

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN RACE AND ETHNICITY

# Black Citizenship and Authenticity in the Civil Rights Movement

Randolph Hohle



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This book explains the emergence of two competing forms of black political representation that transformed the objectives and meanings of local action, created boundaries between national and local struggles for racial equality, and prompted a white response to the civil rights movement that set the stage for the neoliberal turn in US policy. Randolph Hohle questions some of the most basic assumptions about the civil rights movement, including the importance of non-violence, and the movement's legacy on contemporary black politics. Non-violence was the effect of the movement's emphasis on racially non-threatening good black citizens that, when contrasted to bad white responses of southern whites, severed the relationship between whiteness and good citizenship. Although the civil rights movement secured new legislative gains and influenced all subsequent social movements, pressure to be good black citizens and the subsequent marginalization of black authenticity have internally polarized and paralyzed contemporary black struggles. This book is the first systematic analysis of the civil rights movement that considers the importance of authenticity, the body, and ethics in political struggles. It bridges the gap between the study of race, politics, and social movement studies.

**Randolph Hohle** is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at D'Youville College. His research addresses how a group's moral claims affect citizenship, social policy and subsequent political mobilization. His work has appeared in such journals as *Sociological Forum*, *The Sociological Quarterly*, *The Journal of Historical Sociology*, and *Sociological Compass*.

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# Introduction

On March 2, 1955, Montgomery, Alabama police arrested a young black woman by the name of Claudette Colvin for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Local black leaders began to plan a bus boycott to protest her arrest and use her as a test case to challenge segregated busing. At the last minute, the same local leaders called off the boycott after they discovered the details of Claudette and her reaction to the arrest. Claudette hit, kicked, and cursed the police as they dragged her off the bus. She was also an unwed pregnant teen. Claudette's response to the arrest and status as an out-of-wedlock pregnant teen would undermine the legal challenge because she did not reflect the type of black citizen that could be used to argue that blacks deserved protective civil rights legislation. Luckily, a local activist by the name of Rosa Parks who did conform to the type of black citizen who would be deserving of rights lived in Montgomery. Accounts of Parks, then and today, describe her as a 'tired, old, seamstress' whose long day of work left her 'neck and shoulders particularly sore', who 'calmly' said no to the bus driver who asked her and three other black passengers to give up their seat for a white passenger. Her character was pristine. No rational person, even a white person from Montgomery, could argue that she did not deserve a seat on her bus ride home from work. It was the normative image that Parks embodied, the racially non-threatening "good black citizen" that local Montgomery activists, including a young minister named Martin Luther King, would organize a year-long bus boycott around.

Following the successful conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, local black struggles everywhere began to emphasize that blacks exhibit good black citizenship during sit-ins, marches, and everyday life. Throughout the next decade and all over the South, and especially before organized movements, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized pedagogical seminars and role-playing simulations that instructed blacks on how to be good black citizens when protesting and confronting bad whites. This included instructions on how to speak, how to minimize emotional outbursts, how to sit, dress, walk, and respond to whites. As the movement secured protective legislation, notably the 1964 Civil Rights Act and

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1965 Voting Rights Act, national rights were intrinsically linked with the embodied image of the good black citizenship: a racially non-threatening and idealized representation of the good American.

Yet, at the same time the dominant liberal faction of the civil rights movement was securing citizenship rights, they faced an internal challenge from the black nationalist groups over the desirability and political ramifications of good black citizenship. Malcolm X articulated an argument that suggested blacks needed to reclaim control of their bodies in order to shape an 'authentic' black identity as an integral part of constructing separate black communities rather than further racial and civic integration. Despite his death, civil rights activist organizations, notably SNCC and the Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE), drew from Malcolm's discourse of black authenticity and placed it into a political context. Thus began the era of two diverging, competing, yet paradoxically connected forms of black political representation. The bifurcation of black citizenship has produced competing projects over how to struggle for new rights and equal opportunities regarding jobs, adequate housing and schools, and access to the social welfare system.

This book examines the normative shift and subsequent struggle for black political representation that emerged in the black civil rights movement. It focuses on the historical and sociological construction of the two pillars of embodied black political representation, what I define as good black citizenship and black authenticity, and how they became synonymous with national or local black struggles, and influenced the style of subsequent black politics and the state's response to racial inequality. Rather than focus on a polemical question of whether the civil rights movement was progressive, revolutionary, or conservative, I focus on the paradoxical and nuanced legacy of the movement as it pertains to American citizenship and contemporary black political representation. The civil rights movement is one of the most well known, well researched, and arguably the most defining period in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American civic culture. Its impact and influence on subsequent political struggles and social movements has been thoroughly documented.<sup>1</sup> Past scholarship has also addressed questions specific to the movement itself, such as how did it start, why did it end the way it did, its impact on identities, music, and literature, the importance of non-violence as a strategy, and its role in social policy and the white responses to the movement.<sup>2</sup> Despite the amount of scholarly work on the civil rights movement, questions remain as to the movement's broader impact on America's civic culture, specifically, how they redefined American citizenship.

The ongoing significance of race in American politics demands scholars go back to the civil rights era and understand the various and flexible ways race makes social policy meaningful. Despite the media-manufactured and pseudo-intellectual debate over a post-racial America, sociological research continues to demonstrate that race is as important as ever. In a way, this book highlights the way race has changed to the point

that one of the effects of good black citizenship is to hide race in plain sight: the body. Many Americans do not have time or interest to rationally digest the nuances of political and economic policy. Monetary theories that insist on a strong dollar and the imminent dangers of national debt and the consequences of privatization are indeed complex, but also embedded with racial meanings in order to attract broader white support. The cultural meanings in racial bodies, as shown on television during a press conference, on the streets sleeping or protesting, standing in line inside the social services office, or sitting in a chair behind a desk in a political office, all help shape how audiences interpret and understand the political meanings embedded in social policy.

### THE NORMATIVE SHIFT IN BLACK POLITICAL STRUGGLES

Although black struggles for civic and economic equality started well before the civil rights movement, it did go through a profound shift under King's leadership. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, black politics were splintered around many competing factions. They included the Fabian-socialism of the early work of W.E.B. Dubois,<sup>3</sup> the race-first-class-second approach represented by the New Negro Movement, the class-first-race-second approach associated with A. Phillip Randolph, the work-hard approach associated with Booker T. Washington, the Garveyites' Back to Africa Movement, and the liberal approaches of the Dubois's later work and the formation of the NAACP. These debates divided and crisscrossed approaches to achieve racial equality. The civil rights movement that took shape around King's leadership represented a normative shift to a "liberal project" that bypassed the race-first/class-first question in favor of emphasizing good black citizenship. I define the faction of the civil rights movement associated with King as the liberal project because of its emphasis on individual citizenship rights, as the means to achieve equality clearly reflects the long political tradition of western liberalism.

The liberal project differed from the past struggles on one key measure: how they targeted who and what counted as good American citizenship as a way that tied the fate of blacks and whites together. This required blacks exercising power over the self to appear racially non-threatening in order to change whites' perceptions of what it meant to be black and white in post-war America. For instance, white segregationists could not easily dismiss the black protests as a communist plot to take over the South because good black citizens did not look like, or act like, dangerous individuals bent on taking over the world. Indeed, a central argument I make in this book is that it was more than just the use of non-violence that made the movement successful. If it were just non-violence, then the non-violence of the preceding 50 years, and the non-violence of the subsequent 50 years, would have produced social change. Non-violence worked because it was part of a larger

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project of good black citizenship, and when situated against the violent white segregationists, distinguished good blacks from bad whites, and severed the relationship between whiteness and good American citizenship.

The internal debates and tensions within the black struggle were temporarily quelled with the ascension of King as the movement's most symbolic and prominent public figure. No longer concerned solely with issues of economic equality, King in particular begins to ask the question of what should constitute good American citizenship. Certainly not whites who used poll taxes and violence to stop blacks from voting. Certainly not Alabama whites who outlawed the NAACP as a foreign organization and fired all public employees, mainly teachers, found to be NAACP members. If good citizenship cannot be defined in terms of race, how should society draw exclusionary boundaries to define and set limits of good citizenship? For King, southern whites represented the opposite of idealized American citizenship, and thus, whites' bad citizenship was ultimately their biggest weakness in their almost hegemonic control of southern life.

Despite the political success of the liberal project, it could not silence the competing black nationalist project rumbling in SNCC, CORE, and dozens of other urban black political groups. The success of the liberal project made the rise of black nationalism and black authenticity possible because the latter was responding to new problems created by the liberal project's successful elimination of legal forms of segregation. The black nationalists challenged whether or not blacks could be integrated into an otherwise 'white America' as individuals as opposed to a group, which raised the question of what should be the normative basis of black political representation. Would blacks at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy who did not reflect good black citizenship be excluded from power? Could there be black politicians that represented black people? Or would blacks have to support white politicians ignorant of the black lived experience? How would economic and political power be dispersed within the black community and between the black and white communities? In perhaps an oversimplified statement, the black nationalists challenged the liberal project over the key issue of who and what would represent black citizenship. Although there was some overlap in how each defined black families, sexualities, masculinities, and femininities, boundaries formed and hardened around their different understandings of citizenship.

