political fragmentation of the Jewish community itself, with liberals, survivalists, radicals, and conservatives all vying for cultural and political authority.

A number of American Jews were involved in the Civil Rights movement and the fight for equal rights from the very beginning. Even more became interested in Civil Rights as a reaction to the rise of Nazism in Germany and the events of the Second World War. In his book *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Post-War*

America, Michael Staub describes early Jewish interest in the movement for rights in the

American south as an outgrowth of comparisons to the Nazi regime. He details racist and

anti-Semitic remarks by Senator Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi and Representative

John E. Rankin which refer to Jews as "kikes" and "long nose reprobates" "who wanted

to 'cram' the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) 'down the throats of the

American people.'"[71] These comments, made in the mid-1940s, offer a sample of the

racism and xenophobia that was rampant during a time when Americans were supposed

to be fighting a just war against history's greatest tyrant. African and Jewish Americans

strongly backed the aforementioned anti-discrimination legislation but the effort was

slammed by the bigoted campaign of Bilbo and Rankin.[72]

Responding to the virulent racism in the American south, echoing in the halls of

congress, the NAACP supported publication *Crisis* increasingly compared American

treatment of blacks and Jews to Hitler and the attitudes that caused Germans to follow

him:

> This is not representative government. This is not democratic government. [The
> striking down of FECP legislation] was fascism operating behind a façade of
> parliamentary skullduggery, parading boldly under a panoply of racial and
> religious screamings reminiscent of Hitler and Goebbels.[73]

These comparisons to the Nazi party continued. As witnesses to violence against blacks

in southern towns, passionate rights supporters made attempts to alert more Americans to

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[71] Quoted in Edward S. Shapiro, "Anti-Semitism Mississippi Style," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*,
ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 141, as cited in Staub, *Torn at the
Roots*, 23. See also: Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 136.

[72] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 23.

[73] "Race Hate First on Agenda of U.S. Congress," *Crisis* 52 (August 1945): 216, as cited in Staub, *Torn at
the Roots*, 24.

the injustice at hand. *Crisis* continued to chide Americans for ignoring the unjust deaths of blacks in mob violence while "gag[ing] at Nazi concentration camp cruelties!"[74]

Jewish journals such as *Jewish Frontier* followed suit, stating in 1945 that most young white agitators involved in anti-Semitic and racist actions were "boys with bad scholarship and attendance marks, the perfect Hitler material."[75] In 1948, the seminal Jewish publication *Commentary* printed a piece called "Alaska's Nuremburg Laws" that spoke out against unfair government legislation against Native Americans in the state.[76]

However, by the late 1940s, McCarthy-era paranoia had become a dominant force in American politics. The new focus of American public criticism was Soviet Russia and many Jews, concerned with being made to look like extreme leftists and, as a result, communists, decided not to risk their well-being, politically or physically, for progressive causes. Staub noted that this period displayed a distinct change in the way Jews wrote about racist actions and slander in their publications. Where it had once been common to highlight American racism and inequality through comparisons to Nazi Germany in the pages of *Crisis*, the Cold War had caused comparisons to Soviet Russia to be much more frequent. Furthermore, influential groups like the NAACP preached staunch liberal anti-communism.[77] This should be seen as crucial because this shift in tactics based on political pressure is just one example of a pattern within Jewish interest groups throughout the mainstream Civil Rights movement and beyond. It suggests an influence

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[74] "Massacre," *Crisis* 54 (August 1947): 233, as cited in Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 24.
[75] Werner J. Cahnman, "Race Riots in the Schools," *Jewish Frontier* 12 (November 1945): 16, 18, as cited in Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 25.
[76] Felix S. Cohen, "Alaska's Nuremberg Laws," *Commentary* 6 (August 1948): 136, as cited in Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 26.
[77] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 26-36.

of a survivalist mentality amongst Jewish-influenced organizations. These examples of

early Jewish participation in combating racism set the stage for what was often perceived

as an African American/Jewish 'alliance' over the following decade.

Socially, a history of positive interaction between the two groups is often touted

by Jewish intellectuals as representing a lack of Jewish anti-black sentiment. It is often

argued that Jews were amongst the first 'white people' to sell goods to blacks, employ

black workers, or rent to black tenants during a time where Christian whites would not.

Furthermore, these shop owners offered items on credit to neighborhood blacks, gave

legal advice, and loaned money where they could.[78] This emphasis is significant for a

number of reasons. Primarily, it allowed American Jews to assert that they were more

tolerant than their gentile counterparts. What it also illustrates is that African Americans

were likely to perceive Jews in terms of economic status, as they were in control of what

they bought, where they worked, or where they lived. Moreover, because not all African

Americans would have understood or noticed the distinction between a Jew and a typical

gentile American, this also meant that Jews, aware of it or not, were serving, at least

partially, as ambassadors for American whites. These are but a few examples of the

complex relationship between Jews and African Americans before the mainstream Civil

Rights movement but they are significant in that they demonstrate a variety of

experiences in terms of political or social influence for Jews in the late 1960s. Also, they

suggest that, regardless of economic status or any variety of other factors, Jews and

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[78] Golden, *Negro and Jew*, 59-64.

blacks were seen often in a similar light, that of a primarily non-American outsider by a sizeable portion of gentile Americans, and found themselves in similar social positions.

Civil Rights, Priorities, and the Looming Identity Crisis

As previously stated, many Jews were active within the Civil Rights movement. Jews were involved in the leadership of the NAACP; it was co-founded by two rabbis in 1909. Jews joined blacks in anti-racism demonstrations like those in Peekskill, New York in 1949 that ended, tragically, in violence.[79] Northern Jews went to the south to take part in Freedom Rides and sit-ins throughout the movement. In 1958, mere months after the bombing of a Miami synagogue, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at a meeting of the American Jewish Congress – in an attempt to create unity between the minorities – and memorably stated that "the racists of America fly blindly at both of us caring not at all which one falls."[80] And, ultimately, as noted earlier, Jews stood next to blacks during the Selma march as the two groups staged, together, one of the most significant events of the Civil Rights movement.

The fight for Civil Rights, however, proved to be tremendously divisive for American Jews. Whether it was political realities of the day or questions of morals, ethics, and even piety, there was a sizable contingent of America's Jewish community

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[79] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 26-36.
[80] Martin Luther King, "In Peace and in Dignity," *Congress Bi-Weekly* 35 (May 6, 1968): 16–17, as cited in Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 21.

who felt that public demonstrations and activist organizations were risky for Jewish interests and survival. Between the early days of Civil Rights up until the late 60s and the emergence of black power, the division of opinions ranged from being based on concerns about simple self-preservation, to the very core of what it meant to be Jewish. Though opinions on Jewish participation in the movement were typically subjective and individual, there are trends that emerged in recent studies, contemporary discourse, and retrospectives after the rise of black power in the late 1960s.

In terms of reactions to Jewish youth participating in Civil Rights demonstrations, there were many who felt that the Civil Rights movement was no place for a Jew. The reasons for this were as diverse as the backgrounds of those who felt this way. Some believed, for instance, that drawing political attention could be counter-productive to improving Jewish stature in American society.[81] Throughout the post-war years a push towards quiet assimilation – in part caused by a lack of desire to confront, publicly, the Holocaust and its implications and also, in part, considered an attempt by Jews to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" without using their status as a crutch – lead to a number of Jews specifically trying to avoid the spotlight.[82]

In the spring of 1964, Abraham G. Duker, a professor of history at Yeshiva University and an editor of *Jewish Social Studies*, presented at a conference about Black-Jewish relations. He acknowledged that the experience of the Holocaust was likely to inspire Jews to be motivated to help black communities. However, he was quick to point

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[81] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105-106.
[82] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105-106.

out that such an interest in social justice has come "at the cost of neglecting Jewish

survival."[83] He argued that blacks occasionally coupled their demands on Jewish

supporters with threats. He argued that an attempt to steep communities in black culture

was akin to "'Aryanization propaganda in Germany."[84] He felt that Jews should be,

primarily, focused on their own problems:

> ... pressures of acculturation, Jewish deculturation and thereby de-Judaization
> have been increasing with hedonism and deracination as their most visible
> hallmarks. Departure from the community through intermarriage and indifference
> follows... In the United States escapism from Jewishness has also found
> expression in the integrationist movement.[85]

This, suggested Duker, would result in some Jews fighting so hard to integrate that they

could cast off their Jewish identity and even become anti-Semitic in the process.[86]

Of course, Duker mentioned a motivational counterpoint to his own argument,

and one that made the decisions of sympathetic Jews more nuanced. He acknowledged

that failing to fight for the rights of American blacks would make Jews as complicit in

prejudice as many Germans were during the Holocaust. The argument follows that many

Jews lashed out against non-Jewish Germans for failing to stand up against what they

knew was wrong. Some hardliners, such as Lucy Dawidowicz, felt so severely about this

that they considered all non-Jewish Germans as complicit in the Holocaust itself. The

debate amongst American Jews, then, was that if blacks were to America as Jews were to

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[83] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105.
[84] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105.
[85] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105.
[86] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 105.

Nazi Germany, that it would be morally reprehensible to fail to support them in the fight against racism and prejudice.[87]

Conversely, there were Jews who felt that they owed African Americans nothing. These largely conservative voices argued that Jews had managed successfully make their own way in the United States without any help and that blacks should have to do the same thing. After all, not only did Jews partake in and survive the wave of immigration into America, they did so just as the Irish had in previous generations and next to other European groups such as the Greeks and the Italians. As we will see in the final chapter, these opinions were usually accompanied by concerns that blacks were no different than other Christians;[88] that they had little interest in the well-being of Jews as anything other than a monetary source or blind allegiance in a liberal struggle.[89]

As the momentum of liberalism began to drive more and more Jewish youth to the cause of Civil Rights, a conservative backlash countered with the argument that many Jews were only supporting the movement because of its popularity. They suggested that radicalism and protests were in fashion as part of the counter-culture that young Jews were not participating in for moral or ethical reasons, but only because their peers were. An extension of this idea, suggested by Yaakov Jacobs in *The Jewish Observer* in 1968, argued that rabbinical support for liberalism – which was fairly prolific – was actually a standard reaction by clergy in the face of decreasing relevancy. He suggested that in order to bolster growing support for the faith, rabbis, as well as their Christian

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[87] Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, xii.
[88] Jacob Glatstein in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 49.
[89] Howard Fast in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 23.

counterparts, put their support into the movement in order to appear relevant and thus, increase their appeal and followers.[90] This concept of activism-as-trend is certainly not a new one. Even today, many groups are accused of supporting politicized trends – such as the ongoing dialogue over environmentalism and global warming – based on the seemingly hollow popularity of the cause.

This, of course, led to the ultimate debate amongst Jews in regards to the Civil Rights movement: that of piety and purpose. There were many Jews who felt the growing trend of liberalism was automatically opposed to traditional Jewish values. This argument permeated the entirety of the inter-Jewish discourse on Civil Rights. According to Michael Staub, "the view that Jewishness and liberalism were at all reconcilable was rejected as early as 1960." As a result, Jews who claimed that their liberal beliefs were supported by the Jewish faith came up against staunch resistance from more conservative community members. Staub went on to illustrate, however, that this conflict evolved over the decade as liberals, conservatives, and radicals all looked to the Talmud and the Torah for religious support in their political activities:

> … Judaism, unlike Christianity, was not "just" a religion but a whole way of life; others noted that the concept of religion did not exhaust the meanings of Judaism, for Judaism always had an ethnic or national or sociological dimension as well… Just as secularity could be found among Jews of almost all political persuasions, so also, and now increasingly, Jews on the left, right, and middle could be found making claims about what God's expectations for human beings were and/or what it meant to treat Judaism as a sacred inheritance.[91]

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[90] Yaakov Jacobs, "To Picket . . . Or to Pray?" *Jewish Observer* 5 (April 1968): 3.
[91] Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 8.

The result, then, was a fragmented Jewish community whose leadership essentially ran in circles concerning terms of religious justification for actions. There were too many opinions for there to be a concrete consensus.[92] Furthermore, given Yakov Jacob's assertion that rabbis may have found themselves following liberal ideals and their subsequent protests, it is clear that the basing of political actions in religion was something that only lent itself to further fragmentation amongst American Jews.

Turmoil

Early in the 20th Century, NAACP Co-founder W.E.B. Dubois asked "Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both?"[93] Although Jews were, obviously, not asking the same question, they were engaging in self-reflection over what being Jewish meant to them and how they should live their lives as a result. In the post-war years, as we have discussed, many Jews made an attempt to lay low. There was some emphasis on blending into American society. Between their own Jewishness being a source of anxiety and a strong push to assimilate with a society that had shown consistent animosity towards Jews, there was certainly a foundation for identity crisis in the making well before the Civil Rights movement or the Six Day War of 1967.

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[92] Earl Raab, "The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question," in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*. ed. Nat Hentoff (Richard W. Baron, New York, 1969), 37.
[93] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 3.

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In 1967, what it meant to be an American Jew changed drastically for many. The Arab-Israeli war of June of that year caused Jews to revisit or face the reality of a threat against Jews from a post-Holocaust perspective. Where the Eichmann trial opened the doors on details and memories of the Holocaust, the Six Day War reminded Jews that they were still not free from violence and vitriol. To many, the conflict represented the continued persecution of the Jewish people. This not only colored the reactions of American Jews to political and social challenges at the time, it would do so for years to come. Within a generation of a time when discussion of the Holocaust was considered taboo and too risky in terms of drawing attention to Jews, the horrific event became a rallying cry for Jews everywhere and represented the perseverance and resolve of Judaism.

Furthermore, the Six Day War galvanized a relationship between Israeli and American Jews. The plight of fellow Jews on the other side of the world resonated with youth, liberals, conservatives, and elders alike. The Arab-Israeli war also caused American Jews to look inward. The *American Jewish Yearbook* from 1968 provided a look into the psyche of the American Jew in terms of what it meant to be Jewish through a collection of published letters. Writing in the *Village Voice,* one young Jew stated that "for the first time in my grown-up life, I really understood what an enemy was. For the first time, I knew what it was to be us against the killers. Us. Two weeks ago, Israel was they; now Israel is we… it is a Jewish we."[94] In contacts, another young student from the

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[94] Nancy Weber, "The Truth of Tears," *Village Voice*, June 15, 1967, as cited in Dawidowicz, "The Arab-Israel War of 1967," 211.

Bronx High School of Science, a protestor against the Vietnam war, wrote: "for reasons of pacifism, I was very disturbed when Israel went to war. How could I be against war in one place and excuse it in another? … I do not see right only on one side… I was confused and I still am."[95]

These responses, and the many others like them from Jews of varying piety, indicate that the Six Day War tore Jews in a number of directions. It once again shone a spotlight on the Holocaust; its lessons, clearly, could not be forgotten while anti-Semitism still existed. Additionally, the Six Day War emphasized the persistence of anti-Semitism even with the existence of a Jewish state. Some liberal Jews who had passionately protested the war in Vietnam now, obviously, found themselves supporting a war against Arab nations. Jews everywhere became more proud to be Jewish at a time when some synagogues had become little more than places to plan bar mitzvahs. Jews saw themselves as a global entity where before there may have been little emotional or spiritual connection. The result was a Jewish population that became incredibly hard to define. Jonathon Sarna, professor of history at Brandeis University, argued that understanding Jewish Identity is "probably the foremost challenge of American Jewish life." One has to approach "the desire to become American and to conform to American norms [while facing] the fear that Jews by conforming too much will cease to be distinctive and soon disappear."[96]

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[95] Dawidowicz, "The Arab-Israel War of 1967," 212.
[96] Jonathan Sarna, "Introduction," in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan Sarna (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), xvi.

It should be clear, then, that a significant number of American Jews were in a crucial period of crises by the late 1960s. Anti-Semitism, though in relative decline, was still prevalent throughout the globe. Civil Rights had polarized a passionate population, not just over questions of liberal and conservative, but over "good Jew" and "bad Jew." Through it all, Jews seemingly had an ally in African Americans with whom Jews shared a similar legacy of prejudice, racism, and struggle; their unique experiences with each other caused both groups to have some sort of exceptional status amongst average Americans but this only served to divide the population further. Moreover, the Six Day War suddenly reminded even the least devout Jew of his heritage, the dangers of anti-Semitism, and the memory of six million dead. How could Jews not be asking questions about their place in America with their identities in so much flux?

A New Anti-Semitism?

The period between 1967 and 1969 was crucial for American Jews. Not only were they faced with a burgeoning identity crisis but, also, with a new challenge. This challenge was the rise of – or, at least, a *perceived* rise of – black anti-Semitism and it would prove to be just as divisive (or more so) as the anti-Jewish sentiments that came before it.

