

The Kercheval Incident

Detroit 1966

The Police Department's Illegal War on Black Power Activists



Student Handouts and Activities

Study this image carefully. It was taken in Detroit in 1966.



<https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/detroitunderfire/item/1088>

See – Think - Wonder	
What do you see? Describe in detail what you see in this photo.	
What do you think? What are you thinking as you study this photo? What conclusions or analyses are you developing, and what connections are you making?	
What do you wonder? What questions does this image raise for you? What do you want or need to know?	

Black Power Quote Comparison

Black resistance building up to the time of the Kercheval Incident often took the form of Black Power organizations.

You will watch the video, “Black Power in 2 min or so” https://youtu.be/OE6oS_3HSIM . Record your responses to the questions below.

- What (events or feelings) set the stage for the rise of Black Power?

Any of the following or related sentiments:

- Even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, America still faced deep racial issues.
- “Dr. King’s message of nonviolence wore thin as the 1960s progressed, particularly because violence is everywhere.”
- People, especially Black folks and people of color, were frustrated with the lack of tangible progress.
 - “There has not necessarily been the tangible transformation in Black people’s living conditions.”
- Some/many Black people did not feel like the Civil Rights Act ended up fulfilling its promises.
- Stonefly Carmichael and his message.

There may be other valid answers that students come up with. These are what is mentioned in the video.

- What does Black Power mean to you?

This answer is reflective, based on students' own meaning-making.

- How did Black Power differ from existing Civil Rights movements?

Any of the following or related sentiments:

- “Called for an end to nonviolence as the only strategy of the black movement.”
- Focused specifically on empowering Black people, not on equality or peaceful relations
- Considered more “extreme”

There is not one “correct” answer. Students will be informed by various contexts and perspectives.

You will now compare and contrast different views about Black Power expressed in quotes, a letter of support, and a critical opinion editorial from prominent Civil Rights and Black Power leaders during the 1960's.

Why Black Power?

“Dr. King's policy was that nonviolence would achieve the gains for black people in the United States. His major assumption was that if you are nonviolent, if you suffer, your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. That's very good. He only made one fallacious assumption: In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none.” — Stokely Carmichael

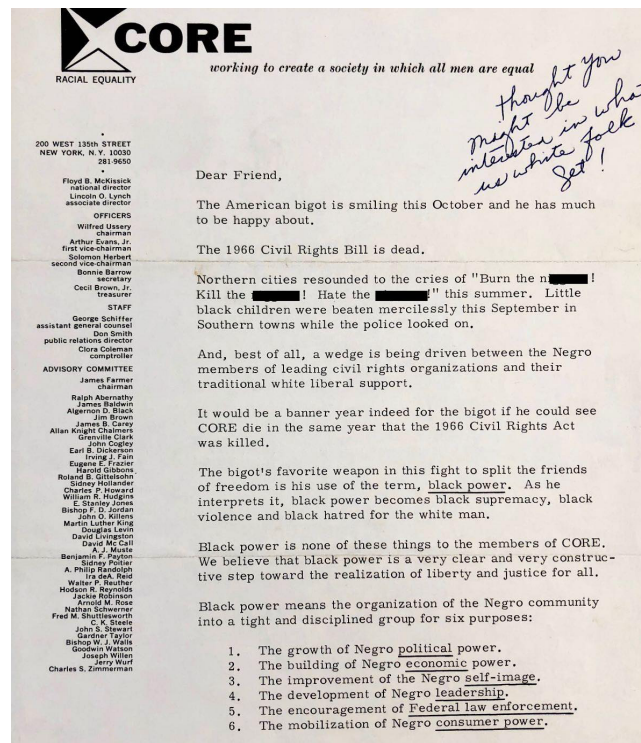
It is necessary to understand that Black Power is a cry of disappointment. The Black Power slogan did not spring full grown from the head of some philosophical Zeus. It was born from the wounds of despair and disappointment. It is a cry of daily hurt and persistent pain. — MLK Jr.

What is Black Power?

It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations. —Stokely Carmichael

Black power is organizing the rage of Black people and putting new hard questions and demands to white America. — Charles Hamilton Houston

Read the Letter to CORE Supporters about Black Power 1966:



<https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/detroitunderfire/item/2542>

- What does this document imply about the purpose of the Black Power movement?