In this book, I argue that the key to understanding this normative shift and struggle for black political representation lies in an understanding of the importance of the body, citizenship, and ethics in the civil rights political struggles. The civil rights movement destabilized an arbitrary American moral order that based membership privileges on white skin color. Yet, the destabilization of America's moral civic code came at a price for black America. The competing normative ideals of black citizenship created boundaries between national and local struggles that has stalled subsequent struggle for racial and civic inclusion. These boundaries have contributed

to the increased marginalization of blacks who cannot conform to the good black ideal because gains in racial progress only benefit a small and narrow segment of the black polity. This book maps out an understanding of this split and the contemporary implications which have, among other things, cemented national black politics with ideas of good black citizenship and an ethics of caution, and local black politics with ideas of black authenticity and an ethics of autonomy.

## **GOOD BLACK CITIZENSHIP**

Historically, citizens have identified with national understandings of citizenship through the emphasis of a common language, the development of media, collective remembrance of holidays and traumatic events, literature, public intellectuals, and active citizenship, which simultaneously linked citizens with each other and the state.<sup>4</sup> The cultural basis of national citizenship accompanies a notion of idealized citizenship. When I say “idealized citizenship”, I am not referring to official membership of a state, the legal right to vote, the obligation to be civically active, or access to state welfare systems.<sup>5</sup> Idealized citizenship refers to how a nation prefers to see itself in relation to idealized cultural values and beliefs. Subsequently, idealized citizenship creates forms of good citizenship that citizens use to justify the inclusion of some into the core of society and the exclusion of others at the margins.<sup>6</sup> Good citizenship is not contrasted to its opposite of bad citizenship. It is defined by the degree it reflects idealized citizenship. The black movement drew from an idealized understanding of American citizenship as it made claims for rights and civic inclusion. Good black citizenship refers to a form of black political representation that reflects idealized citizenship, which in turn produces a racially non-threatening black political agent. For the liberal project, the idea of being racially non-threatening meant emphasizing the idealized notions of good citizenship in an effort to debunk harmful black stereotypes that blacks were lazy, violent, and morally unfit for American citizenship. Thus, a key part of understanding the civil rights movement is understanding how it made good black symbolic citizenship claims as it justified the need for rights and the value of their civic engagement.<sup>7</sup>

Good citizenship is not active citizenship, although the two are sometimes used interchangeably. The value of active citizenship assumes that extensive involvement in community will ultimately produce some change because there is some inherent good in active participation. The problem with this perspective is that blacks were, and have been, ‘active’ in their communities for some time. They formed national organizations like the NAACP and local fraternal organizations and whites still denied them the right to use an integrated toilet. Local black organizations today are actively trying to improve the urban community and have experienced a



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backlash and reduction to state-funded services to the black community. In other words, if simply being active was enough to produce change, blacks would have had the right to vote long before 1965 and would have adequate municipal and state support in urban areas today.

Social movements do not make claims to enter the civic polity as is, but want to change the meanings embedded in the normative aspects of citizenship. In this regard, the black civil rights movement attempted to overcome the tension of American liberalism between individual and group rights articulated in the 'race question'. The civil rights movement targeted the normative meanings behind who counts as a good citizen in order to change what counts as good citizenship. Once blacks were no longer universally defined as bad citizens, then whites could not morally justify the continued and universal discrimination of blacks. Therefore, an important but overlooked part of the civil rights movement was how it compelled changes in whites. It would be a mistake to say the civil rights movement made whites more racially tolerant. The movement did marginalize violent racist whites to the margins. The rest of the southern and northern whites did change how they spoke of blacks, if they ever spoke of them at all. Yet, whites did eventually relinquish their overt resistance to blacks at the same time they were trying to redefine good white citizenship in anticipation of the post-civil rights era.

Whereas there is general agreement on the social construction of citizenship, far less attention has been made on the material aspects of citizenship, unless material benefits are reduced to economic benefits. Good citizenship is embodied. Indeed, the civil rights movement's impact on American civic culture did not happen just because it made symbolic citizenship claims that blacks were good citizens deserving of rights. If it were that easy, *Brown v Board of Education* would have produced racial equality and the subsequent struggles to desegregate public facilities and to outlaw poll taxes would not have happened. If blacks could have just pointed to their military service, church attendance, desire for entrance into union membership, and the right to vote as proof of their good citizenship, then they would not have had to march, sit-in, and endure police violence. While blacks shared the same democratic values as whites, the negative stereotypical meanings attached to black skin overrode shared cognitive understandings of democratic values. The key aspect of the movement was not only the stories and claims of good citizenship, but how an idea of good black citizenship was materialized at the level of the body. Conversely, the black nationalists did not just shout black power. They also used discourses of black authenticity to shape an authentic black self at the level of the body to prove to other blacks that they were capable of governing an all-black community.

Social theory conceptualizes the body as a cultural variable within cultural, political, historical, and ecological contexts.<sup>8</sup> The body is central to our understandings of power—the power over the self and the power to control other's bodies. The one thing that all marginalized people have power over, with the exception of children, is their body.<sup>9</sup> We can manipulate the

shape and presentation of our bodies for a variety of reasons. Social movements fashion their bodily postures, gestures, style of speaking, and physical appearance around some idealized notion of who they are. Thus, we should not view bodies as socially neutral. They are the effects and products of power, which in turn produce their own effects onto society. Understanding this two-way causality, how bodies are produced and what they produce, is important for explaining how the civil rights movement was successful at simultaneously obtaining rights and producing competing normative ideas of black citizenship that bifurcated black political struggles.

The underlining theoretical argument I pursue is that exercising power over the self can produce change in others. The basis of my theoretical approach to the body comes from synthesizing the theories of performances (dramaturgical theory) and performativity. Performativity has to do with how the ritualized bodily practices can create new arrangements, categories, identities, limits, and connections with others to sustain a community. The ritualized repetitions of bodily movements and postures that conform to normalized codes reproduce those same codes, which erect boundaries and sets limits to one's identity.<sup>10</sup> Bodies, and subsequently identities, are the effects, not causes, of a performance. Audiences compel us to adhere to a performance much differently than laws or threats.<sup>11</sup> Normalized codes organize the audience's expectations which bind performance to the audience. Thus, some performances can pin groups to the margins. For instance, in *Stigma*, Goffman referred to a process of "minstrelization", when "the stigmatized person ingratiating acts out before normals the full dance of bad qualities imputed to his kind; thereby consolidating a life situation into a clownish role".<sup>12</sup> Whereas the ritualized repetition of some scripts can keep marginalized groups at the margins, movements can also draw from other scripts to create new performances, which in turn produce new identities and scripts that compel behavioral changes in others.

Not all performances get their intended meaning across. A successful performance has to do with the competence of carrying out and completing the performance. The importance for properly carrying out a performance is that it binds performer/audience together. The "fusion" of performer and audience is necessary for symbolic communication: the process of having others correctly understand and be swayed by your argument.<sup>13</sup> The physical appearance of the body is important for successfully communicating political messages. The body limits possible rival interpretations because the performer is using her body to fill in the blanks, or connect the dots, for the audience member. Thus, it is not enough to act the part. You also have to look the part. The liberal project used citizenship schools and role-playing to ensure that black bodies, from the style of dress down to the pronunciation of words, reflected good black citizenship. The embodied margin of error for blacks is much smaller than for whites. Blacks must account for every movement to limit the use of racially embedded critiques designed to debunk black claims for equality without addressing the grievance.

Good black citizenship made non-violence meaningful. There was nothing violent about the NAACP, yet, their legal strategies limited how much change they could make. Changes in laws do not equate to cultural changes. The passage of laws, specifically the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, were made possible because racially non-threatening good black citizens were performing the non-violent protests. I refer to how the body makes political demonstrations meaningful as an “embodied performance”. Embodied performances are the normative meanings embedded in the bodies during a public political performance, including protests and speeches. The embodied performances of each local movement reinforced idealized American citizenship by pitting good blacks against bad whites. The repetition of the performances compelled changes in how whites responded and subsequently, who counted as a good citizen narrowed. Whereas the liberal project intended to exclude bad whites from the notion of good citizenship, it also had the unintended effects of excluding blacks who could not, or did not want to, conform to the narrow ideal of good black citizenship.

The passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act is an important turning point in the history of the civil rights movement for a number of reasons. For one, it was the culmination of an 11-year struggle. However, it was also simultaneously the high point of the movement and the moment it began to decline. There is still no definitive answer why. Explanations have ranged from King’s assassination, to the infighting between the different organizations, to the loss of the movement’s unitary identity.<sup>14</sup> Yet, King was killed three years after the Voting Rights Act when the movement was already in decline, organizational strife was constant, and the tensions between the black nationalists and liberal project undermined the potential of a unitary black identity prior to the Voting Rights Act. Thus, rather than say the movement declined in 1965, I argue that the Voting Rights Act was a turning point in the larger struggle for racial equality. Once blacks had the legal right to vote, the problem on how to proceed stumbled over the question of what should be the representation of black citizenship. Rather than a universal acceptance of good black citizenship as *the* representation of black citizenship, the black nationalists challenged the liberal project over desirability to ‘deracialize’ blacks and for ignoring blacks confined to the urban slums. However, the tension between the two projects was never resolved. Instead, it split black political representation into two levels. Good black citizenship became synonymous with national black citizenship and black authenticity became synonymous with local black citizenship.