Black hostility towards Jews did not simply materialize in 1967. It had been experienced by Jews as early as the Mississippi Freedom summer of 1964, the Watts Riot in 1965, and occasionally beforehand within the mainstream Civil Rights movement

itself.[97] Throughout 1966, the black power movement made white liberals increasingly

nervous about supporting certain Civil Rights organizations. As a segment of

progressively militant blacks began to reject white support and organizational paternalism

after the Mississippi Freedom Summer and the Selma march, it became obvious that there

was a dramatic shift within the movement. The Civil Rights movement had successfully

addressed many legal obstacles to equality but failed to understand the nuances of a

broader economic problem that put many blacks at odds with those who had supported

them. This backlash had a profound effect on the Jewish community. Furthermore, the

Arab-Israeli war marked a significant new milestone in black/Jewish relations. As Israel

beat back opponents in the Middle East and annexed territory, a militant black and pro-

Muslim contingent accused Israel of being imperialistic. Given Jewish America's

rediscovered allegiance to Israel, this came at an especially poor time for their

relationship. Over the next two years, black power groups became more and more hostile

towards American Jews. Urban populations fought over desegregation of schools in

areas like Ocean-Hill Brownsville in New York. These conflicts only brought out the

worst in both sides involved. Additionally, friction over housing and neighborhood

growth became increasingly heated as both minorities found themselves pushing against

each other for the same rung on the status ladder.

Reaction to overt black anti-Semitism and/or violence against Jews was varied.

Many Jews were confused by the sudden outbursts. Those who had put financial support

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[97] Richard L.Rubenstein, "The Rabbi and Social Conflict," *Religious Education* 59:1 (January-February
1964), 100.

into increasingly militant groups such as CORE and SNCC began to withdraw it. A number of liberal protesters suddenly found that their help was no longer wanted by blacks and this only served to isolate and confuse their position further. A sense of betrayal was prevalent.[98] Arthur A. Cohen claimed that "the Jewish reaction seems to be an extension of what I can only clarify to myself as an experience of intensified grief, grief which covering six million is not yet deep or profound enough to cover the American Negro."[99] Jewish organizations, political groups, and community intellectuals began to put their heads together to consider some plan of action for the new wave of American anti-Semitism which they saw as emanating from the black community.

One generalization that can be culled from the literature of the late 60s is that, in the face of wavering support, many liberal Jews felt they had to draw a distinction between accepting and believing in Civil Rights and being trod upon by anti-Semitism. In Schlomo Katz's *Negro and Jew,* a number of prominent Jewish scholars shared their experiences and thoughts on the crisis of anti-Semitism. Many of them believed that, while it was still the Jew's moral duty to stand beside those facing prejudice, they would not stand by and passively accept verbal and physical abuse against Jews in any form. This generally appeared as the more likely response from liberals, some of whom argued that violence against Jewish businesses occurred because they were the only white businesses available to attack. Others argued that blacks were not attacking Jews out of anti-Semitism, they were being, as James Baldwin suggests in Nat Hentoff's *Black Anti-*

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[98] Cohen, *Negro and Jew*, 9.
[99] Cohen, *Negro and Jew*, 9.

Semitism and Jewish Racism, "anti-white."[100] The liberal response was both apologetic

and assertive. It stressed that caution, patience, and a deep look into the economic

structure of America would be more likely to solve the problem than any desegregation

program. What is important to note here is that many who felt this way appealed to the

similarities between Jews and blacks in their experiences. They point to their shared

histories as oppressed peoples, compare the Holocaust with slavery, and relate their

shared experiences during the zenith of Civil Rights.

Conversely, conservative Jews responded by arguing that black anti-Semitism

was not a surprise at all. They argued that African Americans were anti-Semitic because

they were Christian. Some felt that the riots existed only for the purpose of damaging

Jewish stores. They saw the violence as a deliberate attempt to surpass Jews in society

by appealing to the one unifying belief that both black and white Americans shared, anti-

Semitism. This response, of course, was far more reactionary and certainly more

damaging to black-Jewish relations in the long run. Groups like the Anti-Defamation

League and a New York Teachers Union took anti-Semitic flyers intended for small

neighborhood circulations and published them nationwide, giving the impression that

black anti-Semitism was far more prolific than it actually was.[101]

Ultimately, what occurred during this period was the culmination of burgeoning

identity crises and political rifts in American Jewish society at the very moment when

Jews also found themselves suddenly "under attack" from within their own country and,

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[100] James Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism,*, 3-12.
[101] Rabbi Alan W. Miller, "Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism", in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 84.

to add insult to injury, from a perceived ally. Peter Novick argued that this sudden

appearance of black anti-Semitism did much to foster the increased emphasis on

Holocaust commemoration. This is, perhaps, short sighted. At a time when some Jewish

critics were questioning the validity of African Americans denying their American

heritage, a number of American Jews were wondering what it meant to be Jewish. Was

the Holocaust the answer? Was it the unifying factor that allowed all Jews to frame the

question of their identity in simple terms? What then of Israel? Was their sudden

support for the Israeli cause not proof that perhaps the call of their homeland was

stronger than their belief in the American system? Given that only a short while after the

war many Jews returned to life as usual, could it not be that Jews were just as casual

about their identity as they were accusing African Americans of being? These are crucial

questions that arose from the events of the 1960s and their complicated histories. More

importantly, these questions and others like them were products of failed liberalism, a

political rift amongst Jewish liberals, and a new, rising neo-conservatism. They were

never simply about culture, religion, or politics individually. They were always about the

product of these things. Moreover, the rift between America's most prominent minorities

was never simply about anti-Semitism, either. It was a product of the era.

Chapter 2

On December 4, 1969, Fred Hampton, leader of the Illinois chapter of the Black

Panther Party and former youth organizer of the NAACP, was killed in his bed by a

heavily armed police unit representing the State's Attorney's Office and the Chicago

police department in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. At least one

hundred shots were fired during the altercation, which also took the life of Panther Mark

Clark, and wounded several others throughout two rooms. All of the surviving Panthers

in the apartment were charged with assault and attempted murder. State attorney Edward

Hanrahan claimed the unit had acted in self-defense, stating to the press that half the

bullets fired came from the Panthers. In the weeks that followed, however, as the crime

scene was more closely examined, members of the press discovered that the alleged

bullet-holes around the entrance were actually nails on the doorframe. It was abundantly

clear to those who walked through the house that all the gunfire went one way: towards

the bedrooms where Fred Hampton and his comrades slept. A number of Chicago papers

called the State's attorney into question. Though Hanrahan maintained that the initial

report was accurate, it was revealed in the final investigation that only one shot of the

ninety-nine fired that evening belonged to a Panther.[102]

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[102] Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A.
DeVinney, Madison Davis Lacy, et al. 2006. "A Nation of Law (1968-71)" *Eyes on the prize*.
[Alexandria, Va.]: PBS Video.

Despite the evidence, a coroner's jury deemed the actions of the police "justifiable."[103] The Black Panther Party, in possession of Hampton's home until police sealed it on December 17, gave tours of the crime scene to the local community. Flint Taylor of the People's Law Office recalled an "older black woman coming through there, shaking her head going 'it's nothing but a northern lynching.'"[104] Over a year later the Illinois Supreme Court made public an indictment that charged Hanrahan and fourteen others with "conspiring to obstruct justice in the aftermath of the police raid."[105]

Hampton, twenty-one, was a charismatic and well-loved member of Chicago's black community. He preached self-respect and self-defense. He wanted to build healthcare, protection, welfare, and education programs within the black community to illustrate that blacks could do well for themselves while showing them how "the system" continually failed to deliver. The authorities, however, did not see his work as positive. Hampton's organization of breakfast programs for neighborhood children, for example, was considered by the FBI as "nefarious activity" for the purpose of indoctrinating black youth.[106] Not only was he a prime example of the leadership Bobby Seale and Huey Newton envisioned for their party when they created it in Oakland in 1966, he was also a shining example of the sort of strong black leader that Stokely Carmichael of SNCC had in mind when he stood on the back of a pickup truck during the "march against fear" in

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[103] Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, ed. *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Duke University Press, London, 2006), 340.
[104] Hampton et al, "A Nation of Law."
[105] Lazerow and Williams, *In Search of the Black Panther Party*, 340.
[106] Hampton et al, "A Nation of Law."

the summer of 1966 and called for "black power."[107] His death was a tremendous loss to a movement that had already lost so many of its leaders, and it sent a message to African Americans everywhere that the state was more than willing to snuff out militant blacks as it saw fit.

At the same time, the loss of Hampton created a strong sense of solidarity. At his funeral, Father George Clements of Holy Angels Church tried to explain to the thirteen hundred children in the crowd what Fred meant to their community. Just as he thought his message was not sinking in, an eighth grade student stood up to declare, "I am Fred Hampton!" The children began to echo the statement until "before you knew it, in the whole church, kids were all shouting 'I am Fred Hampton!'" Hampton's "death was not in vain," Clements concluded, "because these kids are saying that they are willing to get up and speak out for liberation, for first class citizenship."[108]

Fred Hampton's death is important to the story of the African-American struggle. It is important because it simultaneously represented how far blacks had come since the days of Rosa Parks and how little had changed in terms of resistance to an assertive black minority. A Southern black defiantly referring to police as "pigs" in the early days of the Civil Rights movement would have been courting disaster. The leap from well-dressed students stubbornly sitting at lunch counters to proud lower class workers with Afros launching community food and welfare programs was a dramatic one. By Hampton's time, African Americans were able to vote largely unobstructed and had taken great steps

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[107] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 227.
[108] Hampton et al, "A Nation of Law."

toward desegregation in the South. The new fight focused on improving the conditions facing blacks in the urban north. Hampton's slaying, however, was not much different than the 1955 lynching of fifteen-year-old Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi or the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman – the latter two Jewish volunteers – by the Ku Klux Klan during Mississippi Freedom Summer.[109] In all three cases those who committed the atrocities were let off remarkably light despite abundant evidence.[110] In all three cases, the victims were killed by racism, ignorance and bigotry, while government agencies and representatives downplayed these crimes. Hampton was a model member of the black community who did nothing but try to improve the lives of African Americans. He was killed because of what his vision represented to certain white Americans.

The Black Power phenomenon of the late 1960s was, like Civil Rights before it, a movement with many faces. In name alone, it shocked many white Americans into assuming its supporters were going to be far more assertive and aggressive than the non-violent contingent of the movement. Yet, Black Power was a reaction to the failures of the mainstream Civil Rights movement. It was created and amplified by frustrations such as those that emerged when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was denied all but two seats at the Democratic National Convention, and the Lowndes County voter drive in

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[109] George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 47.

[110] In the case of Till, his murderers Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam admitted in an interview after their acquittal to killing Till for whistling at a white woman. During the interview Milam stated "when a nigger even gets close to mentioning sex with a white woman, he's tired o' livin'. I'm likely to kill him." He also accused Northern Blacks of sending young blacks to the South to "stir up trouble." More than any murders or lynchings beforehand, the acquittal of two obviously guilty men who then talked candidly about the crime pointed a national spotlight at the unfair judicial system of the deep South. (see Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement*, 47-49).

Georgia, organized by SNCC in 1966, that saw a black majority fighting for self-control against traditionally white leadership. Generally speaking, it was a rallying cry for African Americans to be proud of their heritage, proud of their culture, and proud to be black. "Black Power," however, was a slogan that could mean different things to different people. Many felt it literally called for more power for black communities; a political call to arms. Most importantly, it illustrated the growing frustration with continued racism and led many from non-violence towards armed self-defense, militarism, and intimidation.

For a movement that sought to unify African Americans, however, Black Power was divisive. From its early rumblings in the writings of Marcus Garvey, through to the founding of the Nation of Islam and the militant Black Panther Party, Black Power was controversial. Its revolutionary and aggressive language alienated white supporters, especially those within the government. It also alienated many blacks within the mainstream Civil Rights movement – particularly integrationists like Martin Luther King and the SCLC – who felt that Black Power rhetoric was counterproductive. It questioned the usefulness of non-violence as a means to an end in light of how little white Americans appeared to care about black casualties from racist attacks. This belligerent shift undermined the successes of the mainstream movement and widened an already growing gap between non-violent integrationists and more radical activists. Additionally, Black Power drew fire because of its violent overtones and posed a threat to the lives of those it claimed to serve by thrusting angry black youth on to city streets.

The dissent caused by this new shift in tactics was widespread. For the purpose of this thesis, one of the most important byproducts of Black Power was the growing

alienation of the ranks of Jewish "allies" within the Civil Rights movement. Though

Jews had long participated in the movement many blacks did not see Jews as allies at all.

The previous chapter examined the circumstances and conditions facing Jewish

Americans during the fifties and sixties. It connected the tensions and factionalism of the

Jewish community to the vicissitude of post-war liberalism and the changing face of

international politics. The air of progress in the post-war years was soured by the

Vietnam War and by the stagnation of domestic social programs under the Johnson

administration. Though the mainstream Civil Rights movement could celebrate

increasing momentum, popularity, and high profile support, a hesitant government was

not willing to move at the pace desired by African Americans. Liberal groups like the

NAACP found some of its members leaving for more radical factions that were willing to

stand up against the government instead of worrying about distancing an ally. Despite all

of the progress made by Civil Rights workers, many did not believe things had gone far

enough. African and Jewish Americans faced similar experiences during this period.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how these same factors were key in the

development of black identity and shifted the course of blacks throughout the movement

setting the stage for a discussion in the following chapter about how these similar

experiences facilitated and influenced black-Jewish relations in the late sixties.

Identity

In 1903 W.E.B. DuBois wrote of a duality in the spirit of the American Negro: "An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[111] DuBois spoke of the desire to be able to celebrate both identities equally, "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."[112] DuBois went on to co-found the NAACP in order to reconcile the identity crisis facing African Americans. Throughout the period between 1909 and 1954 DuBois and those within the organization fought racism from within the system in an attempt to illustrate that being American and being black was not a contradiction. The duality persisted, however, even as the movement embraced ever more confrontational tactics of non-violent civil disobedience in the late fifties and early sixties. While Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights in his demand for equal and fair treatment, groups such as the Nation of Islam argued that black and American identities were irreconcilable. In these circles, the focus was on transcending duality by casting aside as many vestiges of *American* Negro culture and history as possible and celebrating a new culture that was partly invented and partly borrowed from African traditions.[113] As historian James H. Cone suggested, "King's life

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[111] W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 1.
[112] Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1.
[113] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 32-35.

represented only one side of the African-American experience, the *American* side. The

African side was represented in the life of Malcolm X."[114]

The struggle to achieve a distinct identity, though present throughout the history

of African Americans, was particularly notable in the era following the Second World

War. This period was a pivotal turning point for race relations in the United States. Not

only was wartime itself an eye-opener for those who served, the post-war era brought

with it a torrent of disappointments, changes and promises. Events on the world stage, a

new surge of liberal optimism, and a newly confident segment of the black population

excited American blacks and made them believe that their time was coming. A defiant

'never again' attitude brought American Jews and Blacks (as well as other groups)

together in the cause for greater equality. They agreed with President Harry Truman,

who declared in his 1948 message to Congress, *To Secure These Rights*, that Americans

must close "the pervasive gap between our aims and what we actually do" in order to stop

"a kind of moral dry rot which eats away at the emotional and rational bases of

democratic beliefs."[115] This was a formative period for the Civil Rights movement.

Momentum was clearly building in favor of American minorities and it appeared as

though a new optimism would eventually carry the day. However, the rhetoric brought

with it the threat of discontent if progress was not made. The government would take

cautious steps towards conciliation during these years. The ways in which these steps

were, or in many cases were not, carried out determined the shape of the African

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[114] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 37.
[115] US President's Committee on Civil Rights, *To Secure These Rights*, 139-141, as cited in Carol A.
   Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005),126.

American identity crisis, an identity crisis which would eventually manifest as fault lines within the Civil Rights movement itself.