Any of the following or related sentiments:

- Black Power is not based in hate or black supremacy.
- Black Power is focused on six purposes (might be listed or just referenced) about the empowerment of Black people in many ways.
- It is focused on the “realization of liberty and justice for all”.
- It is based on community and empowerment.

There may be other valid answers that students come up with.

Read the *highlighted* sections of Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, warned against Black Power in this 1966 edition of *The Crisis*:

WHITHER “BLACK POWER”?*

By Roy Wilkins

ALL about us are alarms and confusions as well as great and challenging developments. Differences of opinion are sharper. For the first time since several organizations began to function where only two had functioned before, there emerges what seems to be a difference in goals.

Heretofore there were some differences in methods and emphasis but none in ultimate goals. The end was always to be the inclusion of the American Negro, without racial discrimination, as a full-fledged equal in all phases of American citizenship.

There has now emerged, first a strident and threatening challenge to a strategy widely employed by civil rights groups, namely non-violence. One organization which has been meeting in Baltimore has passed a resolution declaring for defense of themselves by Negro citizens if they are attacked.

This position is not new as far as the NAACP is concerned. Historically, our Association has defended in court those persons who

* Excerpts from keynote address delivered by Mr. Wilkins at NAACP 57th annual convention, Los Angeles, July 5, 1966. This statement was in response to the issue raised by the use of the slogan “Black Power” by Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the Meredith Mississippi March early in June.

have defended themselves and their homes with firearms.

But neither have we couched a policy of manly resistance in such a way that our members and supporters felt compelled to maintain themselves in an armed state, ready to retaliate instantly and in kind whenever attacked.

We venture the observation that such a published posture could serve to stir counterplanning, counteraction and possible conflict. If carried out literally as instant retaliation, in cases adjudged by aggrieved persons to have been grossly unjust, this policy could produce—in extreme situations—lynchings, or, in better-sounding phraseology, private vigilante vengeance.

Moreover, in attempting to substitute for derelict enforcement machinery, the policy entails the risk of a broader, more indiscriminate crack-down by law officers under the ready-made excuse of restoring law and order.

It seems reasonable to assume that proclaimed protective violence is as likely to encourage counter-violence as it is to discourage violent persecution.

BUT the more serious division in the civil rights movement is the one posed by a word formulation that implies clearly a dif-

ference in goals.

No matter how endlessly they try to explain it, the term "black power" means anti-white power. In a racially pluralistic society, the concept, the formation and the exercise of an ethnically tagged power means opposition to other ethnic powers, just as the term "white supremacy" means subjection of all non-white peoples. In the black-white relationship, it has to mean that every other ethnic power is the rival and the antagonist of "black power." It has to mean "going it alone." It has to mean separatism.

Now, separatism, whether on the rarefied debate level of "black power" or on the wishful level of a secessionist Freedom City in Watts, offers a disadvantaged minority little except a chance to shrivel and die.

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

Ideologically it dictates "up with black and down with white" in precisely the same manner that South Africa reverses that slogan.

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

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

Though it be clarified and clarified again, "black power" in the

quick, uncritical and highly emotional adoption it has received from segments of a beleaguered people can mean in the end only black death. Even if, through some miracle, it should be enthroned briefly, the human spirit, which knows no color or geography or time, would die a little, leaving for wiser and stronger and more compassionate men the painful beating back to the upper trail.

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

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

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

JOIN THE NAACP

<https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/detroitunderfire/item/2551>

- What does this document imply about the purpose of the Black Power movement?

Any of the following or related sentiments:

- Black Power = Black Supremacy and the subjugation or oppression of non-black people.
- Black Power means "going it alone" and separatism.
- The underlying ideology or impact of Black Power/Black Supremacy is compared to White Supremacy, the South African Apartheid (ideologically), and Hitler or the Klu Klux Klan.
- The only benefit it might offer is to give Black people a "psychological lift".
- Black Power will perpetuate racial hate and violence.

There may be other valid answers that students come up with.

- How does it differ from the CORE letter?

Generally, students will summarize the different sentiments they observed. The most obvious difference is that the CORE letter sees Black Power as empowerment, while the Roy Wilkins piece criticizes it as a source of hate, violence, and inequality.