## BLACK AUTHENTICITY

Not all social movements and political struggles are about inclusion. Whereas the liberal project drew from idealized citizenship to move blacks into the core of American society, the black nationalists made claims of authenticity to distinguish themselves from the center. Black authenticity

refers to the embodied ideal of racially pure black identity based in opposition to notions of whiteness and deracializing strategies. The idea behind authenticity is that it is exclusive and limited to a certain population. For Benjamin, the bourgeoisie created authenticity through “distance” or the social gap between them and the proletariat articulated through statuses like ‘master’ and ‘genius’.<sup>15</sup> In this case, black authenticity was unattainable to whites because whites could never understand the black lived experience. Black authenticity was an embodied practice exclusive to blacks. Blacks could create and maintain an authentic black existence by abstaining from vice, bodily mutilations, and interracial sex to create real and symbolic distance between blacks and whites.

Political groups present authenticity as something that is natural rather than cultural. Subsequently, authenticity creates essentialist understandings of cultures that naturalize political constructs like race. For instance, racial and ethnic groups create a coherent sense of authenticity through various cultural practices, such as preparing foods and raising children, music, dance, and expressions of grief during a funeral procession. Sometimes groups maintain these practices through the preservation of the group’s native language or religion. In the case of black Americans, whites abolished their native languages and religions through the system of slavery. Therefore, the black nationalists’ construction of black authenticity was an effort to redefine and then use an empowered black culture as the means of achieving political and economic power. The naturalization of black authenticity allowed the black nationalists to define the presence of whites as the problem, not part of the solution.

Malcolm X best articulated and represented black authenticity. Malcolm shaped a modern idea of black authenticity by combining Elijah Muhammad’s discourse on black sustainability with Garveyism, violent post-colonial struggles of independence, and assumptions about ethnic white communities and the ‘American Dream’. Although the Nation of Islam abstained from voting and involvement in the civil rights movement, Malcolm emerged as the leading black nationalist political figure and symbolic alternative to racial integration. By the mid-1960s, and after the assassination of Malcolm, SNCC broke from the liberal project and began to use discourses of black authenticity in relation to the limitations of organizing urban black areas around good black citizenship.

The black nationalist emphasis on black authenticity presented a different type of citizenship claim than the liberal project. The liberal project emphasized individual membership while the black nationalists emphasized group membership. In this regard, the black nationalists were early entrepreneurs of multicultural and cosmopolitan understandings of citizenship that question the plausibility and desirability of universal citizenship in favor of group rights or rights to protect difference.<sup>16</sup> The black nationalists sometimes made claims demanding succession, and sometimes they demanded group rights. In either case, they used discourses of black authenticity to reject liberal ideals that racial equality could be achieved through individual black successes.

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In turn, the black nationalists had an entirely different political project that targeted the body and focused on local action.

The black body became the point at which the black nationalists attempted to wrap black authenticity around black citizenship. Before one could articulate a black-first or black-only political discourse, blacks had to look, act, and master the part. However, because black authenticity was set in opposition to good black citizenship, black authenticity began to reflect a racially threatening embodied black agent for two reasons. The first was the use of emotions. Bodies emote and feel sensations. They also produce emotions and sensations in others. We can re-feel events just as we can re-remember them. Political struggles use emotions to build a sense of community, create solidarity bonds between members, create moral shocks for recruitment, and can lead to a movement's decline.<sup>17</sup> Central to being a racially non-threatening good black citizen was not arousing fear or anger in others. The liberal project trained black activists how to limit embodied displays of anger, such as waving their arms in a frantic manner, raising the pitch of their voice, or folding their arms while glaring at another in silence. In contrast, the black nationalists combined the free expressions of emotions like anger with a hypermasculine and a 'tightly' disciplined, soldier-like, muscular body. I define this process as "figurative violence": when the body is used to produce negative emotions like fear in others. The black nationalists used violent black stereotypes for their advantage. They appeared intimidating and frightening to prevent violent attacks by whites and to ward off white social workers and police from intervening in black neighborhoods. The paradox was that the expression of emotions presented one as authentic, and thus, credible when organizing local urban blacks, but harmful when making national claims for rights.

A second difference is found in the opposing ethics of optimizing and abstention. The idea of optimizing the self is to conform as close as possible to a culturally prescribed ideal. The logic behind optimizing the self is to make one 'better'. The liberal project used their citizenship schools to optimize good black citizenship by instructing better posture, better pronunciation of words, and better handwriting in an effort to make blacks better citizens. In contrast to optimizing, the idea behind abstaining is to make oneself better through negation. The black nationalists provided blacks with guidance on how to distance oneself from all associations of whiteness by abstaining from destructive practices that ranged from mutilating the body (altering hair, lightening skin tone, and drug use) to creating all-black political associations. These divergent practices over the body led to two overall political ethics, an ethics of caution and an ethics of autonomy.

### **ETHICS OF CAUTION AND ETHICS OF AUTONOMY**

While public discourse often conflates ethics with a value statement, sociologically ethics refer to the procedures, regulations, and guidance that

direct how people do things appropriately.<sup>18</sup> Ethics are not something that is reducible to laws. From political elites to graffiti artists, social groups of all kinds shape an acceptable way to do things by establishing limits and guidelines for individual behavior. The liberal project emphasized acceptable behaviors conducive to good black citizens and provided sanctions for bad behavior. The liberal project used role-playing simulations to prepare blacks on how to refrain from emotionally lashing out when they endured violence from the police and other bad whites. If any blacks responded to police violence with violence, King would publically condemn their actions even if perpetrators were not affiliated with the movement. Malcolm used public ridicule, scorn, and shame to enforce ethical guidelines by lacing comments about rival black leaders in sarcasm and humor. “Well, I heard Roy say at the rally the other night that he was  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  Scandinavian. And he seemed to be lost in that Scandinavian dream somewhat . . . Well, every time I hear Martin he’s got a dream. And I think the Negro leaders have to come out of the clouds and wake up, and stop dreaming and start facing reality”.<sup>19</sup> In the absence of laws and other sanctions, shame provided adherence to ethical guidelines.

The different orientations to the body and citizenship created two overall ethics that ultimately hardened boundaries between the two projects and limited the extent in which either project could continue the struggle for racial equality. Good black citizenship corresponded to an “ethics of caution”. I use the term ethics of caution to refer to a gradual, or ‘cautious’ approach to politics. It seeks political consensus by limiting controversial stances by positioning oneself as the non-threatening alternative. It favors fixing or improving existing social institutions. It is the antithesis to structural change. The liberal project’s discourse of good black citizenship was, in part, about gaining citizenship rights for blacks. Yet it was also about a better American citizenship for blacks and whites by ending the practices of racial segregation. At no point did the liberal project seek or mention revolutionary change. They gradually moved from the issue of desegregating public facilities to voting rights to economic equality, despite persistent charges from the black nationalists and students of SNCC that the liberal project was not moving fast enough. The liberal project’s adherence to an ethics of caution positioned them between blacks arguing for immediate change and whites arguing for no change.

The black nationalist discourse and embodiment of black authenticity corresponded to an “ethics of autonomy”. An ethics of autonomy is a revolutionary or liberationist approach to politics that seeks to govern homogeneous political communities. While an ethics of autonomy is geared toward structural change, it is a political orientation that approaches entrance into the core as an impossible or unwanted outcome. It is an ethos orientated towards self-rule and self-governance. After SNCC adopted the black nationalist project, they expelled whites from the group and turned their backs on national black struggles in favor of organizing blacks confined to rural and urban poverty. SNCC organized the first Black Panther Party in

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Lowdes County, Alabama, leading the construction of a tent city to protest the eviction of black farmers who registered to vote. They also organized an all-black political party in Atlanta that was known as the 'Atlanta Project'. The Atlanta Project focused on issues unique to poor urban blacks. This included protesting the white slumlord's control over black economic life, black prisoners' rights, and an ardent stance against America's involvement in Vietnam. Indeed, these early struggles produced the blueprint for Oakland's Black Panther Party that also adhered to an ethics of autonomy in organizing around issues of black self-defense and improving healthcare.<sup>20</sup>

All ethics involve managing a degree of risk. An ethics of caution manages political risk by slowing things down. The risk of going too fast or too far was alienating whites. However, whites responded with their own ethics of caution, which neutralized how much change the liberal project could accomplish. Therefore, the liberal project always risked the perception of seeming complacent. The black nationalists dealt with a different kind of risk. They risked facing the consequences of rejecting the sacred democratic understandings of America's 'civil religion' which anchored black authenticity on the margins. But they also risked alienating potential black and white allies because expanding the black nationalist project beyond its urban core threatened to dilute the claims of authenticity that was quickly becoming a means to an end. Thus, the black nationalists either risked further isolating the black nationalist project on the margins or they risked ceasing to exist.