The experience of the Second World War was frustrating for African Americans. Men who answered the call to save the world from fascism returned to a country that disrespected them and discounted their sacrifice. "We get along fine with the Negro, why change?" was a sentiment common among white veterans during the early post-war years.[116] During the war itself, the sight of African Americans in military uniforms sparked racial violence more than once. The worst riots occurred in New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit; but lynching in the South persisted as well.[117]

While some white soldiers came to the realization through combat that black soldiers were just as human as they were, they were in the minority. In Pennsylvania, the severe beating of a black soldier in camp led to a hostile gathering of frustrated black servicemen. They were fired upon by a group of white soldiers during the fracas. Chicago native Dempsey Travis was wounded and recalled hearing, from the back of the ambulance, one white soldier ask the driver why they were shooting fellow soldiers. The driver responded: "Who ever told you niggers were our soldiers? Where I come from we shoot niggers like we shoot rabbits."[118] In 1943, Travis also remembered being shocked at the severity of Southern racism in Virginia as he witnessed German POWs being chosen to ride in the front of a bus while black soldiers sat in the back. Overseas, paranoia about race relations was so severe that a black soldier, ignoring an order not to

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[116] Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in The Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 19-20.
[117] Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 20-21.
[118] Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 23.

talk to French locals, was shot in the back by a white officer as he was served coffee by a French woman. Black soldiers returned home hoping for some measure of respect, or appreciation, but found that life, especially in the South, was largely unchanged and that whites were happy to keep it that way.[119]

The Second World War was nevertheless a catalyst for change among African Americans. As with the First World War, it spurred a mass migration of blacks to northern cities. Growing frustration towards Southern bigotry and the industrialization of agriculture - particularly in the cotton industry - accelerated this resettlement.[120] The shift pushed European immigrants into suburban residences (though their businesses, more often than not, remained in the cities) as African Americans took their places in the ghettos.[121] Moreover, the migration added crucial numbers to a black voter base that would support African-American protest movements in the South.[122] Finally, blacks expected the progress toward desegregation made during wartime to continue. President Roosevelt's controversial Executive Order 8802, for example, had created the Fair Employment Practices Committee in order to placate African Americans who wanted a greater role in the wartime labor force. Legislation towards fair treatment in labor and Truman's desegregation of the armed forces set a precedent for government involvement in the question of Civil Rights. With pressure, it was believed that more gains would be

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[119] Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 23-25.

[120] August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (London: Constable, 1966), 241.

[121] The significance of the ghettoization of African Americans will be discussed later in this chapter.

[122] The 1948 election of Truman over Henry Wallace's Progressive party was evidence of this, as the Truman administration was better able to appeal to black voters despite the fact that Wallace may have believed more in their cause. By guaranteeing Civil Rights legislation Truman was able to secure a large enough number of black votes to beat Republican Candidate Thomas Dewey. (See Szold et al., *American Jewish Year Book*. 22-23.)

on the way. Blacks expected such measures to develop further in the post-war years, and, eventually, to make it feasible for all African Americans to live better lives.[123]

It should be should be clear that the post-war United States experienced by African Americans was an obvious example of the sort of eternal frustration in the duality of spirit that W.E.B. DuBois wrote of in 1903. Blacks, in short, had fought proudly for their country and returned to the same racism they had faced before. As the war proceeded, the consequences of racism became clear to the world. The racially motivated murder of millions of people by the Nazis was a demonstration of what happened when racism was left unchecked and, indeed, encouraged by the state. The universal disgust on the part of the Allies made African Americans more confident that the way they were treated in their country was not sustainable.[124] Moreover, the dynamics of global politics found the United States in conflict with its recent ally, Soviet Russia. As the United States and its allies pointed to the evils of Communism and the plight of millions in Soviet territory, Soviet propaganda humiliated the United States by exposing its treatment of blacks. Though ironic, as Soviet Russia could hardly be said to have a good record regarding human rights, this shone an unwanted spotlight on the U.S. government that served as powerful incentive for change.[125] Even while defending American principles, African Americans were deemed inferior merely because of the color of their skin. They fought for the idealistic causes of Democracy and Freedom but came home to find that being American still did not supersede being black. Being black meant you were barely

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[123] Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 247.
[124] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 124.
[125] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 124.

American.[126] These themes fueled an acceleration of liberalism during the post-war era.

There was a prevailing optimism that great progress would accompany the victories over

Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan – that the world would finally be made safe for

democracy. This feeling was encouraging to those in the mainstream movement who

hoped New Deal-era government social integration would continue to blossom.

Throughout the post-war years, liberal causes found increasing support; desegregation,

welfare and labor reform joined anti-communism at the center of the liberal agenda.

The post-war era, however, also saw a change in the nature of liberalism; the

beginning of a rift in America's left wing. It was in many ways a reaction to the violent

conservatism of the Nazi party. American liberals assumed that a changing international

landscape would encourage great progress at home. For many, the Holocaust was seen as

proof of the horrors of racism and a racial hierarchy. Some believed that Americans

might eventually treat blacks or Jews as the Nazis did. The result was a more robust

effort against racism in America that cast aside the Darwinian liberalism of the late

nineteenth century that suggested "racial hierarchy dictated the necessity of

discrimination and segregation."[127] Pressured by this new emphasis on equality and an

awareness of the contradictions of American principles and segregation, the Democratic

Party, despite heavy opposition from Southern 'Dixiecrats', "argued that such practices

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[126] It is worth nothing that African Americans were not alone in this distinction as Japanese Americans were not only segregated but incarcerated during the period of the Second World War . Meanwhile, Italian and German Americans enjoyed the rights all white Americans enjoyed. At the time, no one appeared to notice or find offensive the implicit racism of the rounding up of Japanese Americans. Those that did object, namely the NAACP, quickly backed down to patriotic pressure. (Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 86-87.)

[127] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 121.

violated fundamental American political values."[128] This new emphasis on racial

equality, though in many cases resulting in only token concessions, served to expand on

the New Deal-era promise of greater federal involvement in society and the economy. It

rejected the Jim Crow-ism of the South, but acknowledged the so-called "American

Dilemma" – based on a book of the same name written by Gunnar Myrdal – that pitted

the "enduring political values" of white Americans against their "ingrained anti-African

prejudice."[129] The liberal focus of the next ten years, then, included an effort to reshape

the consciousness of white America by emphasizing the equal abilities and character of

American minorities. It aimed to level the playing field by removing or deflating racial

stereotypes and stigma.

Despite the disappointment of continuing domestic racism after the war, there was

no shortage of inspiring events throughout the world that seemed to support the new

liberal agenda and to encourage black optimism. Possibly the most important event of

the early post-war years, especially in terms of African Americans, was the principle of

national self-determination. A carry-over from Wilsonian promises of the First World

War and the failed League of Nations, the self-determination of former colonies was

finally becoming a reality. Furthermore, the end of the Second World War saw the

creation of the United Nations in 1945 and in 1948, following through on the promises

made in the Balfour Declaration, the founding of Israel. The creation of a state for Jews,

who had suffered horribly because of racism and prejudice for nearly their entire

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[128] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 121.
[129] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 121.

existence, became the ultimate success story for post-war liberalism. It was a

manifestation of progress and justice for those wronged by racial violence and was

thought to signal a profound change in global attitudes. In 1995 Murray Friedman,

recalled "personally the optimism that impelled many poor Jews of my generation into

leftist causes, even as the Cold War began, convinced that in these efforts lay the path to

a brave new world."[130]

The struggle for India's independence, led by Mahatma Gandhi, also drew the

attention of idealistic liberals who believed strongly in democracy and state intervention.

The granting of independence from Britain in 1947 was encouraging as an example both

of self-determination and of the utility of non-violence as a means to an end. Martin

Luther King Jr., who studied Gandhi at Crozer University in 1948, argued that non-

violence was the only viable protest option for the American Negro.[131]

Ghana's independence in 1957 was even more inspiring to African Americans.

American blacks with nationalist sympathies, such as the followers of the Nation of

Islam, were particularly pleased when Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first prime minister,

pledged to make his nation a beacon of "justice, tolerance, liberty, individual freedom,

and social progress."[132] Educated in America, Nkrumah understood that life for

American Blacks was discouraging. By being the leader of the first African nation to be

liberated from clutches of colonial Europe, he was a tremendous inspiration for the

movement – nationalist or otherwise – back home. Gamal Abdel Nasser's ascent to

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[130] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 132.
[131] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 29.
[132] Joseph E. Peniel, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 18-19.

power in Egypt provided further inspiration as he styled himself the leader of the newly

named Third World in its continuing struggle against imperialism. The result was a

strong emphasis on pan-Africanism, or in the case of Nasser, pan-Arabism, that further

attracted the Nation of Islam and represented, particularly to militant and nationalist

blacks, an international movement they could identify themselves with. "Almost every

African American intellectual and activist" was motivated in some way by the stories of

Ghana and Egypt where people considered inferior by white racists not only had power,

but ran their own countries.[133]

For white liberals and African Americans alike, the global climate was obviously

encouraging. The global trend toward ending colonial aggression and stopping racism

gave blacks hope that it would soon be their turn. Many assumed that post-war

disappointment would be replaced by exultation, as concrete progress seemed all but

inevitable. The international events of the post-war era provided evidence of the

capitulation of traditional white conservatives to liberal pressures. At home the situation

was deeply troubling, however, as black ex-servicemen and their wives were being

brutally lynched.[134] In the summer of 1946, Alvin Owsley, chairman of the American

Legion National Americanism Endowment Fund, wrote to President Eisenhower that

Blacks returning to the south after the war, filled with confidence that things were going

to change, were likely to be "hanged or to be burned alive at public lynchings by the

white men of the South."[135] His premonition, sadly, was correct. Between July and

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[133] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 48.
[134] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*,131-132.
[135] Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 28.

August of the summer of 1946, twelve black men were killed, many of them veterans.
One veteran, Maceo Snipes, was killed after registering to vote. Another, George Dorsey
(along with his brother in law and their wives), was murdered on July 25 over a domestic
dispute.[136] Something had to give. Fortunately, the United States government was also
beginning to take an active role in precipitating change, attempting to walk the fine line
between encouraging social change, bending cultural traditions, and pleasing
conservatives.

President Truman was not generally supportive of the African American cause.
His resistance was a result of the mounting Cold War and concerns about the threat of
socialism and communism. Compared to another war, domestic racial issues may have
been little more than a distraction. Truman, however, was nothing if not pragmatic.
Realizing the necessity of appealing to the new masses of black voters in the urban north,
his 1948 campaign platform included a conciliatory promise of new Civil Rights
progress. If successful, the legislation would "abolish the poll tax, establish lynching as a
federal crime, reduce discrimination in employment, and prohibit segregation in interstate
commerce."[137] Truman admitted that seeing the Klan in the South "scared the shit out of"
him and it was clear, at least in his rhetoric, that roaming vigilante and hate groups were
not something he was willing to tolerate. Though the Klan may have believed that it was
merely protecting its culture and heritage, the government was becoming more aware that
it could no longer turn a blind eye to racial violence in the United States.[138]

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[136] Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 28-29.
[137] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 125-126.
[138] Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 147.

In 1954, the most significant decision in the history of Civil Rights was passed down by the Supreme Court. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was a unanimous decision to desegregate American public schools. It was a tremendous victory for government interventionist liberals who believed blacks were promised equal education long ago. The NAACP had been litigating since 1938 to have inequality in schooling addressed. Chief Justice Earl Warren stated that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate education facilities are inherently unequal."[139] In a defiant and seemingly contradictory move, a number of Southern states attempted to stall desegregation by improving the conditions and funding for existing black schools. Though this was untenable and legally suspect, white fear of desegregation prompted these states to fund black schools at a rate of eight-hundred percent above what had been allocated before 1939. Still, by 1957, some "723 Southern school districts had been desegregated, and 300,000 black children were either attending formerly white schools or were part of a 'desegregated' school district."[140] The Civil Rights Act passed by Congress in 1957, meanwhile, assured federal voting rights to blacks and allowed the Justice Department to sue those state and local governments that supported segregation.[141] Such measures provided further proof to African Americans that the federal government was on their side; the hard work of liberal groups such as CORE and the NAACP were finally beginning to bear fruit in greater freedom.

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[139] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 38.
[140] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 39.
[141] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 39-40.

Of course, there would be little to talk about if desegregation had worked as planned. From the time of the *Brown* decision right up to the 1960s black children attempting to enter white schools in various Southern communities were greeted by angry mobs, curious press, indifferent police and, in the case of Little Rock, Arkansas, National Guardsman, who, under the command of governor Orval E. Faubus, denied black students entry into public high schools.[142] Violence erupted in the South as mobs of angry white citizens came into conflict with blacks attempting to exercise their new legal rights.

Frustrations mounted in the years following the *Brown* decision. Despite the reaffirmation of their right to vote and have an equal education, African Americans in the South were often prevented from exercising this right. Black resistance to Jim Crow began to find expression on the streets. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to move to a seat at the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Though she did not know it then, she would be considered one of the most important representatives of African-American frustration during the era known as the second reconstruction. Before long, black students were demanding to be served at 'whites only' lunch counters. Protestors began to exercise their new rights to be treated as equal by openly defying segregation in bus stations and other public spaces. Boycotts began against stores that did not hire black employees. The post-war push for more freedom had, indeed, delivered change to black Americans. Groups like the NAACP, CORE, and the progressive wing of the Democratic Party made excellent strides during the decade after the war in demonstrating that American

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[142] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 40-41.

minorities were due the Civil Rights promised to them generations before. However,

these groups had done little to address the fervent racism in the South and even less to

address economic disparity and repression in the North. Though *Brown* was a huge

disappointment for Southern Blacks, its frustrations roused the black public and served as

a spark that led to the mainstream Civil Rights movement. The resistance by Southern

states to act on federal laws illustrated the stubbornness and resourcefulness of

segregationists. It also demonstrated the federal government's inability, or

unwillingness, to enforce its legislation. It was two steps forward and one step back.

Action and Reaction

The actions of Civil Rights groups, particularly the non-violent initiatives of

Martin Luther King Jr., the NAACP, and the SCLC in the years after the *Brown* decision,

were intended as a reminder to white Americans that African Americans were not just

going to patiently back down. Frustrated by the fact that federal legislation was blatantly

ignored in the South while Jim Crow continued to thrive, the movement took to the

streets to face segregation head-on. Not only were Civil Rights activists met by a

stubborn conservative opposition seeking to preserve their "way of life," they also

encountered white resistance that grew increasingly violent, dangerous and angry as Civil

Rights demonstrations escalated. Suddenly Southern whites were told that it was time for

promises made at the end of the Civil War to come to fruition; their children had to attend

schools with black children, their heritage and traditions were unconstitutional,

segregation had to end, and blacks were equal in the eyes of the law.

Between 1955 and 1959 nearly all Southern cities created White Citizens'

Councils comprised of middle-to-upper class whites dedicated to maintaining

segregation. In 1956 dozens of Southern communities passed their own Jim Crow laws

to maintain segregation in schools and society. Georgia made it a crime to spend tax

dollars on any mixed-race school. Mississippi made it illegal for African Americans to

enter any white schools. The state of Alabama denounced the *Brown* decision entirely.

Louisiana and Mississippi even went so far as to amend their state constitutions to reflect

their endorsement, on moral and medical grounds, of the separation of black and white

students.[143] In February 1956, white resistance proved how violent it could get as a riot

erupted over the admission of Autherine Lucy at the University of Alabama. She was

expelled shortly thereafter and sued the state, arguing that mob-rule and violent elements

had won out over legal obligations. Though she won the case, the school maintained the

expulsion anyway. The white resistance learned that it could have its way if violence was

the means of protest. [144]

The case of Autherine Lucy also evoked growing frustration with the gradual

progress in the South. After the incident, President Eisenhower stated that "if you try to

go too far, too fast in laws in this delicate field… you're making a mistake. I believe

we've got to have laws that go along with education and understanding and I think if you

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[143] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 42.

[144] Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A. DeVinney, Madison Davis Lacy, et al. 2006. "Fighting Back (1957-1962)" *Eyes on the prize*. [Alexandria, Va.]: PBS Video.

go beyond that at any one time... you've got trouble."[145] It was clear that the federal

government was not yet willing to step in to enforce desegregation. At Lucy's trial, her

lawyer, the prominent NAACP leader Thurgood Marshall, responding to criticism that

Lucy's admission was going too far and too fast, declared "maybe you can't over-ride

prejudice over night, but the emancipation proclamation was issued in 1863, ninety-odd

years ago. I believe in gradualism, but I also believe that ninety-odd years is pretty

gradual."[146]

In 1957, the year of the founding of the SCLC, governor of Arkansas Orval E.

Faubus declared that nine black students chosen to attend a white school would not be

allowed into the building. He called on National Guardsmen to turn the students away.[147]

The use of state troops in disobeying federal law was a shock to the country and a

discouraging message to African Americans that perhaps the progress made through

liberal initiatives was in vain. Resistance continued in other states as other black students

were turned away from schools by angry mobs. Pressure mounted on President

Eisenhower. Critics charged that he was supporting the violence by not acting against

it.[148] Eisenhower met with Faubus but he proved to be uncooperative. Though the

governor removed the National Guard he only replaced them with local police who had a

limited capacity to subdue their own people. The riot that ensued as the nine students

entered the school the next day made it obvious that the federal government would have

to force the hands of segregationist leaders.

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[145] Hampton et al, "Fighting Back."
[146] Hampton et al, "Fighting Back."
[147] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 40-41.
[148] Hampton et al, "Fighting Back."