COINTELPRO

The Civil Rights Movement and the rise of Black Power were met with incredible resistance by many people in power, including those with government agencies at their disposal. One of the most powerful instances of state oppression in response to Black organizing and resistance was led by J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the FBI at the time. The FBI or the Federal Bureau of Investigation is a national security organization with both intelligence and law enforcement responsibilities. You will engage with the following information to learn about COINTELPRO (The Counterintelligence Program) and answer the questions at the bottom of the handout.

You will first watch a Tik Tok video on the basics of COINTELPRO. After, read through the Purpose, Goals, and targets of COINTELPRO. Use these passages and this video to answer the questions that follow!

https://www.tiktok.com/@theoriginalsilverfoxx/video/7040664603130645806?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7189442406255773227

J. Edgar Hoover's Purpose:

The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters Efforts of various groups to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or youthful adherents must be frustrated. No opportunity should be missed to exploit through counterintelligence techniques the organizational and personal conflicts of the leaderships of the groups and where possible an effort should be made to capitalize upon existing conflicts between competing black nationalist organizations. Be alert to determine ... personal misconduct on the part of militant nationalist leaders so any practical or warranted counter-intelligence may be instituted. — J Edgar Hoover

Goals of COINTELPRO <https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/814>

1. Prevent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups.
2. Prevent the rise of a "Messiah" who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement.
3. Prevent violence on the part of black nationalist groups.
4. Prevent militant black nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability, by discrediting them to three separate segments of the community - the Negro community, the white community, and Negro radicals.
5. Prevent the long-range growth of militant black organizations, especially among youth.

COINTELPRO targeted groups and individuals that the FBI deemed were trying to undermine the power or authority of the U.S. government and law enforcement. This included nonprofit organizations, student groups, Black Student Unions, churches, Feminist and Anti-War groups, the Ku Klux Klan, Civil Rights and Black Power groups, and leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, and Malcolm X.

One way that law enforcement agencies enacted COINTELPRO was through the use of **agent provocateurs**. An agent provocateur is a person who is employed by law enforcement entities to encourage people in certain targeted groups to break the law so that law enforcement agencies have cause to arrest them.

- What was COINTELPRO?

An answer might include these sentiments or more:

- The FBI was spying on citizens and actively suppressing dissent.
- The secret Counterintelligence Program - a global, clandestine, unconstitutional practice of surveillance, infiltration, and disruption of groups engaged in protest dissent and social change.
- An FBI program to “neutralize” activists, Black Power and Civil Rights leaders and organizations, and other threats to government power.

- Why might the FBI want to spy on these people and these groups?

An answer might include these sentiments or more:

- They felt/the US government felt that they were a threat to the government, to white people, or to the status quo.
- Due to persistent racism in the US, they targeted Black people.
- Black people, activists, and the Black Power movement (among others), were a threat to the power of the government and law enforcement.
- “The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters”

- Who are some of the targets of COINTELPRO?

An answer might include these examples or more:

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

- Stokely Carmichael
- Malcom X
- Nonprofit organization
- Civil Rights & Black Power Organizations
- The Black Panther Party
- Black Student Unions
- The Young Lords
- Anti-War Groups
- Feminist Groups
- Black book sellers
- Black churches
- Black schools
- “Truly blanket surveillance of African American people”
- “It took place in every place where people would gather”
- “black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters”

- What does it mean to “neutralize” these groups and leaders?

An answer might include these sentiments or more:

- To take down, lock up/criminalize, set up/entrap, create social divides within these communities
- To take away any power they might have
- To render them unable to achieve their goal
- To use violent or manipulative means to remove or separate leaders from their group

Detroit’s Anti-Loitering Law (20 minutes)

*“It shall be unlawful for any person to loiter on any street, sidewalk, overpass or public place . . . so as to hinder or impede or tend to hinder or impede the passage of pedestrians or vehicles.”
City of Detroit Ordinance Section 58-1-10*

The DPD often used the city’s vague anti-loitering law to target and arrest ACME members for their political activities. In 1964, the police department successfully lobbied for the anti-loitering law in order to legalize its longstanding practice of making unconstitutional “investigative arrests.” Detroit’s Mayor enacted an “anti-loitering” law to give police the ability to arrest anyone in public for any reason at any time.