A paradox between these two projects took shape after the 1965 Voting Rights Act. While the ethics of caution guided the liberal project struggle to obtain rights, it ended up as a hindrance when the liberal project switched its focus from political rights to poverty. Poverty is a structural problem that requires structural solutions. Yet, the only approach to structural problems was an ethics of autonomy, which by 1965 was synonymous with black power. The ethics of autonomy also led to a focus on the local struggles of the black living in the city, where the word 'urban' has become synonymous with 'black'. Thus, the competing political ethics tied blacks into competing identities, and thus, began the era of identity politics.

In order to analyze the development of a general ethical orientation to political change, I break down political ethics into three forms: personal, social, and civic ethics. Personal ethics refer to the relationship one has with the self. This includes how the body is posed, dressed, speaks, emotes, etc. Personal ethics require one to compare and contrast oneself with an ideal. Social ethics refer to the relationship one has with others. They require mastering personal ethics while engaged in associational life and intercultural relations with others. Social ethics are vital for achieving belonging and securing bridging and bonding social capital. The third are civic ethics. Civic ethics refer to mastering personal ethics when directly engaged in political performances. Civic ethics differ from citizenship duties because they emphasize the correct way of looking, acting, and emoting when exercising one's democratic rights. Citizenship duties are behaviors minus obligations to fulfill them in a certain manner. Starting with the civil rights movements

and continuing GLBT struggles for equal citizenship rights, marginalized groups change the nature of who and what counts as good citizenship as they enter the community. Civic ethics simply guide the embodiment of this process. Although each set of ethics has a symbiotic relationship with the other, I will analyze each one separately for the sake of clarity.

## **THE LIBERAL PROJECT AND BLACK NATIONALISM COMPARED**

In a 1967 speech, Stokely Carmichael remarked to black students, “You had better recognize that individualism is a luxury that black students can no longer afford. You had better understand that. You had better begin to see yourself as a people, and as a group, and therefore you need to help advance that group”.<sup>21</sup> Carmichael’s insistence on black’s primary identification as a racial group rather than national citizens underscores the differences between the black nationalists and liberal project’s approach to citizenship. The liberal project emphasized the importance of individual representations of good black citizenship. In contrast, the black nationalist project challenged the individual aspects of the rights project on the grounds that citizenship was the property of groups, and primarily racial groups. The black nationalists maintained that the best approach to racial equality and debunking harmful black stereotypes was by distinguishing racial groups from national groups. Once blacks identified as black first, and American second, the black nationalists assumed blacks would build up financial resources and political power, and then associate with whites on the political level as equals. That is, blacks would become a part of the American polity after they had built up enough political and economic power, but would not assimilate.

### **Personal Ethics**

The liberal project used good black personal ethics to deracialize the self, meaning, they wanted blacks to bracket out the negative racial stereotypes associated with black skin. The liberal project was especially concerned with black bodies that were dirty, unkempt, hunched over, and poorly spoken. Through informal training sessions and formal citizenship schools, the liberal project trained the black body on how to limit emotional outbursts, taught blacks the proper pronunciation of words, how to dress and walk in a way that made blacks racially non-threatening to whites. It was the optimization of good citizenship. However, this was not an act of compliance on behalf of the movement. It was an exercise of power over the self for the purposes of producing changes in whites.

In contrast to the liberal project, the black nationalists used a personal ethics of black authenticity to guide blacks on how to abstain from certain bodily pleasures, appearances, and postures. Abstention differed from a personal ethics designed to optimize the body because abstention was about



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distancing the self away from negative influences. Distancing the black body from white culture was a way to discover an idealized black identity uncorrupted by whites. The black nationalists argued that an authentic black body could be achieved by refraining from bodily mutilation practices, such as straightening black hair or using cream to lighten and smooth out skin tone, because mutilating the black body was akin to rejecting black culture out of shame. The black nationalists also used black authenticity to challenge black stereotypes that blacks were lazy. They wanted blacks to refrain from social vice, including drugs and alcohol, because vice produced an unproductive black subject associated with black stereotypes of not willing or wanting to work or take care of the family. The personal ethics of abstention also included a set of dietary practices that abstained from southern cuisine, which included pork, as a rejection of blacks' enslaved and segregated past. The liberal project was also concerned about the nutritional value of food, but did not place any symbolic value on the geopolitics of cuisine. Rather, the liberal project wanted to debunk stereotypes of a fat and lazy black populace who refused to work in order to bracket out opposition to the black movement.

The black nationalists and liberal project overlapped on the issue of refraining from vice and a more conservative appearance that distanced the black movement from the zoot-suit and lindy-hop stereotypes of the black pimp and drug dealer. The liberal project approached a conservative bodily appearance as something to foster racial integration, not racial purity. They never spoke out against lightening creams and hair products as a threatening practice. Many black leaders, including Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, adopted that hairstyle. King was aware of the pressures on blacks to present a conservative demeanor and style of dress, but used the idea of being racially non-threatening to the movement's advantage. The black nationalists argued that if blacks refrained from illegal activities, if they refrained from dressing the body in clothes associated with gangsters or pimps, then blacks would be free from the surveillance of white police and social workers. However, on closer inspection, the black nationalists' postures and style of speaking were more confrontational and military-like. The liberal project idea of good posture was not enhancing the black body with muscles and refusing to smile. The liberal project used manners and postures to be pleasant and non-threatening rather than standoffish.

### **Social Ethics**

The liberal project used good black social ethics to overcome the inverse relationship between bonding and bridging social capital to reach out to other blacks and whites. Good black social ethics allowed blacks to enter and network with black communities on the margins of rural southern life. It also provided the foundation for interracial associational life, which made interracial political coalitions possible. Black nationalists used racial

models of belonging to create all-black networks. Subsequently, the black nationalists were able to increase bonding social capital because they would only work with groups who reflected black authenticity. The risk of bridging social capital for the black nationalists was the contamination of black authenticity. Whereas the liberal project used good black social ethics to diffuse good black citizenship throughout the South and onto the national level, the black nationalists used the social ethics of separation to create a separate political field. The black nationalist project maintained that the best approach to racial equality and debunking harmful black stereotypes was by purifying blacks as a racial group. For them, white ethnics as a group improved their social standing by organizing themselves into homogeneous racial groups that supported neighborhood economies and political machines. The consequence of emphasizing the authenticity of the in-group was that black authenticity remained on the margins and primarily in the urban black communities.

### **Civic Ethics**

The liberal project defined good black civic ethics as the deployment of good black personal ethics into the broader political field of civil society and the state. Good black civic ethics made non-violence meaningful and fused good blacks with good whites. Good black civic ethics also organized the liberal project's overall ethics of caution because it was a non-threatening way to make non-threatening claims to racial, and ultimately racial-class, equality. In contrast, the black nationalists' civic ethics corresponded to the broader ethics of autonomy and the problem of establishing all-black political communities. The degree that one could claim to be racially authentic, a status obtained by adherence to authentic black personal and social ethics, became meaningful within a nationalist political field. The civic ethics of black authenticity was stabilized by what I term a "figurative violence", or making the body racially threatening to communicate racially threatening meanings to whites, and an alternative political project to good black citizenship for blacks. By using an embodied form of violence, the black nationalists could decrease white violence and scare whites into granting them political rights. An ethics of autonomy also meant organizing independent black political cultures and civic practices of self-defense, sabotage, and revolutionary violence. Thus, authentic black civic practices created independent black political cells to obtain power rather than civic inclusion.

Ultimately, it was the notion of figurative violence that stuck with black authenticity and became the embodied ideal associated with bad black political representation. The normative dimensions of good citizenship are used to justify inclusion, and the moral power of civil society marginalized black authenticity because its rejection of white America was, in essence, a rejection of the idealism that surrounds liberalism. All-black networks were secretive

rather than open. Racial groups and striving for racial purity was a rejection of liberal ideals of autonomy and equality between individuals. Black authenticity was racially threatening, not because it was physically violent, but because it threatened the entire social system of western liberalism. It was rejection of the state's power not because it took up arms, but because exercising power over the self was a violation of the state's monopoly of violence. While liberalism may set limits to state power in the form of rights, black authenticity tugs at the very fabric of liberalism and state power.

## Emotions

Emotions can communicate information as well as produce sensations in others. The use of emotion and black authenticity dealt with the former and figurate violence dealt with the latter. The black nationalist project argued that authentic blacks had to express anger and use their emotions because emotions were associated with the 'truth'. They approached emotion as something that was natural and spontaneous in relation to the immediate context. Unlike cognition, which is susceptible to manipulation, expressing emotions exhibited blacks' real reaction to discrimination and unfair treatment. Therefore, if one is unhappy, their real or authentic reaction should be unhappiness. However, the effects of expressing emotions produced its own effects by producing sensations in others. The bodily movements associated with anger and emotion—yelling, screaming, kicking, pointing, fist waving, violent jerking of the body, the cringing of the face—helped to ensure that those sensations in whites were revulsion and fear.