On the night of riot, Eisenhower mobilized the 101st Airborne to Little Rock.[149] They escorted the students to the school the next day, setting a startling precedent of the federal government essentially occupying one of its own states in order to ensure that the law was followed. Melba Pattillo Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine, recalled feeling that day a sense of "pride and hope that, yes, this is the United States. Yes, there is a reason I salute the flag… and it's going to be O.K." However, she also felt that the arrival of the troops signaled a declaration of war in the South as Southerners found their traditions being threatened with occupation by their own military.[150]

The events in Little Rock, of course, were only the beginning of open confrontation in the South designed to remind whites of the legal rights of African Americans. Since it was clear that legislation was not enough to topple years of racism and the statute of limitations on gradualism was quickly approaching its expiry date, the Civil Rights movement, with Martin Luther King as its primary leader, began to take serious action to expose white hatred, embolden African Americans, and facilitate Black Americans reaching the same status as white Americans. The movement was bolstered by a pragmatic government, with chief executives ranging from a reluctant Truman to a very cautious Eisenhower to an enthusiastic but hesitant John F. Kennedy Jr., found itself increasingly pressured by idealistic liberal groups. Federal actions increasingly showed that the Democratic administrations were willing to speak out against racism, segregation, bigotry, and the injustice faced by American minorities. Since wartime the

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[149] Hampton et al, "Fighting Back."
[150] Hampton et al, "Fighting Back."

army had been desegregated, jobs were increased for black workers, lynching was outlawed, bills granted voting rights, schools were desegregated, and federal troops had escorted blacks through mobs into white schools thereby forcing the hand of segregationists to adopt new laws and attitudes.

The methods of the mainstream Civil Rights movement and its pacifistic leadership were designed explicitly to target the injustice of racism. It was hoped that pointing out the contradictions between the ideals the United States was founded on and the oppression faced by African Americans would be influential in changing attitudes on race relations. The idea was to show white America that African Americans were not going to go away, to prove that they were not going to simply give up on improving their lives because of racist white resistance.

The method chosen to combat racism was one that, from the very beginning, divided the black struggle for freedom. Non-violence, the tactic of the mainstream movement advocated by Martin Luther King Jr., served a variety of purposes. First, King argued, it would be a far safer course for African Americans. Having just seen in the Holocaust the horrors of focused genocide in Nazi Germany, it was thought that an armed black movement would only invite a more severe or potentially deadly white backlash and further delay government action on Civil Rights. Furthermore, the philosophy was based generally on both the teachings of Jesus Christ, which would resonate well with the

predominantly Christian African-American community, and those of Gandhi, who was an international role model for anti-colonialism and freedom.[151]

While opponents of non-violence like Malcom X and the Nation of Islam believed that non-violence only served to take self-defense away from victimized blacks, King argued that non-violence made victims of their oppressors. It was his belief that the tactic "weakened the morale" of the violent racist. In his *American Dream* speech in March of 1961, King argued that if the oppressor "beats you, you develop the power to accept it without retaliating… If he throws you in jail in the process, you go in there and transform the jail from a dungeon of shame to a haven of freedom and human dignity. Even if he tries to kill you, you develop the quiet courage of dying if necessary without killing. This," King insisted, "was the power of non-violence."[152]

Ultimately, what eventually became the most divisive aspect of non-violence was the fact that those who brutalized blacks could be redeemed by it. King believed that non-violence carried with it a moral strength that could turn racists into allies once they realized their actions were reprehensible. "This refusal to hit back," claimed King in a 1956 speech on desegregation, "will cause the oppressors to become ashamed of their own methods and we will be able to transform the enemy into a friend."[153] Furthermore, he believed that participating in non-violent protest promoted a sense of courage and

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[151] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 76-77.

[152] Martin Luther King, Jr, "The American Dream" (12 March 1961) as cited in Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 77.

[153] Martin Luther King, Jr, "Desegregation and the Future," address given 1 December 1956 at the National Committee for Rural Schools, New York, in KCA, as cited in Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 77.

price among the participants. They were using morals to achieve something morally

constructive and right.[154]

Though the televised image of Birmingham, Alabama's public safety

commissioner Theophilus Eugene 'Bull' Connor turning loose dogs, firehoses, and armed

police against women and children in May 1963 shocked the world into recognizing the

severity of Southern American racism, it did nothing to transform southern white

supremacists.[155] Even at Selma, Alabama, the march that caused the greatest legislative

victory of the mainstream Civil Rights movement, the signing of the Voting Rights Act,

non-violent protestors (at that point both black and white) found themselves being

trampled and beaten by officers on horseback.

Over time, it became clear to those passionate about Civil Rights and the

movement that white Americans were not, as hoped, redeemed by the non-violent

suffering of blacks. The burning of busses in 1961 and violent assaults on the "freedom

riders" who rode them, the beatings of protestors by Southern police and over-crowding

of jails, the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman

in Mississippi, the police assault against peaceful marchers in Selma in 1965, the

shooting of James Meredith in 1966, and the assassination of King himself in April, 1968

were only a fraction of the violent outrages visited upon non-violent Civil Rights activists

during the sixties. While King himself eventually realized that non-violence was not a

redemptive agent for Southern whites, there were many others who, earlier in the

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[154] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 78.
[155] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 68.

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movement, grew frustrated at the persistence of white violence and the slow pace of progress for the mainstream movement.[156] Non-violence failed to affect the heart of Southern racism. Though non-violence prompted legislative measures and the federal government's commitment to enforcing laws for voting, access rights, and education, racist attitudes still prevented African Americans from achieving all of their goals. Though the mainstream movement saw the progress as a great boon to reconciling the duality of the black spirit, the continued racism was a key part of the mounting frustration that threatened to split the movement and, with it, the concept of black identity.

There were a number of factors for this frustration that lead to the eventual rift in the movement. Among the most important of them was an initiative for real political clout, and eventual power, in the South, The Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964. The Freedom Summer was a project aimed at educating blacks about their political options and registering them to vote. Started by representative of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Bob Moses after witnessing the ridiculous obstacles faced by blacks wanting to vote in Mississippi, the Freedom Summer was a call to the Civil Rights movement to fight against racism in what was regarded to be the most violent and racist state in the union. SNCC opened 41 freedom schools for political education – teaching uneducated blacks the process of voting registration, the ins and

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[156] Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, in *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 69-71 points out that between the mid 1950s to mid 1960s, it was not uncommon to see members of the SCLC, NAACP, or CORE carrying firearms for personal self-defense or the defense of their homes. He points out that "they did not consider their willingness to accept physical assaults in marches or sit-ins incongruent with their belief in protecting their own lives or their families' lives." He also mentions instances where the SCLC armed defenders engaged in "at least one" shootout against white attackers and points out that the Nation of Islam, a pro-self-defense group, actually banned Muslims from carrying guns and certain knives.

outs of the electoral system and what sorts of questions they would be asked by the bigoted registrars – that doubled as night-time meeting places.[157] It was met by the staunch resistance of the White Citizens Councils and racial violence that resulted in the deaths of 6 black activists, 1,000 arrests, dozens of bombed buildings, and the burning of three-dozen black churches.

Among the casualties of the Freedom Summer were James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman. Chaney was a black activist. Schwerner and Goodman were Northern, Jewish Civil Rights activists who had answered a national call for support against segregation. Their disappearance became national news. White Americans were stunned to see that racial violence against blacks was being extended even to those whites who wanted to help. Though their deaths were tragic for the movement – and notably in both black and Jewish groups – they also served as yet another point of contention for frustrated blacks. For many, it appeared as though the country and the media cared more about Civil Rights when it was costing a few white lives than when it had cost many black lives. Eventually, this frustration culminated in a purge of white supporters from SNCC and was a major factor in the growing split between Jews and African Americans in the late 1960s.[158]

The frustrations of the Mississippi Freedom Summer did not end with the deaths of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney, however. The ultimate letdown came with the story of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and their charismatic spokesperson,

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[157] Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A. DeVinney, Madison Davis Lacy, et al. 2006. "Mississippi: Is This America? (1963-1964)" *Eyes on the prize*. [Alexandria, Va.]: PBS Video.
[158] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 75.

Fannie Lou Hamer. At the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City that year

there were two delegations from Mississippi: the traditional Democratic candidate, and

the MFDP, led by Hamer. Her nationally televised speech to the credentials committee,

which openly questioned the inaction of government in stopping racist violence and

called out to the committee for fair treatment and representation, was cut off by President

Johnson because of his concerns over disrupting party unity. Ultimately, Johnson

pressured liberals to marginalize the MFDP. They were only offered two seats,

preventing them from being the representatives of Mississippi. As conciliation,

Democratic Party leaders also vowed to ban from the party any Democrats who were

openly discriminatory. The decision was a huge blow to black confidence in the federal

government. Hamer famously commented afterwards that the protestors "didn't come all

this way for no two seats when all of us is tired." [159]

The frustrations experienced by the MFDP were a tremendous blow to the

mainstream Civil Rights movement. Though government had stepped in occasionally in

places like Little Rock and had provided some protection for peaceful demonstrators, and

had created some legislation and provided *some* pressure in cracking segregation, many

blacks had become frustrated and disillusioned. Racism, legal or not, was still

omnipresent. The South was resisting changes just as fervently as it had from the

beginning. Even when protestors managed to have success through the democratic

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[159] Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A.
   DeVinney, Madison Davis Lacy, et al. 2006. "Bridge to Freedom (1965)," *Eyes on the prize*.
   [Alexandria, Va.]: PBS Video.

process, a reluctant federal government throttled their progress and trivialized what they had fought for.

The days of patient, non-violent, gradualism were beginning to come to an end. Many, such as SNCC's Stokely Carmichael, argued that blacks should not wait for freedom - they should take it. Frustrated by the media's focus on relatively infrequent white casualties and indifference to the abundant black ones, some groups began to turn more to nationalist militancy. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael uttered the phrase "Black Power" during the Meredith March. Though in principle Black Power had existed in the words and actions of Marcus Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, Malcolm X, and in the spirit of the founding of Ghana, this marked the first real public endorsement of the term from the movement itself.

The previous summer, blacks had shown their frustration as a riot erupted in Watts, California, just outside of Los Angeles. The multi-day crisis served to change the nature of the movement in a dramatic way. It became apparent that the fight against racism was not something that would be solely and primarily Southern. In the North, blacks were being economically dominated in urban ghettos. Suddenly the movement was no longer about being able to wait in the same waiting room with whites. It became a much more daunting movement focused on achieving parity with (or even superiority over) white America. At the forefront of this new movement was Black Power, based on same principals as the MFDP and the Lowndes County voter drive that was the eventual

inspiration for the Black Panther Party.[160] The idea, largely spearheaded by SNCC

initially through numerous voter registration drives, was for blacks to govern themselves

since no white official would ever really care about black issues. Black Power was the

culmination of years of liberal promises that failed to deliver. It was an almost inevitable

backlash against white aggression. And, ultimately, it marked the end of the mainstream

Civil Rights movement as a dividing line was loosely drawn between liberals, the

factions still willing to work with government, and those who now wanted to make it,

proudly, defiantly, on their own steam.

Culturally, the period of Black Power and the events leading up to it did much to

foster an identity crisis among blacks that, again referencing DuBois' duality, expanded

on the contradictions of being American and being black. For centuries blacks had been

made to believe they were inferior. They were held accountable to white standards of

civilization, culture, and beauty. Racist and stereotyped imagery of Blacks in popular

culture and the media eventually caused many of them to believe what they saw. They

were encouraged in their own media to whiten their skin. Those with lighter skin were

chosen above others in service jobs. Racist epithets became more common amongst

blacks themselves.[161]

As early as the 1920s, the father of Black Power, Marcus Garvey, pleaded with

blacks to throw away their supposedly assimilationist culture. It was developed in a

society that was inherently anti-Black and obviously self-destructive. In response,

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[160] Peniel, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour*, 124.
[161] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 6-7.

organizations like Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the

African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) fought to combat and denounce stereotypes that came

from being dependent on a racist system. The torch carried by these groups in the pre-

war years was, after the Second World War, taken up by the Nation of Islam.[162] The

growing popularity of the Nation of Islam (re)introduced African culture into black

communities. Shrugging off the African-American contributions to American culture

likes jazz and blues, the NOI argued, taking Garvey's ideas further, that such pieces of

black culture only celebrated the slave experience they were derived from. Instead, they

focused on a more pure African-like culture that encouraged unity and consolidation

among blacks. Other cultural movements, be they inspired specifically by Black Power

or merely a as backlash against assimilation, developed in the late sixties that served to

celebrate a black culture not derived from American experiences. They took on Swahili

names and denounced their past. They wore their hair in natural afros. They wore bright

colors and proudly stood out. Black Power preached self-love and encouragement that

black was beautiful and natural, and went to work at attempting to break down the

centuries of self-hatred and low self-esteem that white Americans had projected onto

blacks.

As the hot summers of riots and frustration racked the country, blacks found

themselves torn in a number of directions. The urban mob violence was not a

manifestation of Black Power as much as it was the peak of frustration. The federal

government had passed its bills but made it clear with the marginalization of the MFDP

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[162] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 6-9.

that it was not comfortable with black elected officials. Progress was too slow. Blacks

had been let down by the slow progress of gradual integrationism and movement leaders

had begun to take matters into their own hands. Meanwhile, the question of what it

meant to be black was being asked earnestly. While some groups declared what being

black meant, the reality is that black communities everywhere, whether they were

supporters of black power or not, found themselves swept up by a sense of pride in where

they had come from. At the same time, the remnants of the movement continued to stress

caution that Black Power would only bring pain to blacks nationwide.

The split between the mainstream non-violent movement and the more militant

proponents of Black Power was crucial to the relationship between African Americans

and Jews towards the end of the 1960s. The frustrations with liberal gradualism and so-

called patronizing from white supporters caused deep rifts between the two minorities.

The fallout from this affected relationships nearly across the board. Just as Jewish groups

had experienced a split that saw radical leftist groups in confrontation with moderate

groups and moderates in confrontation with more conservative elements, so too did

African Americans find their attention torn between multiple sides. Furthermore,

throughout it all, both groups found themselves attempting to clarify their status as

American citizens, molding their rich histories into something coherent and relevant to

the time. The following chapter serves to analyze and explain the interrelations of black

and Jewish Americans as their various crises played off of one another.

Chapter 3

During the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, the disappearance of Civil

Rights volunteers James Cheney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman became

national news. On Sunday, June 21, Goodman's first day as a volunteer in the state, they

set out to investigate the burnt remains of a black Methodist church that had been a

meeting place for activists only weeks before. That afternoon they were pulled over by

police and taken in for questioning. They were released late that evening and were not

heard from again.[163] The men had been a part of the momentous and controversial voter

drive in the black communities of Mississippi that aimed to crack the lily-white power

structure of the state, particularly in areas where blacks outnumbered whites by as much

as four hundred percent. The movement, largely organized by the Student Non-Violent

Coordinating Committee, spent the summer erecting so-called "Freedom Schools" that

not only served as schools for children, but also coached blacks on the proper procedures

for voter registration as well as serving as night-time meeting places for the burgeoning

movement.[164] As the black communities organized and worked vigilantly to exercise

their constitutional rights they were met by increasing resistance from the state's White

Citizens Councils created during the 1950s to combat desegregation. Tougher laws were

drafted to discourage black voters and slow down registration. Furthermore, blacks were

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[163] Hampton et al, "Missippi."
[164] Hampton et al, "Mississppi."

met with racial violence aimed to further discourage their attempts at equality. During

the course of the summer, violence against Mississippi's black community resulted in the

deaths of 6 black activists, 1,000 arrests, dozens of bombed buildings, and the burning of

three dozen black churches.

The disappearance and presumed death of Schwerner, Cheney, and Goodman,

however, was met with more national attention than any of the racially motivated

violence to date. President Lyndon Johnson had even ordered a statewide search of the

missing men, using national troops to scour the terrain. This unusual amount of attention

was not because of the gravity of three missing workers and their possible demise at the

hands of bigots. Such tragedies were hardly something new to the black struggle. It was

news because Schwerner and Goodman were white. They were young Northern Jewish

Civil Rights activists who had answered the call of the mainstream movement for help in

Mississippi. Many white Americans were stunned to see that racial violence against

blacks was being extended even to those whites that wished to help them. There was an

impression that segregationist violence had gone too far. Days later, at a press

conference, Schwerner's wife Rita made a statement that was indicative of the

disappointment within the movement itself and also foreshadowed frustrations to come:

> It's Tragic, as far as I'm concerned, that white Northerners have to be caught up
> in the machinery of injustice and indifference in the south before the American
> people register concern. I personally suspect that if Mr. Cheney, who is a native
> Mississippian Negro, had been alone at the time of the disappearance, that this
> case, like so many others that have come before, would have gone completely
> unnoticed.[165]

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[165] Hampton et al, "Mississsppi."

The movement went on, however, bringing the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that registered a great deal of new black voters and even made it as far as the Democratic National Convention. The experience of cooperation between local blacks, Northern white volunteers, and Civil Rights organizations created a tremendous sense of unity amongst Civil Rights activists everywhere, black and white, that eventually reached its apex at Selma, Alabama the following year as record numbers of white supporters joined blacks on the march that ultimately brought forward new voter legislation.