They were tools of “discretionary policing,” or laws whose enforcement was based on individual officer’s judgment. Although the police did issue tickets to some people engaging in criminal activity, many argued that the anti-loitering law allowed prejudiced officers to abuse their authority. In 1965, the DPD arrested Moses Wedlow, a leading ACME activist, for ‘loitering’ on the sidewalk in a clear case of targeting for his civil rights work. Wedlow challenged the anti-loitering law as unconstitutional, with the assistance of the ACLU, but the courts rejected his lawsuit.

Now it is time to explore a “Map of Racially Targeted Enforcement of Anti-Loitering Law”. Use the questions below to guide your exploration!

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d626e10a71f44968ad7ce4ca0bd85ed8#ref-n-DiIfRy>

*This map shows the number of loitering tickets given out in each Detroit Police Department precinct during 1965, when the DPD crackdown on ACME intensified. The DPD issues by far the most loitering tickets (737) in the **5th Precinct** (far right on Detroit’s East Side), the station closest to ACME headquarters. This indicates that DPD policies were not about fighting crime or protecting the Black community, but rather fighting the civil rights movement and criminalizing anti-police brutality activists. The DPD’s issuance of yet more loitering tickets to ACME members is what set off the Kercheval Incident.*

- What does this set of maps show? (Who, what, when, and where?)
 - Who: Detroit residents and their racial demographics
 - What: the number of loitering tickets given out in each DPD precinct
 - When: 1965; when DPD crackdown on ACME intensified
 - Where: Detroit; the neighborhoods with their racial demographics; police precincts

- What do the different symbols on the map mean?

- Orange dots - show the different DPD precincts and the amount of tickets they issued
 - Shades of blue - blue means it is a majority black neighborhood; the different shades of blue indicate different percentages of the population that are Black in each neighborhood
- Compare the number of loitering tickets given out in 1965 in the 5th precinct to other precincts in the same area. How many tickets were given in each of the following precincts?
 - 5th - 737
 - 7th - 154
 - 1st - 63
 - 15th - 81
 - 11th - 83
- Based on these numbers, in which precinct did the police most frequently target people for loitering? What might explain this pattern?

The most tickets were issued in the 5th precinct, where ACME had their headquarters and, subsequently, where many activists and organization members spent time.

It seems like the 5th and 7th precinct are located *in* majority Black neighborhoods. It seems like the 1st, 15th, and 11th precincts are located *in* majority white neighborhoods (albeit at the borders).

Students' ideas for what might "explain the pattern" are speculative, and there is not one "correct" answer.

How did the Kercheval Incident begin? (25-30 min)

Take a look at two different accounts of how the Kercheval Incident began and answer the questions that follow each source.

Source A:

Transcript from a 1968 congressional hearing on "Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders," conducted by the right-wing Senate Subcommittee on Investigations in March 1968. The hearing, held in Detroit eight months after the 1967 Uprising, sought to prove that a conspiracy of Black radicals had caused that violent event and also pursued a theory that the same radicals had incited the Kercheval "Mini-Riot." The Senate subcommittee called Detective Lt. William McCoy, who was in charge of the Demonstration Detail of the DPD's Special Investigation Bureau, its main political surveillance unit.

Lieutenant McCoy. The Kercheval incident started at 8:25 p.m. on August 9, 1966, when the fifth precinct cruiser—a four-man patrol car—observed seven men grouped in front of 9626 Kercheval. These seven men were impeding pedestrian traffic. The cruiser was in the vicinity in response to previous complaints of loitering.

The CHAIRMAN. In other words, these men had been obstructing traffic?

Lieutenant McCoy. Pedestrian traffic; yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And there had been a complaint and the cruiser went there in response to the complaint?

Lieutenant McCoy. Yes, Mr. Chairman; that is correct.

The officers informed the seven men that they were blocking the sidewalk and instructed them to move on. Four of the men complied with the police officers' command. The three remaining refused to move. The officers again told the three to move on. The officers then asked the three for identification in preparation of writing loitering ordinance violations. The three began to yell, "This is our neighborhood and we won't be moved. Whitey is going to kill us."