The liberal project used emotions differently. Good black citizens did not scream or get angry even when an emotional outburst could be justified, such as enduring police violence. The liberal project demanded emotional self-restraint. Emotional self-restraint was defined as a necessary disposition to make racial integration possible on all levels. In short, authentic blacks used emotional responses to communicate their rejection of racial discrimination, while good black citizens used rational dialog as part of their rejection of racial discrimination. Subsequently, the liberal project required a different power over the self than black authenticity. It would be a mistake to read that the free expression of emotions is akin to lacking power over the self. The display of anger was an affirmative statement against white power that imposed a degree of silence upon the black community. However, when coupled with figurative violence, the free expression of emotions enhanced the racially threatening meanings of black authenticity and inadvertently helped its continued marginalization.

## Gender

Both projects defined the proper gender roles and sexual relationships in relation to the unquestioned privilege of the heteronormative black family.

Subsequently, both projects reproduced existing patriarchal norms. Despite the rejection of western liberalism, the black nationalists embraced the gendered order of their day: women in the domestic sphere, men in the public sphere. Although both addressed sexual relations, the black nationalists spent more time ensuring that black sexual relations remained between blacks for two reasons. The first was over the problem of broken families. Although they blamed white social workers for breaking up the family, the black nationalists dispensed advice on the value of monogamy and abstaining from vice for the sake of the black family. Stable black families were the foundation for autonomous all-black communities. Related to the first reason is the second: the desire to purify black bloodlines. Mixed-race children polluted racial authenticity. Maintaining all-black families ensured all-black children. The focus on the reproductive function to ‘breed out the white’ was attributed to the black nationalists’ essentialist understanding of race, in that white blood was bad blood. The liberal project was more concerned about how the bad white community used interracial sex as a weapon to make the liberal project more threatening than it was. They drew from the modern idea of citizenship as an achieved status open to all, as opposed to pre-modern ideas of bloodlines and racial groups that were exclusive.

Both political projects accompanied an idea of black masculinity.<sup>22</sup> However, the competing discourses shaped two different ideas of the good black man. While Wendt noted how black men had to struggle with their masculinity over the issue of non-violence, that was only one part of the liberal project’s idea of black masculinity and pertained only to black men involved in the demonstrations.<sup>23</sup> The liberal project defined the good black man in terms of the caring patriarch and his ability to stabilize the black family. The liberal project produced the idea of stable and non-threatening good black family to ease white fears of neighborhood integration. The black nationalists used discourses of black authenticity to wrap an idea of an empowered black man as a means to stabilize the heteronormative black family as the foundation for a separate black community. However, black authenticity entailed an ordering process that was race first, gender second. The emphasis on black first opened up more possibilities for black women to occupy positions of leadership in black communities, whereas the emphasis on male first confined black and white women to the margins of the liberal project.

## A NOTE ON DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this book comes mainly from archival data, although I also use secondary historical sources to help concretize the movement’s struggles. Archival data provides primary source evidence. I find that theoretical approaches guide data collection methods, especially for historical scholarship. Therefore, approaches that rely on elites focus on what elites

did. Approaches that emphasize organizations focus on organizations, and so on. This leaves archives, even for a topic as heavily researched as the civil rights movement, a rich source of data exists because prior researchers simply did not think that something like SCLC's citizenship schools were as important as one of King's many speeches. Of course, there are many limitations to archival data, including the selectivity and bias of what exists, the impossibility of observing the field in action, and the necessity to study broad systems. While we cannot observe a historical field in action, we can observe how actors were responding to new problems, untangle the multiple lines of flight, and empirically understand the consequences of various decisions.

The methods I use are historical-comparative methods and discourse analysis. Historical-comparative methods seeks to identify causal relationships over time and place and can account for the actors involved in the timing and cultural context of change.<sup>24</sup> I supplement historical-comparative methodology with discourse analysis to show how the civil rights movement's actions became meaningful.<sup>25</sup> However, my use of discourse analysis is not simply to analyze talk. I use insights from semiotics to show the word-object relationship was the word-body relationship, where bodies produced meanings within the civil rights struggles and continue to represent different understandings of black citizenship.

Recent historical research has looked beyond the major historical actors and major dramatic moments and sought out the mundane aspects of political struggles.<sup>26</sup> This has led recent historical inquiry to emphasize community level political struggles rather than on rhetoric. I share the idea that there has been too much of a focus on the rhetoric of elites, which helped give us the idea that the civil rights movement's success resulted in how they framed their messages in Christian and democratic frames.<sup>27</sup> Whereas my analysis also moves away from rhetoric to show what the movement did, I retain the symbolic importance of the movement leaders because they were the symbolic and embodied carriers of good black citizenship and black authenticity.

## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 deals with the development of good black citizenship and the ethics of caution. I argue that the liberal project embodiment of good black citizenship represented a method of social change based on the exercising of power over the self to produce change in others. Empirically, I focus on the liberal project which organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the black students and SNCC, and SCLC's citizenship schools around good black personal ethics. The implications of this normative shift in black politics made the early successes possible and elevated good black citizenship as the way to achieve racial equality.

In Chapter 2, I switch my focus from the question of how the liberal project spread—both physically into the rural South and symbolically in the private sphere. The physical spread was made possible by using good black social ethics. SNCC used good black social ethics to build social capital between local black groups and with the broader civil rights movement. I argue that good black citizenship overcame the tension between bonding and bridging social capital because the uniform struggles of good blacks created a temporary symbiotic relationship between the two forms of social capital. Good black social ethics also organized the symbolic spread of good black citizenship into the private sphere. Because of the apprehension of challenging existing social institutions, good black citizenship reproduced gender norms through an attempt to strengthen the black family in order to enhance the good black citizenship of men.

Chapter 3 deals with the development of good black civic ethics. I analyze how the embodiment of good black citizenship made non-violence and direct action meaningful. It argues that non-violence was effective only because it was performed by racially non-threatening bodies and deployed against bad white adversaries. I compare the movements in Albany, Birmingham, and Selma to illustrate how the outcomes were patterned on maintaining good black embodied performances and producing a bad white response. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the ‘paradox of success’ of the civil rights movement: how minimizing white violence ended up hurting the movement, and how civil rights victories ended up strengthening the resolve of and popularity of the white segregationist resistance.

Chapter 4 deals with how black authenticity emerged as the alternative to good black citizenship. The emergence of black authenticity illustrates how the body is capable of communicating specific political ideologies that can change and alter larger meanings and meta-narratives by its presence. In the first part of the chapter, I focus primarily on Malcolm X since he was, and remains, the dominant discursive authority figure on the subject. The second half of the chapter uses the Atlanta Project, a black nationalist struggle in Atlanta against slumlords and prisoner abuse, as a case study to understand how black authenticity became cemented with local black politics. The paradox of this bifurcation created an inverse relationship between national and local struggles to overcome racial and civic inequality where efforts to improve local conditions hurt national efforts, and conversely, national efforts gloss over local struggles.

Chapter 5 backtracks a little from Chapter 4 and deals with the implications of SNCC’s adoption of the black nationalist project on the civil rights movement. Empirically, I trace the transition of SNCC, who went from attempting to organize interracial groups in shared geographic space to organizing black-only groups in racially segregated spaces. The limitations faced by SNCC in organizing interracial alliances around good black citizenship propelled them to adopt the black nationalist project and organize their struggles around black authenticity. In contrast to the explanation that

SNCC's split led to the decline of the movement, I argue that the split and decline of the movement were unrelated. The split happened because of the limitations of using the liberal project in the rural black and urban ghettos due to the desire of local blacks for immediate gains. The decline happened because of the increased tensions between the liberal and black nationalists projects that split the struggle between the national and local level.

In the conclusion, I elaborate on the implications and legacy of the civil rights movement on white citizenship. What it meant to be a good citizen unraveled by 1965. Indeed, over the course of the 1960s, four distinct forms of citizenship emerged that claimed to define what it meant to be white and black at this critical period. The liberal project's dominant position within the civil rights movement ensured that images of good black citizens filled the heads of whites when they considered black equality. While unintentional, the black nationalists helped the liberal project by giving these same whites a concrete image of bad black citizenship. Bad white citizenship was a politics for whites to avoid. Most importantly was how good white citizenship emerged as an ambiguous concept that white liberals and an emerging new form of American conservatism sought to define. Southern white began to define good white citizenship in relation to an ethics of moderation and symbolic distance from groups of struggle. They used moderation to organize the mindset that one was 'middle class' despite and in spite of actual income, wealth, and educational levels. A middle class mindset was reinforced by an emphasis on meritocracy and personal responsibility rather than biological superiority to explain success. Thus, the articulation and embodiment of good white citizenship became the normative representation of American citizenship that would usher in the neoliberal turn in American politics by the late 1970s.