On August 4, 1964, the bodies of Goodman, Schwerner, and Cheney were found. All three had been shot and Cheney had been severely beaten. Despite requests by their parents that they should be buried together, Goodman and Cheney were buried in separate cemeteries as state segregation laws extended even though death.[166] This separation was symbolic, however, of things to come. It was symbolic of friction within the movement between the black struggle and its white supporters. It foreshadowed the tension and eventual "separation" of two of America's most prominent and active minorities, sometimes considered "allies" in the fight for Civil Rights.

A great number of Jewish and African Americans shared the experience of the Civil Rights Movement. United by a mutually beneficial desire to see racism play a diminished role in American public life, Jews were never all that far from the front lines of the black struggle for equality. Be it in courtrooms, planning offices, on marches, in sit-ins, or as more distant benefactors, the presence and assistance of Jews added much to

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[166] Hampton et al, "Mississsppi."

the movement that is largely underrated today. "It is a truism," argued Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, "that a society which is unstable or unsafe for either [of us] will be at best precarious for both."[167] Indeed, the mainstream movement gained much by working with Jews who had already cracked the white power structure.

Jews worked alongside blacks throughout the course of the mainstream movement in crucial organizations like the NAACP, CORE, and SNCC. Jews had ridden alongside blacks in both of the Freedom Ride campaigns in the south. They had joined the NAACP in the courtrooms in battles over desegregation. They provided black activists in the movement with money and resources essential to spreading the word on Civil Rights. Indeed, relations between blacks and Jews in the United States had been largely better than black relations with any other white group. Jews were among the first to treat blacks with equal respect as customers and tenants, and associated with blacks socially at times when no self-respecting White Anglo-Saxon Protestant would be caught dead doing so.[168]

The deaths of Goodman and Schwerner, however, marked an incredibly important event in the history of black-Jewish relations. The national attention, both by media and the American public, garnered by the deaths of two young white Jews in Mississippi offended a number of young black activists both inside and outside the mainstream movement. It was as though white America could not be bothered to care about the plight of African Americans unless whites were also endangered. Countless black activists had given their lives to the cause of Civil Rights and expired in the same way as

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[167] Gittelsohn, *Negro and Jew*, 46.
[168] Albert Vorspan, "Black and Jews," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 205-207.

Goodman and Schwerner without national attention and outrage. As a result, many

began to question the role of whites – paying little attention to denomination – within the

movement.

Between the summer of 1964 and the end of 1969, a dramatic rift was created in

the Civil Rights movement. Militaristic and nationalistic groups of blacks denounced

white patronage, feeling that white supporters were, at least in part, responsible for a

continued emphasis on non-violence and government liberalism that continually failed to

deliver equality. Focus shifted to power structures and economics, places where the Civil

Rights movement had mistakenly failed to improve life for blacks. Frustrated by the

paternalism implicit in white help, SNCC went as far as to purge the group of all white

members. As a result, many Jews were offended by the idea that their help was no longer

wanted, especially given their history of supporting the struggle, and withdrew their

assistance altogether. While blacks saw the deaths of Schwerner and Goodman as

examples of why whites should not be involved, Jews saw the young men as examples

that Jews too were willing to pay the ultimate price for equal rights.

During the long hot summers between 1965 and 1967, riots and violence in black

communities in America's cities from California to New York saw the destruction of

white-owned, in many cases Jewish, stores. Urban blacks, led in part by the example of

Malcolm X – who would in one sentence chide Jews on their stinginess and the next

appeal to blacks to "help… and respect themselves 'the way the Jews do'"[169] – became

increasingly vocal about the economic conditions of the ghettos made worse by

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[169] Jacob Cohen in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 11.

exploitative Jewish landlords and shop owners. As cries of Black Power emerged from city centers across the country and the popularity of nationalist groups like that Nation of Islam blossomed, Jews began to reevaluate their relationship with African Americans. Coupled with violence, many whites saw Black Power as not only a threat to their personal safety, but also the white power structure. Both groups, closely linked in the fight for Civil Rights, now came to a head in the urban ghettos of Northern cities. As early as 1966, only one year after the unifying success of the Selma March, the Jewish journal *Midstream* was asking a symposium to assess the threat and sources of "Negro anti-Semitism." In 1968 anti-Semitic flyers penned by extremist blacks became a major cause for concern in New York City. By early 1969, the Anti-Defamation League declared that New York was in "crisis" as anti-Semitism among black communities suddenly appeared to be a tremendous threat to Jewish well-being in the wake of the community-controlled schooling project in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Despite the fact that real tensions were localized almost entirely in New York City, representatives of both groups felt the shockwaves across the country.

The relationship between African Americans and Jews in the late 1960s was incredibly complex. On the surface it was largely framed in terms of class and economics. As blacks moved into what were once Jewish neighborhoods, they found that even though most of the Jews had moved into the suburbs they still owned stores and apartment buildings within the city. As the frustrations of poverty and poor conditions grew, so too did animosity towards the white representatives of the oppressive economic structure: shop owners, landlords, bankers, and welfare workers, a good portion of whom happened to be Jewish. Some attributed the animosity simply to the growing pains that

come with naturally when any minority group displaces another within a culture or society. Deep below the surface, though, the relationship was far more comprehensive.

Jewish and African Americans were two groups undergoing analogous changes within their ranks both before and during the late 1960s. Though they had vastly different histories, their status, both in perception and reality, brought the groups together as coworkers in the fight to bring true equality to American life. Despite the desire by militant blacks to shed their reliance on white paternalism, the groups, as a product of burgeoning black populations in America's cities in what were once Jewish neighborhoods, remained very much in close contact. Throughout the period, their relationships with one another represented the tribulations within their groups and informed changes to come. Despite what many see as a split between two allies, the period of the late 1960s saw the groups become irrevocably intertwined in a mutually supportive and antagonistic connection that spoke volumes about the deeper identity issues and crises that lay below the surface.

This chapter seeks to analyze the relationship between American Jews and blacks during the late 1960s. Through published writings from scholars and role-players of the period, it is possible to illustrate that tension between the minorities erupted, in some ways, as a result of deeper personal conflicts within themselves. By the time the mainstream movement realized that the right to eat at a lunch counter did not mean anything if you could not afford to eat, it was too late. The result was the true beginning of identity politics that started with the two groups most closely positioned as America's most prominent victim came to a head in the urban centers of the United States.

Differences

Though the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which the Jewish

and African American relationship was a product of similar experiences, it is vitally

important to acknowledge the differences between the two. Besides the apparent

symptoms like skin color the groups also brought to the table wildly divergent cultures,

histories, and perspectives that complicated their association. These distinctions are

crucial because, although the groups could overlook their differences when working

together in the mainstream movement, they often spoke volumes about the sources of

frustration and resentment when friction between the two occurred in the late 1960s.

One of the most glaring distinctions between the two groups is the way in which

they came to the United States: one of them came freely, the other in chains. Obvious

though it may be, this difference is one that is surprisingly overlooked by a number of

Jewish critics of the black movement in the late 1960s. For example, in *Midstream*'s

forum on black/Jewish relations, *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, only a

handful of twenty-seven authors (the vast majority of which were Jewish)[170] chiming in

on the question of black anti-Semitism dutifully acknowledge that "Jews came to

America because they wanted to – freely, hopefully, passionately. Negroes first set foot

on this soil as captive slaves."[171]

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[170] Jacob J. Weinstein in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 134-135 and Gittelsohn, *Negro and Jew*, 41.
[171] Gittelsohn, *Negro and Jew*, 41.

The reason for this omission can be recognized as a response to the northern migration of African Americans that had steadily increased since the time of The Great War. As industrialization increasingly encroached on southern farming, especially in the cotton industry, blacks moved north into the same neighborhoods as previous immigrant groups.[172] Neighborhoods, as a result, began to shift. As earlier immigrant groups found success in the United States they worked their way out of the ghettos of America's urban centers. The transition for blacks, however, did not produce the same results. Racism and capitalism forced them into a circular system of economic oppression that left them stagnant in poor communities. Rents were high, their labor was cheap, and debt collectors left just enough money to collect on the next pass. Even as anti-poverty campaigns ran in the early 1960s managed to help some blacks fight their way out of the ghetto, "these programs were more effective in raising expectations than mass standards of living."[173] This is just shorthand for a much larger story, however, because this stagnation brought cries of help, and those cries of help elicited a critique, particularly notable in more conservative Jewish opinion, that flatly said 'we had to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, and you should too.'

In the case of blacks, the immigrant group they were displacing more frequently was Jewish to the point where, by 1969, Jews could be considered "the white outpost in the Negro neighborhood."[174] While the economic conditions bred resentment for whites and established Jews – known colloquially as "Mr. Goldberg," a group clearly visible as

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[172] Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 213-249.
[173] Raab, "The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question," 19.
[174] Kaufman, "'Thou Shalt Surely Rebuke Thy Neighbour,'" 52.

landowners, shop-owners, welfare workers… etc."[175] – as exploiters, some Jews saw

themselves as a group with their own brutal history of oppression who were able to rise

above hardship to enter positions of prominence in American society. Furthermore, they

had success as a group "themselves disliked by other whites" in America.[176] This

position, though one that made Jews sympathetic to blacks, was also one that in some

ways made them *more* critical than other whites and particularly paternalistic in their

approach to helping the black cause.[177] Coincidentally, it also meant that blacks were

more critical of Jews hoping that, given the scope of racism and the Holocaust, they

would know better.

    As blacks asked for special treatment in terms of economic help, special classes

and programs in universities, controlled enrolment *within* universities to ensure blacks

were educated, community control to ensure black interests were addressed, and any

other number of requests designed to increase parity for the black population, a number

of Jews took exception. Holding the Holocaust and Jewish support of the mainstream

Civil Rights movement close to their chest, these critics felt that black history offered

excuses no different than their own.[178]

    Of course, this was but one difference between the groups. With different origins

in the United States came different implications for the group as a whole. It was unfair,

for instance, for Jews to critique black associations with Africa. Jews came to the United

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[175] Marie Syrkin in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 122-123.
[176] Joel Carmichael, *Negro and Jew*, 1.
[177] This, in turn, made Jews all the more insulted when blacks turned away their help as Black Power
    became more prominent. Paternalism will be discussed in greater detail further in this chapter.
[178] Cohen, *Negro and Jew*, 9-10.

States with a "portable civilization"; nomadic by necessity. They were not cruelly split from their families and forced to be part of a country that needed them but did not want them.[179] Black cultural achievement in America was one defined and shaped by the experience of slavery and was, as such, not always considered worth celebrating. Since tracing lineage after years of control and rape at the hands of whites was impossible, the best African Americans had to an Israel-like home was Africa at large, Swahili, and Islam, even if they did not necessarily practice these things in traditional ways.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, echoing Nathan Glazer and James Baldwin, wrote "Negroes and Jews require quite different things from American society."[180] The Jewish struggle in the United States, he claims, has been framed by a battle for equal opportunity under the slogan "a career open freely to talent."[181] He points out the aforementioned fact that Jews came to the United States with their culture and family intact. For blacks, Hertzberg suggests that their problem went the other way. He argues that the institution of slavery destroyed families and prevented education. "Most Negro individuals in America today," he claimed, "need opportunities which are weighted in their favor to give them a fair start."[182]

Furthermore, Jews had political power where blacks could not. While blacks were just beginning to organize themselves as a political force during the mid-twentieth century, Jews had held positions of power in the government long before. Racism and prejudice aside, this was largely a factor of the most clear and distinct difference of all: in

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[179] Gittelsohn, *Negro and Jew*, 45-46.
[180] Hertzberg, *Negro and Jew*, 71.
[181] Hertzberg, *Negro and Jew*, 70.
[182] Hertzberg, *Negro and Jew*, 70.

the United States Jews were white. When a Jewish individual (let alone any white person) explained to blacks that they could relate to them – because they, too, had been prejudiced against – blacks would always take it with a grain of salt. In 1969, prominent black author James Baldwin wrote: "it is galling to be told by a Jew whom you know to be exploiting you that he cannot possibly be doing what you know he is doing because he is a Jew."[183] Baldwin went on to proclaim that "one does not wish, in short, to be told by an American Jew that his suffering is as great as the American Negro's suffering. It isn't, and one knows that it isn't from the very tone in which he assures you that it is."[184]

Color, culture and history are, like any study of two separate minorities, a major point of departure. However, Jewish and African Americans were brought together by a mutual desire to see racism and prejudice removed from American society. Their common ground as oppressed people with a long history of suffering and violence only furthered those ties. At the same time, this common ground caused them to be deeply hurt when the other group showed insensitivity towards this history. Responses on both sides to insensitivity echoed criticisms of 'you should know better.' If it were not enough that their differences served to drive them further apart and spark animosity in the late 1960s, their mishandling of the ways in which they were similar certainly caused more resentment in the long run.

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[183] Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," 5.
[184] Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," 6.

Changing Focus and Emergent Identities

In 1967 Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein had an article published in the Jewish journal *Reconstructionist* that shared his experience as a white liberal supporter in the days before the pivotal Selma march of 1965 and provided a stark outlook on the future of black/Jewish relations. Entitled "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," the article was an excellent example of the fractures not only evident within the mainstream Civil Rights movement on the ground, but also amongst leadership in both black and white liberal groups.[185]

On March 14, answering a national call from SNCC to aid demonstrations in Montgomery, Alabama, Rubenstein and one-hundred and thirty-five students from Pittsburgh boarded a bus bound for the South. Upon their arrival, on their way to a demonstration directly after departing their bus, they were stopped by police who protected them from mounting armed crowds and helped them get safely to their demonstration. "Without their protection," Rubenstein recalled, "the gathering mob would have certainly taken us on in a very uneven match."[186] That night, after the demonstrations, Rubenstein sat amongst a crowd of students observing a SNCC rally. A representative of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was appealing to SNCC members to maintain non-violence and obey the law by not marching without a permit. As the representative appealed to the crowd Rubenstein

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[185] Richard L. Rubenstein. "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," *Reconstructionist*, November 17, 1967, 7.
[186] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 7-8.

overheard someone refer to SNCC as "the Non-Student Violent Non-Coordinating Committee."[187] He also remembered observing SNCC members as "a tough, angry, resentful group."[188] At one point in the evening, while SNCC Executive Secretary James Foreman spoke to the crowds and discounted the concerns of the SCLC, the SCLC representative appealed to the Pittsburgh students not to march without a permit for fears of violent reaction by locals and police.[189]

On the way to the demonstration the following morning, Foreman led the group – Rubenstein estimated as approximately one-sixth Jewish – through not one but two black grade schools to recruit children for the march. The children were, according to Rubenstein, told they were joining a carnival and were woefully unprepared for what would follow. Two blocks from their destination, police in riot gear stopped the group of roughly six hundred individuals. Claiming he had the police permission (when he actually did not), Foreman persuaded a number of students to attempt to break the line. Police attacked the small number of protestors who made it through the line. Shortly thereafter, mounted officers rode through the small group "beating, whipping, and trampling as many students as they could. They then turned on the larger group which had obeyed the police and repeated the same performance."[190]

Rubenstein recollected that the students were noticeably bitter after their dramatic afternoon. While it was clear that, only a day before, that the police were capable of being civil to protestors who obeyed the law, their brutality for those who did not was

[187] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 8.
[188] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 8.
[189] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 8.
[190] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 9.

unyielding. That evening, while a virulent SNCC representative at a gathering

encouraged the black crowd to commit violence against whites, Rubenstein was

approached by a young "new Left" leader who had been badly injured in the earlier

assault. He claimed Foreman had insisted he had the proper permits when he obviously

did not. "The student felt that Foreman had deliberately deceived the group. He had lost

confidence in Foreman's leadership."[191] The implications were clear: Foreman had

incited a riot against black and white protestors, students, and children in order to abuse

the media attention and supplement black frustration for further violence. Furthermore,

the tactic worked, as national print and television media covered the story of gratuitous

southern violence the following day.[192] The young man asked Rubenstein to try to get the

group out of Montgomery before things escalated.

Rubenstein's memories of the event were punctuated by descriptions of the anger

with which Foreman spoke to the crowd. Making "no distinction between good whites

and 'goddamn honkies,'" he stirred up racial hatred and encouraged blacks to attack the

police in kind. The white man was referred to as the devil. Before long, they were

suggesting "there would be ten dead white men during the next day's demonstrations"

and claimed "the revolution needed dead whites."[193] Fearing for their safety and seeing

no indication that Jews were exempt from the anti-white hatred, Rubenstein's group

agreed amongst themselves to leave as soon as possible. Rubenstein understood that

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[191] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 10.
[192] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 9.
[193] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 10.