A crowd began to gather, and the fifth precinct cruiser asked for assistance over the police radio.

The CHAIRMAN. As I understand, they started yelling "Whitey is going to kill us" when they hadn't been asked anything but to move on and stop obstructing pedestrian traffic.

Lieutenant McCoy. That is correct.

- What claims does the account make?

Answers might include the following ideas or more:

- Seven men were blocking "pedestrian traffic". Police responded to a "complaint" because of this.
- The men were asked to move. Four complied, three refused to move. The officers calmly asked for identification and the three men started yelling provocative things that caused a crowd to gather.
- The police officers then called for back up, since the men refused orders and a crowd gathered.
- The police officers simply responded to a complaint and treated the men respectfully.
- The men were breaking the law and not listening to the officers. The men also were provoking a crowd to gather.

- How does the document's language communicate the speaker's perspective?

Answers might include the following ideas or more:

- He uses legal/official language and speaks very "matter of fact". This might communicate/imply that what he is saying is the "truth" or "fact" of what happened.
- He describes the officers actions as being very by the book and very calm. This might communicate/imply that the officers were simply doing their job and cannot be seen as the cause of any problem.

This is a more interpretative question. There is not one "correct" answer.

Source B:

On August 18, 1966, a new coalition called Citizens for Fair Law Enforcement published "Who Started the Kercheval Street 'Riot'" as a paid advertisement in the Detroit Free Press. People Against Racism, the white radical group started by former ACME member Frank Joyce, created this account based on the statements provided by ACME-AAYM members who were arrested and their experiences with the multi-year police harassment campaign.

THE INITIAL INCIDENT

On Tuesday, August 9, between 8 and 9:30 p.m., Wilbert McClendon, Clarence Reed, and James Roberts were standing at the curb leaning against a car parked on Kercheval near Pennsylvania. A passing police cruiser stopped and one of the four officers said to the three men, "Move on Buddy, or you're going to get a ticket." McClendon said, "For what." The police jumped out of their car and one said, "O.K., let's see your identification." Roberts said, "I don't have any identification." (He had just come from home and did not have his wallet) One officer then said to another, "O.K., call some help."

Within three minutes, 15-25 police cars converged on the area. Clarence Reed, who protested the manhandling of Roberts, was severely beaten by more than six police officers in full view of a gathering crowd. He was unable to move and was taken directly to Receiving Hospital where he was not allowed to make a telephone call to his family. The other two men were taken to the Fifth Precinct station. When they entered the precinct parking lot they noticed an unusual number of police cars and officers, many armed with "riot equipment."

In the neighborhood itself, people naturally entered the streets to see why there were so many police in the area. Some young people threw rocks and yelled insults at the police.

<https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/detroitunderfire/item/1406>

- What claims does the account make?

Answers might include the following ideas or more:

- The men were standing on a curb, leaning against a car, when officers drove by and told them to move or get a ticket.
 - When one of the men asked why, the officers got out of their car and asked for identification. One of the men had left his ID at home, so he couldn't show it to the officer. Because of this, the officers called for backup.
 - Within minutes, a huge amount of police cars arrived. One of the men was severely beaten by police officers as a crowd gathered. He was taken to the hospital and the other men were taken to the precinct.
 - The two men noticed many officers in riot gear as they entered the precinct.
 - People in the neighborhood gathered to see why there were so many police. Some young people threw rocks and insulted the police.
- How does the document's language communicate the speaker's perspective?

Answers might include the following ideas or more:

- The language sounds like it is objectively recalling a series of events, which communicates/implies that this is the "truth" or "fact".
- This sounds like it is telling a story/narrative which might communicate/ imply it is based on first person accounts, rather than a more report-like account.

Consider these questions after looking at both sources.

- These documents agree that...

Answers might include the following ideas or more:

- The men were standing on the sidewalk.
- At least one of the men COULD not or DID not show identification.
- A crowd gathered.
- The initial officers called for backup.

- They disagree about...