# 1 Good Black Citizenship and Personal Ethics

At the conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott on December 18, 1956, a boycott that went on continuously for over a year, Martin Luther King took a symbolic ride. He sat next to Glenn Smiley, a white pacifist from Texas who came to Montgomery to assist the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and helped introduce the black struggle to non-violence. Members of the MIA worked feverishly to prepare blacks for that important first ride. Before boarding the bus, King urged blacks that

we must not go back on the buses and push people around unnecessarily boasting of our rights. We must simply sit where there is a vacant seat . . . This places upon us all a tremendous responsibility of maintaining, in face of what could be some unpleasantness, a calm and loving dignity befitting good citizens and members of our race.<sup>1</sup>

After the rides, King reported that blacks integrated the buses without incidence and that most whites were respectful during this process. However, one exception stood out. A white man riding the bus slapped a black woman in the face. Yet, the woman did not yell or fight back. King wrote, "True, one Negro woman was slapped by a white man as she alighted, but she refused to retaliate. Later she said: 'I could have broken that little fellow's neck all by myself, but I left the mass meeting last night determined to do what Reverend King asked'".<sup>2</sup>

Although not the first bus boycott protesting racial segregation, the MIA did capture America's attention with their embodiment of good black citizenship. Good black citizenship guided blacks through the bus boycott in Montgomery, the sit-ins in Greensboro, and the Freedom Rides into the Deep South. It defined how direct action would be waged in the Birmingham and Selma campaigns for civil and political rights, in Chicago for housing equality, and in the Memphis 'Poor People's Campaign' for expanding economic rights for blacks and poor whites. King's speeches, which emotionally moved local black audiences in the South and white college audiences in the North, would one day become stock footage for television clips introducing black history month, and every child would



learn about his dream with barely a mention on the physical, psychological, and emotional horrors of racial segregation. Yet, by the time the MIA declared the boycott over, local and national racial politics had been altered in a way that a speech or the term “non-violence” alone could not capture. Gone, or perhaps just put on hold, was the focus on economic equality as a means to achieving racial equality. The struggle for black equality would take another path and begin to ask the question of who and what counts as the good American citizen.

This chapter explains how the liberal faction fashioned the idea of good black citizenship around the black civil rights struggles. The emphasis on good black citizenship propelled the liberal project to the dominant position in the struggle for racial equality because it reemphasized American civic norms and severed ‘whiteness’ from good citizenship. The larger implications of the rights project illustrated an approach to suppress racial, and to an extent class, identities in favor of a universal idea of good citizenship.

### **SYMBOLIC CITIZENSHIP CLAIMS OF GOOD BLACK CITIZENSHIP**

King and the MIA’s use of good black citizenship marked the normative shift away from approaching racial equality by first achieving economic equality to an emphasis on good black citizenship as the means to integrate blacks into the mainstream polity. Good black citizenship was a symbolic citizenship claim that reflected idealized American citizenship. Many scholars have written on King’s influence and leadership over the civil rights movement, usually citing his rhetorical style.<sup>3</sup> Yet, King was more than just the leader of a movement devising strategies, making media appearances, and raising funds. King’s position of leader in the movement made him simultaneously the symbolic and embodied ideal of the good black citizen. How he managed his emotions and held himself influenced blacks and whites. The various text produced by King, including books, speeches, and interviews, helped to fashion good black citizenship onto the black population because he offered practical advice and guidance of what good citizenship was, how to be a good citizen, and philosophical advice of why blacks can and should be good black citizens. It was in the genre of practical advice that we find his articulation of the personal ethics of good black citizenship. Therefore, the importance of culture, and specifically language, was not in the framing of blacks as Christians or lovers of democracy that helped the movement convince whites that blacks were not evil or unwilling dupes of a communist plot to overthrow America. It was in the discursive aspects of ethics and subsequent embodiment of good black citizenship that comprised the national civil rights movement’s moral claims for rights.

Despite the portrayal of King’s speeches being very abstract and cosmological, he dispensed concrete guidance on how to identify and correct bad

behaviors in everyday life. King noted that, "In order to love your enemies, you must begin by analyzing self".<sup>4</sup> Blacks should contrast the self with idealized citizenship, not with white citizenship. Copying or mimicking whites would have confirmed that 'whiteness' equated into good citizenship and reinforced ideas that race was the marker of good citizenship. Whites needed help too. King suggested that blacks needed to improve themselves as a way to pressure whites into changing: "For whatever demands the Negro justly makes on his fellow citizens are not an effort to lift responsibility from himself. . . . he will have to learn new skills, new duties, and creatively and constructively to embrace a new way of life".<sup>5</sup> When we connect the audiences to the performers, we see how power over the self can compel changes in others. The performers' influence over audiences illustrates power. In this case, good black citizenship was every bit as much about changing whites as it was about changing blacks. King urged blacks to see the good in others as a way to master the emotional restraint necessary to minimize the performance of black stereotypes of being angry and lacking self-control, which were manifested in violent behaviors and emotional outbursts. He wanted blacks to concentrate on modifying their bodily practices because the body was something blacks could control.

Who and what counted as good citizenship had real consequences in the South. Southern whites used various means to keep blacks at the margins of southern life. This included Jim Crow segregation laws that separated the races by neighborhood, job, public amenities, and denied blacks the right to vote. However, whites used an idea that blacks were naturally inferior, by often citing an idea of inferior black bloodlines/genetics and mental capacities, as the moral justification for discrimination. For instance, the White Citizens' Council often quoted former Mississippi Governor (1904–1908) James K. Vardaman on his views on blacks and democracy:

The Negro should never have been trusted with the ballot. He is different from the white man. He is congenitally unqualified to exercise the most responsible duty of citizenship. He is physically, mentally, morally, racially and eternally the white man's inferior. There is nothing in his race, nothing in his individual character, nothing in his achievements of the past nor his promise of the future which entitles him to stand side by side with the white man at the ballot box.<sup>6</sup>

In 1892 Mississippi started issuing literacy tests as a pre-requisite for voting because there were more blacks in the state than whites. The law stated that "a person had to be able to read any section of the Mississippi constitution, or understood any section when read to him, to give a reasonable interpretation of any section".<sup>7</sup> Blacks were required to interpret any one of the 244 sections of the Mississippi constitution. However, for blacks living in the Deep South, citizenship was more than obtaining rights and fulfilling duties. It was convincing whites, especially whites in power, that they were worthy

of rights and morally capable of handling the responsibilities of citizenship. The debate over good citizenship helped steer the movement's focus toward citizenship schools because the schools gave them a way to diffuse good black citizenship while overcoming existing barriers like the literacy tests.

It was at the level of the body that blacks could debunk black stereotypes to prove that they were unwarranted and unfair. Whereas skin tone could not be changed, other forms of bodily conduct could be changed. Because bad postures, bad manners, sloppy, unkempt, and unclean appearance were attributes of bad citizenship, King argued blacks should minimize and eliminate them. He argued that, "The Negro must make a vigorous effort to improve his personal standards. The only answer that we can give to those who through blindness and fear would question our readiness and capability is that our lagging standards exist because of the legacy of slavery and segregation, inferior schools, slums, and second-class citizenship".<sup>8</sup> Whereas King placed the burden on blacks to produce equality, he was careful not to blame blacks for their situation. One of the remarkable things about social movements is how they take on burden to make things better with limited access to traditional aspects of power—the social power of money, entrance into elite political networks, and control over how the media portrays them. King isolated the control over the body as the one source of power blacks did have that could sever the significations of race from bad citizenship.

Personal ethics include prohibitive guidelines. One prohibitive guideline of note was how the liberal project downplayed consumption as a method to achieve equality. In essence, it was an outright rejection of using a performance of class to achieve racial equality. If anything, the liberal project wanted blacks to be economically conservative in how they spent money, but also in how they displayed money. We find this line of argumentation in a program titled "Mass Meeting Sponsored by Southern Christian Leadership Conference Program for Student Conference and Raleigh Citizens Association". SCLC designed a small pamphlet for the conference, which directly led to the formation of SNCC. Under the picture, the text says "International Proponent of first-class Christian Citizenship Through Intelligent Non-Violent Protest".<sup>9</sup> The text in a box under a picture of King and the headline "Sacrifice for Dignity" indicated: "First class citizenship is more important than first class clothes. Give up something for Easter in order to support the students sit down protest and the drive for total freedom".<sup>10</sup> Good blacks had to make the distinction between dressing the body in a respectable but stylish manner from a trendy or flamboyant manner. This move was made in relation to black stereotypes that blacks only cared about their appearance. The black body was dressed to conform and not stick out. It was a different use of fashion than practiced by Berlin's elites who used fashion to distinguish themselves from the proletariat and middle classes.<sup>11</sup> For the liberal project, a prohibitive ethics of caution and conformity provided security and access to citizenship.

Thus, King was instrumental in creating and disseminating the idea of good black citizenship. Good black citizenship sought to sever blacks and whites from racial group identifications in favor of a universal ideal of good citizenship. In order to accomplish this, the movement outlined a series of techniques on how to observe, monitor, correct, and improve the self in relation to idealized citizenship. The driving idea behind good black citizenship was not to be more like whites. It represented the idea that all citizens had to abandon, or at least downplay, the use of racial identities to define good citizenship and full inclusion into the polity if democracy was to work and fulfill its vast promises and potential. Good black citizenship illustrates how power over the embodied self compels changes in others. Controlling the body was a way for blacks to control the direction of the movement, to minimize white violence, and bring whites to their side. It changed what it meant to belong because it changed the behavior of whites and blacks as good blacks moved from the margins to the center of society.