SNCC only saw their support effective insofar as they were "expendable Northern Jewish liberals."[194]

Rubenstein then reminisced about the inner tension he had over his experience in Alabama. On one hand, he supported the cause of Civil Rights. He believed in helping blacks do what they could to achieve equality. On the other hand, he felt angry that blacks would sacrifice the safety of whites – who were now putting their lives on the line to help - just to achieve publicity. He was hesitant to make his account of SNCC vitriol and deception public because of the negative impact it could have on the mainstream movement.[195] However, he was also certain that his experience represented a larger message. As Foreman famously declared, foreshadowing the violence to come throughout the next few summers, "If I can't sit at the table, I'm going to knock the fucking legs off," Rubenstein began to believe that "the historic posture of the American Jewish community as an ally of the movement for Negro emancipation had become untenable."[196] Like many Jewish supporters of Civil Rights in league with him, he felt that although the plight of blacks was a worthy cause, he could not allow it to threaten his wellbeing or the wellbeing of other Jews. The black "revolution" had grown beyond the point where Jews could find themselves in step with black aspirations. A mere two years after Rubenstein left Alabama, he decried SNCC as a Maoist organization – one that had fallen into, like many revolutions before it, anti-Semitism. He declared that "it was obviously easier for Jews to accept the limitations of their minority status than it was for

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[194] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 10.
[195] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 13.
[196] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 7-11.

Negroes to accept theirs" and that "it would be suicidal for Jews to ally themselves with a movement which saw its ultimate salvation in blowing up America."[197]

Rubenstein's experience in Alabama allowed him to come to his conclusion faster than many Jews who did not witness the shift in black attitudes first hand. The frustration caused by media attention towards the deaths of whites over blacks in Mississippi had, only a year later, escalated to media manipulation by sacrificing whites. Shortly thereafter, SNCC banned whites from their organization, as did a number of other black groups who felt it was time to shift from a focus on integration to a focus on separation, pride, economics, and political power.

Rubenstein's article was published late in 1967. After years of summer riots in America's large cities — where Jewish stores were burned — and the experiences of the Six Day War, where black nationalists spoke out against Israel and Jews with more frequency, further cries of anti-Semitism were in the air. Whereas only two years before many commentators considered African Americans and Jews to be successful allies, they were now experiencing great tension. The Black Power movement saw African Americans shedding ties with white supporters, a sundering which, for those Jews still clinging to the mainstream movement, continued to sting.

In the wake of the great successes of the mainstream movement, the violence, frustration in lack of real progress, continued and augmented economic stratification in urban areas, the failures of liberalism, and obvious rifts in the leadership of both African Americans and Jews, both groups turned inward. By the end of 1967, identity featured

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[197] Rubenstein, "Jews, Negroes, and the New Politics," 13.

prominently in not only documents pertaining to each group individually, but also in documents that referenced their relations. They had begun to ask themselves, having seen the Civil Rights Movement fall apart, what it meant to be black or Jewish. For blacks, the questions asked how to celebrate culture, which culture to celebrate, what positives could be taken from black history, and how could they reconcile having the United States be so much of how they identified themselves when the country had never accepted them. For Jews, the questions revolved around whether they were obligated to help blacks as a fellow persecuted group or protect themselves from racial hatred and violence. They wondered, just as blacks did, whether their culture was at stake and worried that they had become too assimilated.

Black Power

Black Power was the manifestation of these questions and the eventual inward turn for African Americans. It began as a political movement, sparked by Stokely Carmichael and SNCC during the period of the Meredith "March Against Fear" and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) of 1965. Initially, it was a phrase that represented a shift in the movement. Many young blacks felt that the mainstream Civil Rights movement was focused on the wrong things. The right to vote was pointless if blacks were too afraid of white backlash to go to the polls. Blacks would have to educate themselves, acquire the will to vote, and elect other blacks into power so that they could

assure their needs would finally be considered. Tired of complaints that black freedom

was moving too fast, Carmichael proclaimed:

> Some white Americans can afford to speak softly, tread lightly, employ the soft-
> sell and put-off (or is it put-down?). They own the society. For black people to
> adopt *their* methods of relieving *our* oppression is ludicrous. We blacks must
> respond in our own way, on our own terms, in a manner which fits our
> temperaments. The definitions of ourselves, the roles we pursue, the goals we
> seek are *our* responsibility.[198]

Black Power branched outward as a political movement through the Black

Panther Party (BPP). Adopting their symbol from the LCFO, the BPP served to fight

against the white rooster of the Southern democratic parties before it became a symbol of

urban black militancy.[199] The party as it is most famously known was created by Huey

Newton and Bobby Seale in California. Influenced by the Nation of Islam (NOI), as well

as worldwide revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but unwilling to adapt their

lifestyle to the clean image of the Muslim organization, the two created a party that aimed

to consolidate blacks, create community food and welfare programs, and protect

communities from police oppression and brutality.[200] However, the party's tendency for

gang-violence amongst blacks and violent image towards whites painted the BPP as a

group of outlaws, echoing the attitudes Rubenstein was privy to in Alabama. Their

militaristic rhetoric served to exacerbate concerns about black violence throughout

American cities and amongst the white populace.

However, Black Power was also tremendously useful for spiriting a change in

African-American culture. In early days the Nation of Islam denounced the epidemic of

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[198] Carmichael, *Black Power*, ix.
[199] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 77 and Carmichael, *Black Power*, 96-120.
[200] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 81-83.

black glorification and fascination of white culture. They felt that acceptance of a culture

that deemed blacks as inferior and unintelligent was counterproductive to black progress.

Blacks were being tricked into idolizing a culture that would never accept them as equals,

they argued. As an example, NOI members saw black popular music as unworthy of

attention. It promoted base instincts, "indecency and slave ways."[201] Popular black

entertainers like Chubby Checker were lambasted for selling out to the enemy. If music

is representative of a culture, black popular music was seen by the NOI as "an expression

of a morally and spiritually flawed people."[202]

In 1968, influential black intellectual Harold Cruse suggested that the souls of

black folk had been lost in their culture. He argued that blacks needed a cultural

renaissance.[203] By the late 60s, however, that was exactly what blacks were experiencing.

Black Power, regardless of political motives and various militaristic figureheads,

garnered a culture that did what it could to foster and celebrate "blackness." Rhythm and

Blues music, or "soul music," experienced a surge in popularity. "The Last Poets," a

northern black poetry group who delivered their art with the sound of African drums,

reflected a cultural nationalism that fostered pride in being black. As people wore

dashikis, changed their names to Swahili or Arabic, let their hair grow out in Afros, and

celebrated new black-centric art, it was clear that Black Power had at least fostered a

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[201] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 32.
[202] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 33.
[203] Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 53-56.

sense of identity and community that could be seen as a real sign of solidarity –

particularly with the youth – within black communities.[204]

Efforts were undertaken amongst blacks to try to reclaim their pride and fight the

self-hatred implanted by whites for centuries. A 1970 publication called *From A Black*

Perspective containing essays on black life from the mid-1960s presented seven essays

out of nineteen explicitly on the subject of rejecting black self-hate as perpetuated by

white culture. "The Language of Soul," "Brainwashing of Black Men's Minds,"

"Explanation of the 'Black Psyche,'" "The Case for Black Studies"… these essays,

shuffled in among articles on black revolution, Black Power, black nationalism, and

promises of a better tomorrow, spoke volumes about a vibrant new black culture coming

to life in America.[205] Northern Blacks in the late 1960s found more solidarity and cause

for celebration in a new proud culture than they had during the successes of the

mainstream Civil Rights movement only a few years before.

This inward turn dramatically affected the black relationship with America's

Jewish population. Not only did it, again, cast Jews aside from the black struggle they

had invested so much time into, but it also brought with it an outspoken populace that

rallied to displace whites in favor of blacks in other areas of society. There was an outcry

for black teachers in New York, which brought with it the conflict in Oceanhill-

Brownsville. There were demands for white jobs in the form of affirmative action.

There were demands for black programs in schools. These demands were met with

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[204] Ogbar, *Black Power*, 110-112.
[205] Douglas A. Hughes, introduction to *From a Black Perspective: Contemporary Black Essays,* ed.
  Douglas A. Hughes (Seattle: Washington State University, 1970), vi-vii.

resistance, particularly in the Oceanhill-Brownsville incident, by Jews everywhere and illustrated racial tension beyond the claims of black anti-Semitism. One Jewish woman in New York was quoted as saying "We don't deny their equality, but they shouldn't get it by pulling down others who have just come up."[206]

Jewish Identity

America's Jews, too, experienced an inward turn in the late 1960s. This turn was the result of a number of factors, among which the most important were assimilation, their ousting from the black struggle, anti-Semitism, increasing emphasis on the lessons of the Holocaust, and the crucial Six Day War of the summer of 1967. Just as the inward turn for blacks isolated Jews, the Jewish inward turn signaled a change in their relationship to blacks. The perception of encroaching threats, coupled with a renewed emphasis on survivalist/victimhood culture, caused a backlash amongst an especially sensitive Jewish population that found itself in more frequent confrontation with blacks in the urban North.

Assimilation, as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, was a result of a post-war effort to avoid attracting negative attention. Anti-Semitism was prevalent in the United States even during the Second World War. Many Jews felt that the prejudice should be avoided at all costs and, as a result, sidelined overt Jewishness in order to go

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[206] Raab, "The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question," 33.

unnoticed. Emphasis on being an American first and a Jew second caused many to simply understate or hide their identity but in more severe cases Jews went out of their way to fit in by, as Norman Podhoretz advocated in 1946, becoming "facsimile WASP[s]."[207] Indeed, this attitude ran true throughout the course of the mainstream movement for a number of Southern Jews who, fearing an anti-Semitic backlash for appearing to support the black struggle, joined the white power base in denying blacks their progress. Though many Jews had historically been unbiased towards blacks, the threats and escalation of violence against Civil Rights in the south persuaded some Jews to turn their heads. Furthermore, in some cases Jews might have been *more* racist than some WASPs as an attempt to fit in.

In his essay *My Jewish Problem and Theirs*, a response to Podhoretz's *My Negro Problem and Ours* from 1963, Harold Cruse described a period spent in Petersburg, Virginia as a youth during the 1930s. Having been raised primarily in New York State, Cruse explained the frustrations of having to "submit to Southern Jim Crow in ways I never understood this institution to exist."[208] He noted, though, that unlike Georgia or Mississippi, whites and blacks seemed to get along in Virginia. Cruse claimed that Jews were clearly visible in the "social hierarchy" of the community but they were seen primarily as small business owners. Furthermore, he noted that he began to "understand that Southern Jews had no visible social disadvantages that blacks could see. Or, if they

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[207] Podhoretz, *Making It*, 50.
[208] Harold Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 156.

had any invisible ones, they were not comparable to black disadvantages."[209] What is especially notable, however, was Cruse's story of being spoken rudely to by a female Jewish shop-owner. Her biting comment stuck with Cruse because white businessmen of the community did not typically speak to blacks in such a way. As a result, he developed the notion that "Southern Jews were capable of exaggerating what they understood as acceptable white attitudes toward blacks."[210]

Cruse's story is useful in that it directly illustrates Jewish assimilation, however sincere, within southern society. This emphasis on fitting in, Cruse suggests, allowed Jews to operate in the South financially since WASPs, despite being anti-Semitic, did not discriminate when it came to business.[211] Furthermore, it offers a prime example of the extent to which Jews were willing to go in order to blend into American society.

Assimilation carried on further throughout the 40s, 50s, 60s, and even still today. A number of Jews became prominent in Hollywood and embraced popular culture. In 1945, for example, the first Jewish Miss America, Bess Myerson, was crowned.[212] At home, Jews were intermarrying, engaging in liberal protests, and attending synagogue less, all to the dismay of the previous generation. The emphasis on avoiding Jewish identity, an offshoot of a perceived refusal to publicly discuss the impact and lessons of the Holocaust, resulted in a less pious and observant Jewish populace. Over time, many

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[209] Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs," 156.
[210] Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs," 157.
[211] Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs," 157.
[212] Pamela S. Nadell. "On Their Own Terms: America's Jewish Women, 1954-2004," *American Jewish History*. Vol. 91:3 (2003), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_jewish_history/v091/91.3nadell.html, Accessed October 12, 2007. It should be noted, however, that Myerson won despite threats and a refusal to Anglicize her name. In the following years she became a role model for pro-Jewish imagery in popular culture. She eventually worked for the Anti-Defamation League as a speaker against racism and anti-Semitism.

began to despair the condition of the Jewish youth who appeared to take for granted the suffering and sacrifice of their parents and ancestors in the land of opportunity. Before long, Jews were worried that *Bar Mitzvahs* were little more than social events and synagogues merely a place to meet weekly to catch up with the community and talk business. By 1970, conservative Jews fretted that the "Sabbath meal [had been replaced by] the TV dinner… the synagogue with the bowling alley."[213]

The inward turn for America's Jews came, in part, with a revisiting of the Holocaust that gradually increased throughout the 1950s and 60s. 1959's *The Diary of Anne Frank* was certainly one of the most obvious examples of one such event. As Jewish suffering at the Hands of Nazi Germany became viewable on the world stage, the Holocaust began to be talked about more openly amongst Jews. Just a few years later, Israel's capture and execution of escaped Nazi Adolf Eichmann gave many Jews, even those who never experienced the horrors of Nazi Germany, a sense of closure and justice served. This further opened up doors in discussing Jewish identity as survivors in the context of the Holocaust.

Arguably, though, the Six Day War in the summer of 1967 was the event most responsible for galvanizing a new sense of Jewish identity that would directly impact black-Jewish relations. As Israel faced Arab rhetoric and hatred of a scale not heard since the Holocaust, American Jews – even amongst youth and liberals – found themselves face to face with their identity as a persecuted people. For those who had

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[213] Jonathan Braun, "Bagels and Lox Judaism: Neglecting the Jewish National Experience," *Flame* 3 (February 1970): 1, 7.

never experienced the Holocaust first hand, they now felt that they could relate to their ancestors as they realized that even with a Jewish nation, Jews would never be completely safe against anti-Semitism. In the *Jewish Yearbook* for 1967, young Jews all over the country wrote in to admit their newfound solidarity and pride in being Jewish. They found themselves, for the first time, feeling as though they were Jews first and Americans second. Israel, ultimately, won the war, and before long the fears of assimilation were at hand once again.[214]

Compounding the severity of the inward focus on Jewishness and Jewish history was the surge of Black Power during the period. Not only were blacks casting aside Jewish help, seemingly denying Jews their claim to humanitarianism and sacrifice in a movement they largely believed in, many nationalist blacks were also decrying Israel, insisting that the country was little more than another colonial power trying to keep blacks/Muslims/their brothers under the thumb of the white powers of the West. These comments from within the United States further damaged relations between blacks and Jews by feeding anxiety that, not only were Jews in Israel not safe from anti-Semitism, but anti-Semitism existed at home as well.

The Jewish internal identity crisis, then, can be seen as a gradual process that, catalyzed by the Six Day War, led Jews to become more careful, defensive, and focused on survival. Where the black inward focus celebrated a new black culture that cast aside slave history and negativism, Jews increasingly turned towards tradition and preached

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[214] Dawidowicz, "The Arab-Israel War of 1967: American Public Opinion," 288-289.

caution, survival, and an appreciation of their history as an oppressed people. They

focused on Holocaust education to unify Jews under the experience of survival. They

sought to determine the nature of their identity by asking themselves "what makes a good

Jew?" They hoped that by sharing the story of the six million who died under fascism

they could bring Jews together and create a sense of Jewishness – the Jew as survivor, as

victim – that would protect Jews in the United States from anything like genocide ever

happening again.

The "Negro-Jewish Question" and the Bolstering of Identity

It should be obvious that a varyingly militaristic and anti-white black population

living – at least in the urban North – adjacent to a susceptible, sensitive, and defensive

Jewish population would be a recipe for tension. Without a doubt, the period between

1967 and 1969 saw relations between blacks and Jews increasingly strained. The bigoted

outbursts of militant blacks, however marginal their influence, occupied the attention of

organizations like the Anti-Defamation League who aimed to expose anti-Semitism and

combat it head-on. Jewish backlashes, on the other hand, only frustrated blacks further as

the one minority that could relate to the black struggle appeared to be no longer any

different than the rest of white society.

It has already been made clear that the relationship once based on a mutual desire

to see racism eliminated and the constitution upheld was very much in jeopardy by 1967.

Between the *Brown vs. The Board of Education*, Mississippi Freedom Summer, the

March on Washington, right up until Selma, liberal Jews had supported the black cause.

Concurrently, blacks in the mainstream movement welcomed Jewish support because they felt they had to make the country free for all minorities, not just for blacks. This is the mutually supportive arrangement and cooperation that caused them to be painted as allies during the period. By 1967, though, Jewish scholars began to wonder how "the Negro Problem" could be solved in the United States, and what role Jews might have in the solution. African Americans, on the other hand, were far more preoccupied with achieving parity in the country and cracking a white power base – one that notably included Jews. Though the two were no longer directly aiding each other, various Jewish and African Americans commentators and activists were indirectly fueling discussions that related to the deeper identity of their respective groups. These discussions, reflecting their parallel inward foci, aided in developing a discourse about consolidating their identities. Furthermore, these discussions illustrated that even with a renewed focus on identity and solidarity, cracks still remained within their ranks.