These accounts disagree about many of the details. There will be a variation of answers. Some examples might include:

- Whether or not a complaint was made about the men.
- The first account says that the men were ignoring orders and causing trouble while the second account says that they were asking questions, left their ID at home, and only really pushed back when one of the men was mishandled.
- The first account says that the men provoked the crowd gathering while the second account says that people started gathering due to the police presence and commotion.
- The first account does not mention any beating or aggression toward the men, but the second account describes brutality and violence against the men.

- Which document do you think is most reliable? Why?

This question is based on students' own opinions and meaning-making. There is no "correct" answer.

- How do you think the Kercheval incident began, based on your reading of these two accounts?

This question is based on students' own opinions and meaning-making. There is no "correct" answer.

Who was Alvin Harrison?

You are going to take a close look at one of the leaders of ACME and AAYM during the Kercheval Incident.

Alvin Harrison was the young new leader of the Afro-American Youth Movement. Harrison, born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1940, moved to Detroit from New York City in May 1965, quickly became an ACME and AAYM leader in the campaign against police brutality.

Read through this primary source and answer the following questions.

This primary source is an excerpt from a Detroit Police Department document, "Information on Meeting Held at Central Methodist Church" on August 20, 1966 - about a week after the Kercheval Incident. It details Alvin Harrison's speech at a mass meeting held by Citizens for Fair Law Enforcement in response to the recent police violence, witnessed by a DPD informant. Alvin Harrison, the AAYM director, is speaking here.

<https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/files/original/3d4402b8bf474f8295d623867995e79f14362fe8.pdf> (p.10-12)

- What is Alvin Harrison's perspective on the role of violence in policing?
Answers might include the following ideas or more:
 - Violence is a foundational part of this country and how it functions.
 - The white man is who committed, taught, and sanctioned violence.
 - Violence is an inseparable part of this whole struggle (due to the actions of white folks).

- He believes the Black community's response to this police action should be...
Answers might include the following ideas or more:
 - A show of black power and perhaps forceful support for black leaders.
 - Implies that nonviolence is not an option because of the way violence is embedded in the government and policing.

- What is Harrison's message to the audience?
This question is based on students' meaning-making and there is no single "correct" answer.

MEETING OF CITIZENS FOR FAIR LAW ENFORCEMENT, AUGUST 19, 1966

good lies about what happened and transpired at the Afro-American headquarters. I did not come to here to talk of violence. I hate violence. I am not a violent man. I have never preached violence in any form. But let's look at the record. This country was constitutionally formed in violence. It was steeped in violence - it was a country filled with violence. When the white man brought out people to this country they taught us violence. They gave us some good lessons on how to become and to be violent people. They were and have been violent to the Negro since the Negroes were first placed on these shores as slaves. Why should the white man be surprised when violence erupts across the nation everytime the Negro protests his difficult problems and when violence comes out of Watts, Chicago, Harlem, Detroit. It is a nationwide protest against his plight, brought on and given an okay by the white man. The white man sanctioned violence against the Negroes. Now he retaliates.

on the part of the white man. If we would have had a good display of black power the other night on Kercheval, what did happen would never have taken place. When those police drove up to those persons minding their own business on a street corner, doing nothing more than talking and the police started to rough up those men, the black power community would have put a stop to that harassment immediately. This is what black power is all about, to give those Negro leaders in government, city,

MEETING OF CITIZENS FOR FAIR LAW ENFORCEMENT, AUGUST 19, 1966

etc. the opportunity to know that the black power is behind them whenever they want to make a statement against police brutality or any other matter affecting the lives of the Negro people. He was interrupted several times by applause, was highly oratorical and seemed to enjoy the situation very much. He ended very dramatically by making an applauded statement, stepping back, pausing, raising his hand and stating - BLACK POWER. Then walked from the platform.

The following persons were identified as being in attendance at the above meeting, the idents being made by the surveilling officers as well as confidential informant [REDACTED]

Now you will read some additional information about Alvin Harrison...

It is clear that the DPD and FBI had at least one informant embedded within ACME-AAYM. Consider the following evidence that Alvin Harrison was one of the agent provocateurs in ACME-AAYM.

(1) Local and federal law enforcement had information about ACME-AAYM that they could not have gathered from outside the organization. The DPD displayed detailed knowledge of ACME-AAYM activities and internal conversations since 1965, and of some of the group's individual members since 1963.