### THE PERSONAL ETHICS OF GOOD BLACK CITIZENSHIP

The personal ethics of good black citizenship refers to how the liberal project sculpted the black body's phonology, posture, and style of dress in order to sever 'good character' from race. The embodiment of good character bracketed out the embedded racial meanings attached to bad character so that good character could be an achieved status open to all citizens. Changes in the body reflected the liberal project's influence on southern blacks. Indeed, King noted the change in blacks' bodily postures as the civil rights movement began to take its shape. "The increased self-respect of even the least sophisticated Negroes in Montgomery is evident in the way they dress and walk, in new standards of cleanliness and of general deportment".<sup>12</sup> Repetitive embodied practices, such as walking upright and wearing 'nicer' and less flamboyant clothing, was how blacks could exhibit good black citizenship. Good bodily postures conveyed to other blacks and whites that good blacks were trustworthy and respectable citizens.

For blacks involved in the liberal project, exercising power over the self was empowering blacks as a group. Exercising power over the self is a productive rather than repressive form of power. It organized a new way for blacks to perceive and interpret political life. King argued that the importance of the bus boycott was proving to blacks they could change themselves and others: "In the new age we will be forced to compete with people of all races and nationalities. Therefore, we cannot aim merely to be good Negro teachers, good Negro doctors, good Negro ministers, good Negro skilled laborers. We must set out to do a good job, irrespective of race, and do it so well that nobody could do it better".<sup>13</sup> Simply being a good black doctor implied that black doctors were different and inferior to white doctors. It kept racial stereotypes attached to capabilities, skills, and character.

Good black citizens strove to be the best in order to overcome boundaries and limits placed on them because of race. Exercising power over the self allowed blacks to sever that relationship:

He came to feel that he was somebody. He came to feel that the important thing about a man is not the color of his skin or the texture of his hair, but the texture and quality of his soul. With this new sense of dignity and self respect a new Negro emerged. So there has been a revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of his nature and destiny.<sup>14</sup>

Genetic and biological factors sculpt a physical body. But the physical body only becomes meaningful through positive and negative cultural ascriptions. Some blacks felt shame over their 'nappy' hair in relation to 'flat' hair of whites. Rather than use relaxers to change the texture of the hair, or creams to lighten the skin, the liberal project challenged blacks to reinterpret their bodily features. While rejecting body modification in favor of the 'natural' black body is usually associated with the black nationalist and black power movements, the liberal project also worked on the body to change and empower blacks.

King distinguished good blacks from bad whites to illustrate that bad conduct was not racially determined. At the Montgomery courthouse during the trial of seven whites arrested for bombing his house, King noted how bad whites were not 'clean': "One could tell from the dress and manner of the whites that most of them were poor and uneducated, the kind that would find security in the Ku Klux Klan. As we entered they looked at us with undisguised hate".<sup>15</sup> King argued that bad whites did not practice any personal ethical standards of cleanliness or civility. Their unkempt style (or lack) of personal ethics organized their racially threatening and violent approach towards blacks. It was important to King that blacks did not use bad white behaviors as a rationalization or justification for blacks to do the same. King wanted blacks and whites to refrain from embodied bad practices.

## THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

It was during the Montgomery Bus Boycott that good black personal ethics emerged as the central theme for the liberal project. King, through his narrative of the bus boycott in his book *Stride toward Freedom*, repeatedly portrayed black self-restraint and mastery over their emotions as the key reasons for the boycott's success. In this way, King's books served as important discursive and pedagogical materials to prepare blacks for entry into the civil rights movement. They were required reading for any individual, black or white, who wanted to volunteer for the movement, and by the 1964 Freedom Summer led by SNCC, teaching seminars used King's books

to retell the history of the civil rights movement.<sup>16</sup> For instance, King told the story of his response to the blacks and whites in Montgomery after the Klan bombed his house while he was giving a speech at a local mass meeting. His wife and two-year-old daughter were home at the time accompanied by a friend of the family. King arrived home after the bombing only to find that the tensions between local blacks and whites were escalating. Blacks and the white police were both brandishing guns. While local black residents had been refraining from violence during the boycott, they were not pacifists.<sup>17</sup> The risk of not controlling this situation meant at minimum a riot and potentially the end of the movement. In order to gain control of the situation, King exercised power over his own emotions:

In this atmosphere I walked out to the porch and asked the crowd to come to order. In less than a moment there was complete silence. Quietly I told them that I was all right and that my wife and baby were all right. 'Now let's not become panicky,' I continued. 'If you have weapons, take them home; if you do not have them, please do not seek to get them. We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence'. . . . Then I urged them to leave peacefully. 'We must love our white brothers,' I said, 'no matter what they do to us. We must make them know that we love them'.<sup>18</sup>

King's ability to regain order and 'quietly' address the crowd is significant. In a situation where whites almost killed his family, coupled with a gathering hostile crowd, King addressed the onlookers in a calm and rational manner. King did not shout, he did not curse, he did not yell, and by all accounts, he did not cry. King's mastery over his emotions allowed him to control the external situation. In some cases, leadership can be exhibited by activating the power embedded in the bureaucratic office.<sup>19</sup> In this case, King exhibited leadership through emotional self-restraint which minimized the sensations of anger and outrage in others. He activated power over himself to control the situation. He used himself as an embodied example of what to do in a bad situation so others could learn from him. In this regard, King's charisma was not a product of his position as a black minister but from his mastery and consistent management of his emotion during times of crisis.

The common misperceptions of the civil rights movement, starting with the depictions of Parks as a tired old seamstress to the idea that blacks just 'became' non-violent in the face of white violence, is that it masks the deliberate, methodological, and purposeful work by black activists. Morris was the first to break this pattern by showing that blacks formed and funded their own separate organizations.<sup>20</sup> The MIA had to train and prepare blacks on the best way to ride a desegregated bus. Blacks did not just get back on the buses as if nothing had changed. After the year-long boycott, what it meant to be black in Montgomery changed. When it came time to board the buses, no one in the movement was sure how whites

would respond. Would they respond violently? Would they boycott the buses? Other problems arose such as how blacks should proceed with riding the bus. One thing the MIA did was place black ministers on the buses because they felt their presence would give blacks courage and make them less likely to retaliate if insulted by whites.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the presence of ministers provided a system of surveillance to give moral support for the black bus riders. However, more was needed than a watchful eye to ensure the integration of the buses went smoothly.

The MIA understood the burden blacks faced when boarding the buses and prepared them for the life of integrated public transportation. They printed flyers and distributed them to black riders who could not or did not attend the training sessions at the mass meetings. They produced the flyers with a dual audience in mind. They were for black bus riders and whites who may object to integrating buses. The flyers read:

Negroes can now sit anywhere on Buses!  
 Be first class citizens! It's now time to move up front! Ride first class  
 for first class fare—Sit in any empty seat on buses!  
 Remember: Be good Americans—be calm, be quiet, be friendly, be  
 prayerful—but be free.<sup>22</sup>

The flyer explicitly associated the importance of personal ethics with idealized citizenship. This flyer communicated to Montgomery whites that blacks would not be involved in creating a public spectacle of bus integration. Rather, blacks would simply exercise their right to enter and sit on a bus like other good citizens who ride public transportation.

Along with the flyers, the MIA prepared blacks for how to ride the bus by developing a set of written rules and guidelines. They designed a series of “general suggestions” and “specific suggestions” that instructed blacks on how to board, sit, and ride the buses through a series of workshops held at mass meetings.<sup>23</sup> They handed these rules out to blacks in the community. Some of the suggestions read:

4. Demonstrate the calm dignity of our Montgomery people in your actions
5. In all things observe ordinary rules of courtesy and good behavior. Remember that this is not a victory for Negroes alone, but for all Montgomery and the South. Do not boast! Do not Brag! . . .
7. Be quiet but friendly; proud, but not arrogant; joyous, but not boisterous<sup>24</sup>

The rules emphasized that blacks be modest when boarding and choosing a seat on the bus. In a way, they won. But they won the right to sit on a bus, and the liberal project realized that more struggles lay ahead. Mastering personal ethics required exhibiting them in all types of situations. Good black citizens

were modest when times were good and bad, in victory and defeat. Bad citizens were ungrateful. Blacks did not want to appear arrogant, but they also did not want to appear apathetic. Thus, a key problem was how to display pleasure and satisfaction without falling to either extreme.