Published in 1967, Schlomo Katz's symposium on black-Jewish relations, *Negro and Jew: An Encounter In America*, provided a tremendous amount of information about the state of the relationship between the two minorities. The collection of short essays written by twenty-five prominent Jewish scholars and community members, as well as a mere two black community members, sought to investigate the severity, nature, and scope of the shift in black attitudes. It began with a telling statement by Katz: "It is now widely accepted as an incontrovertible fact that, 1) there exists a pronounced anti-Jewish sentiment among the Negro masses in this country… and, 2) that Jews are reacting to this

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sentiment with an emotional backlash."[215] He then challenged the scholars with a number

of tasks including an evaluation of: the scope and severity of "Negro anti-Semitism,"

anti-Jewish sentiment in the rioting of the hot summers, the truth behind the prevalence

of Jewish profiteers in the ghetto, Jewish identification with white America, religious

obligations to Civil Rights, the effectiveness of the Rabbinate, the effectiveness of Negro

leadership in preventing anti-Semitism, the influence of "Muslim cults," and the

feasibility of a "consultative body" between the groups for solving these problems.[216]

    While the resulting essays do vary to some degree on how thoroughly they broach

the various topics, there are a number of trends that point to the more important issues

amongst Jewish scholars, and the populace they represent, of the period and – as one can

extrapolate from their comments – the evolving priorities for blacks. Opinions on anti-

Semitism vary wildly, for instance, from an assertion that black anti-Semitism is not even

remotely troubling to an allegation that it is unsurprising and no different than ordinary

Christian anti-Semitism. Debates on corrupt Jewish merchants are clear, where many

bicker over the difference between unfair economic practices and "business is business."

They argue further over the role of the Jew in the black struggle, be it as advisor and role

model or as staunch adversaries of sectarian black militarism. What follows is an

examation of the opinions of Jewish and black scholars *before* the primary source of

tension and anger, Ocean-Hill Brownsville.

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[215] Katz, *Negro and Jew*, vii.
[216] Katz, *Negro and Jew*, viii-ix.

In the introduction, Katz claims that "on the Negro side there is the temptation to isolate Jews as the target of their anger for the inexcusable, even if facile, reasons. For one thing, Jews are an easy, and historically speaking, a socially acceptable target. They are also a safe and readily accessible one."[217] Black anti-Semitism, as approached by the Jews who wrote in this book, is explained through a number of theories. Katz's claim, for instance, that Jews were a good target for anti-white aggression was a relatively common one made by the symposium's authors. The crux of the argument was simple: Jews were far safer to harass than other whites because a Jewish backlash would be a lot less intimidating than a large-scale white backlash. Furthermore, since whites could just as easily be anti-Semitic, blacks could find common ground with whites and "culture-climb" through anti-Semitic prejudice.[218] Author Joel Carmichael, for example, argued that it was "natural" for blacks "to pick out the weakest sector of the white population, knowing that Jews are both vulnerable and feeble."[219] He goes further by likening black anti-Semitism to Russian peasants under Tsarism; a comparison made by a handful of other authors, most notably historian Lucy Dawidowicz who is the first of the authors to mention pogroms.[220]

Perhaps the most telling of explanations is the one that was also the most frequent. The large of the authors in the book ascribe, in one way or another, black anti-Semitism to Christianity. Jewish novelist Howard Fast bluntly wrote: "Yet the simple fact is that the Negro by and large is a Christian, and anti-Semitism is a Christian way of

[217] Katz, *Negro and Jew*, xv.
[218] Leslie A. Fiedler in Katz., ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 33.
[219] Carmichael in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 1.
[220] Lucy S. Dawidowicz in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 15.

life."[221] Though he goes on rather dramatically by suggesting that all Christians absorb

hatred of Jews by osmosis, his initial point is no less valid. Another author, academic

and literary critic Leslie Fiedler, argued that blacks were anti-Semitic because, "at the

deepest mythological level," blacks were part of an evangelical protestant culture that

preached anti-Semitism through the Gospels.[222] Rabbi and Professor Arthur Hertzberg

argued, similarly to the "culture-climb" position, "the only point at which the Negro,

historically, has been part of the majority is in the fact that the Negro is a Christian."

Furthermore, "the only Christian 'principle' which the Negro has been able to share

unreservedly, and from which he has not been excluded by white Christians, has been

anti-Semitism."[223]

There are, conversely, a handful of contributors in the book who spoke up against

this theory. They argue that there was "no evidence of categorical, systematic anti-

Semitism, of the Christian or racist variety, among Negoes."[224] Instead, they suggest that

black anti-Semitism was a product of unscrupulous Jewish landlords and merchants,

economics frustrations, and an attitude that was far more anti-white than specifically anti-

Jewish.[225] They argue, as Rabbi Myron Fenster did, that evidence showed blacks actually

preferred Jews to white Christians.[226] These positions, though far more in line with what

black scholars offered as explanations of anti-Semitism, illustrated an obvious split

between Jews who took black anti-Semitism as "more of the same" and those who saw it

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[221] Fast in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew,* 23.
[222] Fiedler in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 33.
[223] Hertzberg in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 73.
[224] Cohen in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 12.
[225] Cohen in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 12 and Jacobs in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 74-80.
[226] Myron M. Fenster in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, 25.

as something unique and potentially treatable. They also illustrated a split between those who took black vitriol as explicitly "anti-Jewish" or just a more pointed and calculated version of anti-white frustration.

The question of landlords and merchants is crucial to the discussion, as well. It is crucial because, despite a decorated history in Civil Rights by Jews, it is the context in which a large number of urban blacks knew them. Illustrating this point, Jewish author Paul Jacobs recounted a conversation he had with some black women in the center of Watts, the community where violent rioting had destroyed a number of Jewish businesses in 1965. When he asked the women to explain how they tell the difference between a white person and a Jew they responded: "The White man don't have time to be knockin' on no door, and that Jew, that's his stick – he's been doin' it for years, that's why he controls most of the money."[227] They went on to say they could tell if someone was a Jew by the way they talked: "He'll tell you, you don't have to pay me but a dollar or whatever you got, you just give it to me and I'll come back…". Another woman interrupted to say "Uh huh, the white folks don't do *that*."[228] The women then shared with Jacobs stories of how they had been duped by Jewish salesmen who took advantage them.

The opinions amongst the scholars on the subject of Jewish economic exploitation varied. Some, like Professor Horace Kallen, claimed that regardless of representation within a community Jews operated their stores no differently than blacks or non-Jewish whites.[229] Accordingly, Lucy Dawidowicz argued that exploitation was merely the nature

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[227] Jacobs in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 75.
[228] Jacobs in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 75.
[229] Horace M. Kallen in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 83.

of trade, quipping, "no one loves a merchant and everyone abhors a landlord."[230] Conversely, others argued that Jewish merchants were exploitative out of necessity.[231] What is consistent, however, is that Jews were certainly represented heavily amongst white-owned businesses in poor black communities. Offering their solutions, a number of authors in the book suggest that Jews should attempt to stay away from opening businesses in the ghetto and that they should be mindful of how they treat blacks in their neighborhoods given the destructive display in Watts and other urban communities.[232] This concession is crucial, because regardless of whether authors were suggesting that Jewish stores were destroyed as an act of anti-Semitism or because Jewish stores were the white-owned stores closest to black neighborhoods, there was some agreement that those Jews who were exploitative should be held accountable by the larger Jewish community or be advised to avoid the communities all together.

A large number of the authors agreed — regardless of how liberal or supportive of the black stuggle they were — that explicit anti-Semitism among blacks was abhorrent and had to be stopped. They largely seemed to concur that exploitative business tactics should be avoided and discouraged in order to better improve black/Jewish relations. Some agreed that black anti-Semitism was a product of the black experience in the urban north; others agreed that it was a product of theology and firmly implanted Christian tradition. These opinions, however, are not as important for our purposes as the identity issues they imply.

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[230] Lucy S. Dawidowicz in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 16.
[231] Golden in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 62.
[232] Glatstein in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 50.

For what it is worth, the book contains the opinions of two black men, C. Eric Lincoln, a professor at Portland State College, and National Director of the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE) Floyd B. McKissick. Although in a book filled with Jewish opinion on a relationship on racial discourse it is something akin to a "token gesture" to offer such a small number of black opinions, they offer excellent insight on the other side of the story.[233]

Lincoln prefaced his discussion by pointing out that he did not agree with the basic premise of the symposium to begin with, this premise being the aforementioned "incontrovertible fact" that there is a pronounced anti-Jewish sentiment amongst the "Negro masses."[234] He then pointed out, just as Fenster argued "on almost every public issue, Jews differ among themselves,"[235] that "to speak of 'Negro Masses' is to confuse the issues beyond recognition."[236] Lincoln then spelled out black anti-Semitism as an overreaction to change on the part of Jews. He suggested that what Jews perceived in the black community was an evolving identity: "what is happening to the black *lumpen proletariat*… is first of all an expression of the developing sense of identity, which is

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[233] It should be noted that a lack of black participation in this particular symposium can be interpreted in a number of ways. Other collections of essays on black life from the late 1960s certainly illustrate that many blacks were forging opinions on their identity and the black cultural revolution at hand. However, these same collections infrequently mention relations with Jews. Throughout *Negro and Jew* a number of authors suggest that black leaders were slow or inert in denouncing black anti-Semitism because, not only was the leadership too fragile to be calling out a public that might not even be listening to it, blacks were far too busy partaking in the fight for black rights to worry about the feelings of another minority. Indeed, when black authors were discussing anti-Semitism it was usually to explain it as an artifact of anti-white sentiment and not indicative of a Jewish-specific hatred. Furthermore, a lack of black scholars writing on the subject could also be interpreted as an indication of the number of black scholars in the country compared to Jews, and might suggest that black requests for increased enrolment numbers in university were quite warranted.

[234] C. Eric Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 86.

[235] Fenster in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 26.

[236] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 86.

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slowly but certainly energizing the black masses toward a new chauvinism of undetermined consequences."[237] This change, one of a newly confident and strong black individual, is characterized by a shift in traditional relationships. It was Lincoln's impression that this shift, removing "the docile, subservient stereotyped Negro with the big laugh and the quaint remark," was being perceived by Jews as anti-Semitism.[238] This suggestion is incredibly telling. Lincoln's assertion, that a shift in black identity was perceived as anti-Semitism, offers an example of one group's evolution (African-American) as part of its inward turn effecting the other's (Jewish Americans) inward turn.

Lincoln went on further, associating the frustrations with identity that had caused Jews to react so boisterously to the shift in black attitudes. Jews, Lincoln argued, were physically white but were never considered among the ranks of "*the* white man" because of their history of suffering. He pointed out that, in "Negro folklore," Jews are considered somewhere between whites and blacks. Lincoln's assertion was that Jews find themselves frustrated because they have to, particularly in a time with elevated emphasis on racial consciousness and identification, "be asked to declare [themselves] in a way [they have] not hitherto felt called upon to consider."[239] Furthermore, of Civil Rights, Lincoln said "Jews have identified themselves with the Civil Rights struggle, they have not identified themselves with Negroes." This assertion rang true throughout a number of the essays by Jewish authors who frequently insisted that they were not synonymous with "whites" and should not be treated as such. Lincoln's distinction is

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[237] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 88.
[238] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 86.
[239] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 91.

interesting, in that while Jews were offended that a *racial* status was being imposed upon them, Jews were imposing a *religious* status on blacks by framing their dissent in terms of Christianity. Wrapping up, Lincoln weighed in on the merchant question by suggesting that violence against Jewish shop owners occurred because of black frustrations with white exploitation that had come to be expected in black communities.[240] Lastly, Lincoln also suggested that Jewish cries for black leadership to nip anti-Semitism in the bud were foolish, because not only because black leadership did not think anti-Semitism was a problem, but also because black leadership had yet to even establish itself in the Northern urban communities.[241]

Floyd McKissick, unfortunately, was far briefer in his evaluation. Essentially, he argued that Jewish merchants in black communities suffered violence merely as "whipping boys" for a greater white group. He also argued that Jews were overly sensitive to derogatory remarks by virtue of the Holocaust. Most notably, McKissick singled out identity as a common ground for blacks and Jews, stating "many parallels exist between the history of American Negroes and that of the Jewish community. The stress upon cultural and religious identity, the struggle for nationhood and the pooling of economic resources represent efforts to develop community power."[242] He went on to encourage blacks to establish a new identity that celebrated community through local representation.

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[240] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 92.
[241] Lincoln in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 93.
[242] Floyd B. McKissick in Katz, ed., *Negro and Jew*, 98.

Amalgamating the letters of *Negro and Jew* into a coherent message is a difficult

task. It is obvious that while relations between black and Jews in the United States were

strained, shifting identities played a role as the respective minorities stepped on one

another's toes. Some authors voiced caution that things could potentially escalate before

they would improve. Others rallied for concerted efforts to improve the relationship as

soon as possible. Some advocated distance between the groups for, if anything, one's

own safety. The discourse in 1967, however, continued as blacks and Jews found

themselves further and further embroiled in not only an ideological and economic

struggle but a turf war in the boroughs of New York.

Ocean-Hill Brownsville

Ocean-Hill Brownsville, a primarily black community of New York City, was

allotted control over its local education system. The project, started in 1968, was a test

program intended to encourage a balanced education system that would provide equal

education for students throughout the city, regardless of neighborhood. The New York

City school board relinquished control of Ocean-Hill Brownsville to a community board.

The board was allowed to appoint and remove teachers so that the local community could

acquire quality educators for the sorts of schools that normally did not attract them. It

was a response to lasting grievances about the quality of education in poorer communities

where good teachers would not normally want to teach. The education system had

largely failed black children in the North. A study by a Boston branch of the NAACP

showed some schools with black failure rates as high as eighty-seven percent where

white failure rates were only sixteen percent.[243] The Ocean-Hill Brownsville project was

an effort to correct this sort of injustice by attempting to combat an attitude of

segregation. Furthermore, it was a response to racism on behalf of white teachers who

questioned the ability of black children to learn. Since the city had opposed a proposition

to bus black students to white schools for a chance at better education, they instead

decided on the local control method with hopes that education in black, Hispanic, and

impoverished communities of the city would improve. The project, however, became

extremely controversial when the community board of Ocean-Hill Brownsville elected to

transfer a number of Jewish teachers away from the school. Claiming that the move was

a violation of Teachers Union rights, New York's Jewish community, led by United

Federation of Teachers (UFT) head Albert Shanker, were soon up in arms at what they

felt was an obvious show of anti-Semitism within the black community.[244]

The fallout of the Ocean-Hill Brownsville scandal had a tremendous effect on the

relationship between blacks and Jews in the city of New York.[245] From a Jewish

perspective, the situation could easily seem grim and outrageous. A black community,

given control of a school district, explicitly removed white teachers (many of which were

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[243] Roy Wilkins, "School Establishments and Desegregation", *Congress Bi-Weekly*, Volume 33 (1966): 12

[244] Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism,," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 133-134.

[245] It is necessary to note that while this thesis is not particularly about New York, a vast percentage of America's Jewish population lived within the city. Jewish organizations and press, based in New York, reached to other Jews throughout the country so that they were largely up to date with the actions and discourse occurring within the city. The case is not, necessarily, the same for blacks. The northern urban struggle was and is distinct from the nature of the struggle in the southern states, and since the black community, in general, was less consolidated than the Jewish, the effects of Ocean-Hill Brownsville may not have been as informative about a more broad black experience in the United States.

Jewish) and brought in black teachers.[246] For many, special treatment of blacks had gone too far. To add insult to injury, not too long thereafter a number of anti-Semitic flyers and pamphlets began to surface throughout the community. To escalate tensions even further, black teacher Leslie Campbell had reportedly been giving lessons in black power in his classrooms, prompting Jews to stand behind a rallying cry that "teachers who teach hate must not be permitted to teach our children."[247] On December 26, Campbell appeared on a radio show, "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" on WBAI hosted by Julius Lester, and a poem by fifteen-year-old Sia Berhan was read on the air. The poem contained angry epithets towards the "Jew-boy" who had held blacks down and represented a deeper frustration of a community let down by people who appeared to be fighting to halt their progress.[248] Weeks later, the ADL claimed "raw, undisguised anti-Semitism is at a crisis-level in New York City schools" and, furthermore, that "the use of anti-Semitism has distorted the fundamental character of the controversy surrounding the public schools of New York City."[249]

Racism within the community itself and the city at large quickly became more overt – by both parties – than racism had been in decades, especially in the typically more liberal North. "A group of political instigators was able to get the white people of [the] city into a frenzy…" one elderly Jewish survivor of the concentration camps claimed at a

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[246] That a number of teachers brought in were actually Jewish seems to be ignored as many focused primarily on the few blacks brought in who actually taught black power studies and made questionable comments about Jews or anti-white sentiment.