(2) There was **no record** of Alvin Harrison before or after his time in ACME-AAYM. Frank Joyce, the first ACME director, recounted Harrison "sort of showed up out of nowhere" in the spring of 1965. Joyce says it was "strange when he showed up and strange when he disappeared" just as suddenly. Additionally, Harrison's name does not appear in any of the DPD documents and FBI surveillance files of Detroit activists that have been reviewed. It was standard operating procedure for the FBI and other surveillance units to hide or omit the names of their undercover agents, or to use code numbers instead of names in these reports.

(3) Harrison disappeared from Detroit, and disappeared almost completely from archives and newspaper databases, in October 1967, with announcement of his membership on the New

Detroit Committee, except for the brief notation in March 1969 that he lived in Cleveland and took a plea deal that resulted in no punishment for charges associated with the Kercheval Incident. It is, of course, possible that his name was not even Alvin Harrison.

(4) Alvin Harrison's comrades and fellow activists came to suspect that he was an informant or government agent. Frank Joyce, the first ACME director, responded unprompted in an interview that he and several African American activists who worked with Harrison still believe that, "Al Harrison is our number one suspect for being an agent". General Baker, a black radical from the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, regularly stated that he suspected Alvin Harrison of being an undercover police spy.

(5) Detective Lt. William McCoy was in charge of the Demonstration Detail of DPD's Special Investigation Bureau which conducted surveillance on civil rights and Black Power organizations and activists, among other "intelligence gathering" activities. McCoy was called to testify in a March 1968 congressional hearing conducted by a US Senate committee that sought to prove that a conspiracy of black radicals had caused a violent uprising in Detroit in 1967.

Detective McCoy told a story about an unnamed leader in ACME-AAYM, presumably Alvin Harrison, inciting a riot and urging black activists to shoot the police. He gave detailed accounts from DPD surveillance records with direct quotations calling for armed resistance over a two-year period by an unnamed leader, presumably Harrison, but again declined to name him. He later named Harrison with extensive knowledge of his life history but asserted that the DPD "cannot tell you why" charges against him were still pending despite the abundance of evidence against him. Many others arrested during the Kercheval incident were charged and convicted. There are only three plausible explanations for why McCoy would act in such a way:

1. The DPD or its undercover informant fabricated (made up) evidence to justify the law enforcement drive to crush the Afro-American Youth Movement.
2. Harrison was a genuine radical who decided to turn on his AAYM colleagues after his arrest during the Kercheval Incident, or possibly after a previous DPD arrest, and cooperated with the police and prosecutors by providing evidence against his friends and allies.
3. The third, most likely, explanation is that Harrison was the main FBI spy. Evidence suggests he was the undercover agent provocateur for the DPD's Demonstration Detail and Special Investigation Bureau who was asked to encourage violent attacks on law enforcement so that the Detroit Police Department would have a legal reason to target ACME and AAYM for their civil rights activities. They also sought a legal reason for making mass arrests to "subdue" the Kercheval Mini-Riot before it spiraled out of control, and a legal reason to crush ACME-AAYM and its leadership of the most effective grassroots anti-police brutality movement in the city. This conclusion does not rule out the possibility of additional undercover FBI/DPD informants in ACME-AAYM.

In the end, whether or not Alvin Harrison or someone else was the undercover FBI/DPD informant is less important than the definitive evidence that the Detroit Police

Department utilized one or more FBI spies who had infiltrated ACME and AAYM. These undercover agents or police informants allowed the Detroit Police Department to frame these direct-action protest organizations as advocates of violence against law enforcement, in order to justify the Kercheval crackdown and the conspiracy charges that effectively ended ACME-AAYM as a powerful community-based movement against police violence and oppression of African Americans in Detroit.

Now consider...

- How might the circumstances under which Alvin Harrison was involved with these organizations affect your understanding of his response?

This question is based on students' meaning-making and there is no "correct" response.

- Based on the background information, I understand this document differently because . . .

This question is based on students' meaning-making and there is no "correct" response.

- Despite his motives, do you still believe what Alvin Harrison said was true?

This question is based on students' meaning-making and there is no "correct" response.

- Think back to what we know about COINTELPRO. How is that program reflected in what the DPD did here?

This question is based on students' meaning-making and there is no "correct" response.