[247] William H. Booth, "Racism and Human Rights," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 118.

[248] Lester, "A Response," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism,* 229-231.

[249] Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism," 130.

meeting of the Board of Directors of the New York Civil Liberties Union, "during which they acted out their worst prejudices, fears, and hatreds."[250] "Most of those white people," maintained Nat Hentoff in the introduction to his own collection of essays entitled *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, "were Jews."[251] Moreover, the conflict extended throughout the city as blacks encroached on dwindling Jewish territory – due to a new Jewish diaspora to the suburbs – and converted old synagogues, abandoned as Jewish population dwindled, to Christian churches. And, were this not enough, controversy erupted over an exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art called "Harlem on My Mind" during April 1969 as both blacks and Jews criticized the exhibit for portraying negative stereotypes and anti-Semitism, respectively.[252]

If relations before 1968 were strained then relations during and after the Ocean-Hill Brownsville incident were on the verge of fracture. Many of the themes and trends present in the discourse of Katz's symposium on black anti-Semitism had increased. Jewish anxiety, accordingly, increased as well. Jews, hurt by a refusal amongst blacks to take their help or work things out, went on guard. Assimilation made a number of Jews distinctly more American — *goyim* — than ever before, and yet many Jews still struggled with a duality in identity. Earl Raab, writing in *Commentary* in 1969, argued that "there is, more clearly than every before, the legitimate and independent Jewish imperative for self-survival."[253] For blacks, the change in attitude that Lincoln had laid out in 1967 was

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[250] Nat Hentoff, "Introduction", in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, x-xi.
[251] Hentoff, "Introduction," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish* Racism, xi.
[252] Booth, "Racism and Human Rights," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism,* 118-119.
[253] Raab, "The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question," 38.

developing more and more. Blacks were requesting special educational programs in

universities, equality in hiring practices, compensatory treatment for the poor. Black

Panther Parties like the one led by Fred Hampton in Chicago were galvanizing the youth

and teaching black pride while providing social programs for the poor. Ocean-Hill

Brownsville, more than anything else, represented Lincoln's assertions of evolving blacks

come to life. As blacks tried to forge a path for themselves in the predominantly white

bureaucratic system, Jews, frustrated at being pushed aside, cried anti-Semitism.

 Nat Hentoff's abovementioned collection of essays, published in 1969, framed

these discussions through nine essays about the circumstances of Ocean-Hill

Brownsville, questions of Jewish identity and motive, questions of black anti-Semitism,

explanations of the Jewish "backlash," and greater comments on the nature of black-

Jewish relations. Hentoff set the tone for the discussions by quoting participants Julius

Lester and Rabbi Alan Miller. Lester suggested, in response to anti-Semitic charges,

during his radio interview with Leslie Campbell in December 1969 that "In America, it is

we are who are the Jews. It is we who are surrounded by a hostile majority. It is we who

are constantly under attack. There is no need for black people to wear yellow stars of

David on their sleeves; the Star of David is all over us."[254] Rabbi Alan Miller, in

agreement with Lester, claimed "The black man is, in truth, the American Jew."[255]

Indeed, all but two of the books authors – out of nine total, five of whom were Jewish –

claimed that the Jewish backlash was out of line, overblown, and the product of ADL

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[254] Lester, "A Response," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, 230.
[255] Hentoff, "Introduction," in Henthoff, ed., *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism,* ix.

paranoia and fear-mongering. The majority of the authors sought to illustrate, instead, that Jews and blacks should not be at each other's throats and that black anti-Semitism should not have been considered the threat that it was considering the parallels in black and Jewish experiences in America. For the sake of organization, what follows is a look at the issues discussed in Hentoff's volume, arranged thematically, to illustrate the variety of opinions discussed in the book and what they meant for black-Jewish relations in terms of identity during the period.

On the subject of Ocean-Hill Brownsville, and the motives thereof, most of the authors weighed in with their outlooks. The consensus opinion, for the more liberal leaning authors particularly, was that Albert Shanker and the UFT railroaded black attempts at community control by stirring the pot of racial tension and escalating the event well beyond its original scope. Authors Walter Karp and H. R. Shapiro provide the most detailed account of this theory – which borders in some ways on conspiratorial – in their essay "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism." The men argue that black anti-Semitism can essentially be summed up by a handful of events that were then blown up by the ADL and the UFT in order to create the impression that anti-Semitism was far more prevalent than it actually was. These events were, primarily, Leslie Campbell's exploits and anti-Jewish leaflets distributed during the protesting of the school issue. Karp and Shapiro quote representatives of a number of Jewish organizations who claim that New York was "engulfed" in racism, that "black anti-Semitism has grown so threatening that Jews must cease to *support* black activists and start defending themselves

against them."[256] They then sneered derisively at this assertion by stating, "for three

hundred years black men in America have been as politically impotent as doormats.

Suddenly, in the past three months they are being portrayed as the most potent force in a

giant metropolis."[257] The crux of their assertion was that the UFT was opposed to

decentralized schooling because it could potentially open up avenues for anti-Semitism.

The argument then followed that whatever anti-Semitism did occur, however slight,

opened the door for the UFT and Shanker to paint black "anti-Semites" as "black Nazis"

and overstate the situation in Ocean-Hill Brownsville so severely that the Jewish

population could scarcely afford to disagree with them. Furthermore, they illustrate that

the position of the ADL and other Jewish organizations had historically been to minimize

the appearance of black anti-Semitism right up until January of 1969 when Shanker

released thousands of copies of a sparsely distributed anti-Semitic pamphlet to middle-

class Jews throughout the city.[258]

"The volcanic Jewish reaction to the New York school conflict," wrote Reform

Judaism leader Albert Vorspan, "would not have reached those proportions were it not

for the special history of anti-Semitism, past and present. We are only one generation

removed from the holocaust."[259] His assertion mirrored Karp and Shapiro, with the

addition that Shanker's language – the evoking of Nazi and Gestapo imagery – was

calculated in order to cause a more virulent reaction and better combat decentralization of

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[256] Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism," 130-131.
[257] Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism," 131.
[258] Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Anti-Semitism," 129-139.
[259] Vorspan, "Black and Jews," 199.

the school system.[260] These two opinions spoke largely for the primary evaluation of

Ocean-Hill. Those who spoke in terms of support for the Jewish cause, namely Earl-

Raab, worked out a similar argument; blacks had asked for so much from white society in

terms of special treatment and reparations that whites were being pushed aside and the

school conflict was merely an extension of this.

What is crucial is not the idea that the Ocean-Hill Brownsville conflict was likely

the machination of one particularly greedy and selfish man picking on a powerless

populace in order to manipulate his peers into agreeing with him, although it is certainly

reprehensible. What *is* crucial is that Jews were in a position to be so easily frightened by

a perceived threat of anti-Semitism that they lashed out angrily against a segment of the

population they had once assisted. This fear can be attributed to the Six Day War, in part,

for opening up a renewed sensitivity to anti-Semitism at home and abroad. It can be

attributed to the inward turn that started earlier in the decade as Jews began to ask more

about what it meant to be Jewish and how their support for Civil Rights could be

reconciled with Judaism. It can even be attributed to the black rejection of their help that

forced even liberal Jews in on themselves in a way they did not expect. Thus, the real

significance of Ocean-Hill Brownsville is that it was the straw that broke the camel's

back. Regardless of Shanker's motives and machinations, Jews were reacting to blacks

more than they were reacting to the issue of schools and unions. They were releasing

pent up frustration at their situation and the escalation of identity politics. They way they

dealt with it, was to accuse blacks of anti-Semitism.

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[260] Vorspan, "Black and Jews," 197-199.

The subject of validity of black anti-Semitism plays a huge role in Hentoff's collection. Opinions ranged from the familiar accusation of black anti-Semitism as a product of Christianity to black anti-Semitism as a product of increasingly hypocritical and asinine charges of anti-Semitism.[261] Judge William H. Booth's essay, "Racism and Human Rights," spoke to the abundance of questionable claims of anti-Semitism from the period. As the Chairman of the New York City Commission on Human Rights, Booth saw accusations increase steadily throughout his time with the position. In fact, Booth was fired for being "soft on anti-Semitism."[262] Booth, a black man, found these claims spurious because they came from the same sort of people he once saw give him the Nazi salute as he entered a school; people who called him a "black Nazi" or his colleagues "nigger-lovers."[263] Besides Booth's frustrations with the obviously hypocritical claims of anti-Semitism from bitterly angry Jews, he also expressed vexations related to the "Harlem on My Mind" exhibit, which elicited complaints from both blacks and Jews. Booth's failure to condemn a young girl for a frank discussion on the position of blacks amongst other minorities got him his "soft on anti-Semitism" label.

Booth's frustration, that anti-Semitism was often bandied about with little evidence, something he described as "crying anti-Semitic wolf," is one that Karp and Shapiro suggested actually went further to creating *more* anti-Semitism.[264] Julius Lester, too, echoed this statement that blacks were being picked upon by Jews senselessly and

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[261] Kaufman, "'Thou Shalt Surely Rebuke Thy Neighbour'"; see also Karp and Shapiro, "Exploding the Myth of Black Ant-Semitism."

[262] Booth, "Racism and Human Rights," 117.

[263] Booth, "Racism and Human Rights," 118.

[264] Booth, "Racism and Human Rights," 124-127.

needlessly, and voiced disappointment that blacks had survived so much prejudice and so much hatred just to be accused of the same by the one group that should have been able to relate to the plight of blacks.

Two more authors in Hentoff's book are necessary to mention, the influential writers and scholars James Baldwin and Harold Cruse. Their essays each provide profound insight into the sources of black frustrations with Jews that were construed as anti-Semitism when, really, they were something entirely different. Baldwin's essay, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," presented a tremendously emotional account of one black man's frustrations with the white world that had so brutally mistreated him. He contended that he hated his crooked landlord — who was Jewish — growing up. He recounted hating his grocer; also Jewish. He went on to talk about his hatred of teachers, union workers, Army officers, post-office workers, Nabisco, Riker's, General Electric, and a number of other institutions that Baldwin was not actually certain were Jewish, but he hated all the same.[265] His argument was that blacks hate the white-Christian world for the suffering it had brought them. He went further to say "the Jew can be proud of his suffering, or at least not ashamed of it. His history and his suffering do not begin in America, where black men have been taught to be ashamed of everything, especially their suffering."[266] He lamented that "when white men rise up against oppression, they are heroes: When black men rise, they have reverted to their native savagery."[267] He also went on to point out that Warsaw was not seen as a riot,

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[265] Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," 3-5.
[266] Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," 6.
[267] Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," 6.

while Watts was, and that blacks are aware of it enough for it to color their perceptions of Jews. Baldwin, ultimately, illustrated the frustration of blacks as a people mistreated from the beginning of their lives until the end. His claims showed that Lincoln was right in his assertions that anti-Semitism was merely misread anti-whiteism.

Cruse, on the other hand, shared through his essay his lifetime experience with Jews. From not knowing much about two young Jewish boys down the block from him, to being insulted by a Jewish woman in Virginia, to the frustration of being called an anti-Semite for disagreeing with his Jewish Marxist-party leaders, Cruse's story is one that painted anti-Semitism as a result of Jewish paternalism. He, like Baldwin, found frustration in being told by Jews that they know how blacks feel because they are Jewish and have seen discrimination. He found it particularly frustrating because Jews had done so well for themselves. He pointed out that Jews "had the highest per capita income ratio of any group in the united states" and that Jews could not possibly be in the same boat as blacks when "there were many Jews rich enough and powerful enough politically to bestow philanthropy on Negroes."[268] Of course, just as Karp and Shapiro suggested, Cruse's major frustration was with being called an anti-Semite for disagreeing with Jews, an opinion he framed excellently by saying "listening to American Jews talk about anti-Semitism in America leads me to believe that, when the first Jew becomes president of the United States, other Jews will consider every Gentile who voted against him to be an anti-Semite.[269]

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[268] Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs", 172.
[269] Cruse, "My Jewish Problem and Theirs", 174.

Conclusion

Having delved into some of the prevailing opinions and theories present in Hentoff's book, it is clear that grievances were abundant on both sides of the conflict between blacks and Jews in the United States. If one were to consolidate the theories in Hentoff's book with those in Katz's book, one could construct a sort of relational timeline of grievances. Starting in the early 1960s, blacks became frustrated by the attention white supporters got in the mainstream struggle over the plight of blacks. More militant groups in the movement, over time, removed white support because of its patronizing nature and inability to relate to the black cause. As the battle for rights shifted from Southern lunch counters and voter registration to economic exploitation in the North, the groups each turned in on themselves as their ranks suffered divisions and their alliances fractured.

Conversely, the inward turn caused blacks to focus on acquiring power for themselves since it was apparent that whites were not going to properly represent their case. They emphasized, thanks to Malcolm X and other strong black leaders, a new culture of strength and perseverance that cast aside their dark history and looked for a more positive ancestry to celebrate. Simultaneously, events like the Eichmann trial and the Six Day War forced Jews to look inward and attempt to consolidate their own identity – just as blacks did – by asking themselves what it meant to be Jewish and how they could reconcile Judaism with Christian America. Where the black inward turn produced a more confident and strident black populace, the Jewish inward turn – again, started in

part as a result of black rejection – looked to its past as well via the Eichmann trial and the Six Day War. Only a generation removed from the Holocaust, they became contextualized by their existence as an oppressed people. They absorbed a victimhood-culture that preached survival with Israel's successes against Arabs as a role model.

Blacks then, finally ready as an emergent political entity, made a run a gaining ground in the urban North. They requested special treatment, given the specificity of their suffering to *America*. Unlike any of the competing immigrant cultures beforehand, Jews found themselves being pushed aside in a way similar to previous immigrant groups with the exception that blacks were demanding special treatment. Jews took exception, because they had worked hard to achieve their position in American society and a great number of them were not about to stand idly by while they felt blacks were being given gains at their expense.

Anti-Semitism, then, erupted from this conflict as Jews began to claim that they too were being abused. Furthermore, this sense of anti-Semitic sensitivity had been increased by the recent emphasis on Holocaust memorialization and lessons of survival. Though Jews were fractured in terms of opinions, their inward turn could be best explained through anti-Semitism being the one thing all Jews could relate to, and black anti-Semitism, as the most readily available and obvious source thereof, became a primary cause for Jewish organizations to combat.

This summary serves to illustrate the importance of identity in the relationship between blacks and Jews in the United States in the late 1960s. Simply put, the black attempt to understand their identity and consolidate *African* with *American* forced Jews to consider, similarly, how to reconcile *Jewish* with *American*. Blacks discovered that they

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could make the United States work for them while fostering a new cultural drive that unified the populace. They could make it on their own steam. Jews, on the other hand, found events like the Six Day War tore them in two directions. Where some had considered themselves Jewish first and American second, this view began to shift. As blacks began to criticize and challenge their former allies in the fight for Civil Rights, Jews united behind their identity as Jews, as those prejudiced against, as those united for their survival. This outcry, from the people they felt they could most relate to, hurt blacks. How could they have pogroms against Jews if they did not even have power? Why would they speak out against Jews, with whom they shared the experience of suffering? Could Jews not see that they were white? Could Jews not see that they had used the white-Christian system to get where they were? And, could they not see that blacks merely wanted and longed for what Jews enjoyed? It is clear, then, that the interrelations between blacks and Jews were greatly responsible for the shaping of their respective identities during the late 1960s. Each group needed an "other" for which to base their struggle, and who better than he who had also struggled.

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The very fundamentals of American identity appear to be up for debate this year. And in many ways, they are. The problem, though, is this: Neither side is spelling out a vision for being an American that actually works for all Americans. Story Continued Below. Â The Founders and their successors also struggled with the contradiction between black slavery in the United States and Americaâ€™s creed of universal human rights. One popular solution to the dilemma was the idea that blacks deserved to be freeâ€"somewhere else. In his autobiography the author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, himself a slave owner, wrote: â€œNothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that [American slaves] are to be free. PDF | On Jan 1, 2001, Indranil Chakravarty and others published The Ties That Bind: Literature and Cinema in Latin America. Â American literature much in the same way as Rome became the cradle for filmmakers. Most of the "boom" writers have had a bit of the scholar and the critic in themselves, a far cry from. the idea of the naif and natural artist. With their scholarship and conscious awareness of history and. Â Unlike dos Santos' Barren Lives or Rocha's Black God White Devil, The Guns provides a critical. perspective on the religious belief and violence, deconstructing the representations and discourses. through which the Northeast has been interpreted.