Whereas the general suggestions served as guidelines, the “specific suggestions” outlined the exact practices of how to choose a seat and how to handle an adverse situation with whites:

3. In sitting down by a person, white or colored, say ‘May I’ or ‘Pardon me’ as you sit. This is a common courtesy
4. If cursed, do not curse back. If pushed, do not push back. If struck, do not strike back, but evidence love and goodwill at all times
5. In case of an incident, talk as little as possible, and always in a quiet tone<sup>25</sup>

The specific suggestions illustrate the importance of mastering good manners and good character. Good manners meant saying ‘May I’ and ‘Pardon’ when walking past another citizen. The public display of specific well-recognized manners ensured blacks would not reflect black stereotypes and bad black citizenship. Additionally, the workshops instructed blacks to be cautious and not respond to bad whites. Therefore, they encouraged blacks to board and sit on the bus as if nothing had changed. They were not to interact with or incite white riders who were still likely to resort to violence. If whites were verbally rude or hostile, a lack of response ensured no further problems. Being quiet referred to not escalating or making the worst out of a bad situation. Conversations among friends were to be of a quiet or modest level. Voices were never to be raised to a noise level others would deem unpleasant. Thus, the MIA planned for every detail, from how blacks should smile and ask about an empty seat to the pitch of conversation, to ensure that blacks rode the buses like good black citizens.

## THE BLACK STUDENT AND SNCC

In July 1958, 65 people from 16 states attended the liberal project’s first non-violent workshops at Spellman College in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>26</sup> A month later, James Lawson, a black pacifist credited with bringing the message of non-violence to black college students, including the founding members of SNCC, led a workshop and discussion group with 25 ministers and black community leaders in Jackson, Mississippi on how to be non-violent.<sup>27</sup> Lawson’s workshop brought the leaders of the MIA and the black students together. Older, or more mature and experienced, black men led the MIA and bus boycott. The students were inspired by King’s work and the boycott, but, rather than join the MIA in an ancillary role, the students organized their own group. In turn, the “black student” emerged as an



autonomous force and represented a symbolic point of departure from past black struggles and the current liberal project.

King emphasized the importance of education as one way to optimize one's good black citizenship. The idealism behind education emerged in the progressive era, especially during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a liberal idea of self-improvement that would raise everyone out of poverty, and improve the quality of citizenry.<sup>28</sup> King drew from the ideas that higher education cultivated more culturally refined citizens. In turn, he distinguished a 'high culture', associated with a particular form of cultural capital obtained from a broad liberal arts education associated with an expansive vocabulary and knowledge of the arts, from 'low' urban and rural cultures—dime novels, blues music, and slang. He used the increased political activity of black students in Nashville, who were using sit-ins to integrate public and private amenities to represent good black citizenship: "But neither is the Negro today an elderly woman whose grammar is uncertain; rather, he is college-bred, Ivy League-clad, youthful, articulate and resolute. He has the imagination and drive of the young, tamed by discipline and commitment".<sup>29</sup> An attractive citizen is the type of person who exhibits conventional American beauty norms, is clean, and has a pleasant personality. Describing how the personal ethics were responsible for politicizing the students, King said, "I am no longer surprised to meet attractive, stylishly dressed young girls whose charm and personality would grace a junior prom and to hear them declare in unmistakably sincere terms, 'Dr. King, I am ready to die if I must'".<sup>30</sup> Good black citizenship meant being charming and physically beautiful, both of which are embodied representations of cleanliness. King's representations of black college protesters as well spoken, clear in intention, and conveying their displeasure with unfair racialized hierarchies in a rational manner were all reflections of good black citizenship.

The importance of SNCC's sit-ins were much more than its self-proclaimed commitment to "the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose",<sup>31</sup> or the articulation of a new identity separate from the adults.<sup>32</sup> The students were keenly aware of the limitations of just getting an education. As part of the development of its charter at its inaugural conference, SNCC wrote, "Many college trained Negroes are offered the mop and broom when seeking employment in private industry".<sup>33</sup> The students went to school, worked hard, and did the things they were supposed to do in order to reap the benefits that society, just as the unspoken educational social contract forged in the progressive era promised them. It was not enough. Whites still denied them equal employment opportunities.

Good black students became a meaningful political identity during the sit-ins. The sit-ins were not spontaneous eruptions of protest.<sup>34</sup> Similar to the MIA's work in preparing blacks on how to board and ride the buses in Montgomery, SNCC prepared black students on how to embody good black citizenship. SNCC ran role-playing scenarios and distributed

instructions to its members on what to do during a protest to ensure that students reflected good black citizenship under duress. They did this before all of their protests. The student's embodied appearance and positioning were key to achieving a successful sit-in. SNCC's instructions focused on how to present, pose, and situate the body to reflect good black citizenship. The 10 instructions were:

- 1 Don't strike back or curse if abused
- 2 Don't hold conversations with observers or police
- 3 Don't laugh out
- 4 Don't move from your position unless instructed to do so by leader or marshall
- 5 Don't block sidewalk, intersections, or entrances to stores
- 6 Show yourself as courteous, calm, and determined at all times
- 7 Stand erect and walk with relaxed deliberation at proper interval
- 8 Always face toward your spokesman
- 9 Report all serious incidents to your leader
- 10 Remember love for truth's sake and non-violence<sup>35</sup>

The first eight instructions all pertain to how to present the body during a protest performance to reflect good black citizenship. SNCC emphasized emotional restraint through prohibition—don't laugh, don't curse—and permission—walk upright and relaxed, face your spokesman. There was a calculation of where to place bodies to decrease the probability of something going wrong. In part, ensuring that the students did not block doors distinguished the sit-in from typical forms of protest associated with labor: boycotts, strikes, and pickets. The placement of bodies combined with the embodied display of good black citizenship ensured that blacks would have maximum control over the environment. In this regard, the deployment of good black citizenship is very situational. As I will show in Chapter 3, SCLC and SNCC made certain adjustments depending on the expected white response of each protest movement.

Because the students' personal ethics perfectly reflected good black citizenship, they were able to control the audience's interpretation of the sit-ins. This fact was not lost on segregationist leader and editor of the *Richmond New Leader* James Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick compared the embodied appearance of good blacks and bad whites, noting that the black protesters were "in coats, white shirts and ties" whereas the bad whites were "a ragtail rabble, slack-jawed, black jacketed, grinning fit to kill . . . Eheu!"<sup>36</sup> CORE leader James Farmer also distinguished the students from bad whites based on their presentation of self:

Newspaper and television accounts of the sit-ins suggested a picture which reversed the common stereotypes. Inside, at the lunch counters, sat well-dressed, well-mannered Negro college students with their

calculus and philosophy books, quietly asking for a cup of coffee; outside, crowds of white boys with duck tailed haircuts and leather jackets grinned and shuffled their feet to start trouble.<sup>37</sup>

SNCC made their point and captured national headlines through their embodiment of good black citizenship that contrasted neatly with bad white citizenship. They did not have to articulate why they deserved rights because they already looked and acted as if they did. Good black students were reading philosophy and mathematics. They were neatly dressed and well mannered. Rather than demand service, asking for a cup of coffee quietly made them polite. In contrast to the good black students, bad whites exhibited bad bodily posture. They shuffled their feet and did not walk upright to look others in the eye. Grinning associated them with being obnoxious and mischievous. This associated bad whites with a general lack of respect for the self and others. The element of bad behavior did not even have to be put into spoken discourse.

The black students' good black citizenship opened space for the increased support of whites. White college students formed Friends of SNCC chapters to raise money and organize support for civil rights within the white community. The students' mastery of good black personal ethics produced changes in how whites supported the movement. Whites became more vocal and more willing to risk their bodies for the struggle. King noted this change, indicating that, "Not long ago the Negro collegian imitated the white collegian. In attire, in athletics, in social life, imitation was the rule . . . Today the imitation has ceased. The Negro collegian now initiates grouping for unique forms of protests . . . Overnight, his white fellow students began to imitate him".<sup>38</sup> King's indication of whites 'imitating' blacks does not refer to whites acting black. It refers to an idea of how some whites began exhibiting good citizenship through their identification with the black students' good citizenship.<sup>39</sup> Rather than copying blacks, we should understand the movement as stimulating the white communities to change.

## THE CITIZENSHIP SCHOOLS

SCLC formed "citizenship schools" to diffuse the lessons of good black personal ethics to blacks throughout the South. They ran their citizenship schools from 1961 until 1966, when controversy surrounding the SCOPE project and post-Voting Rights Act recruiting difficulties ended the program. In 1962, SCLC reported that they held 263 classes, containing 2,330 attendees, and registered 2,464 black voters through the classes. Citizenship school trainees registered 13,266 blacks through community drives and voter canvassing.<sup>40</sup> By 1964, SCLC reported 225 active voter registration groups, 560 inactive voter registration groups, 216 SCLC affiliates, 219 active adult citizenship school classes (average 15 students each), and 1,060

temporarily inactive adult citizenship school classes that trained 12,271 students.<sup>41</sup> Whether or not these numbers represent progress because of the complexity of restrictions on black voter registration or failure because these numbers are small in relation to the number of blacks living in the South is a moot point. The schools existed for the purpose of training blacks on how to be good citizens. They represented a broader cultural struggle to break individual identification with racial groups and wrap good black citizenship around the movement.

SCLC's main citizenship school, the Dorchester Training Center, was located in McIntosh, Georgia. In part, the liberal project focused on citizenship schools because of low literacy rates in the black population. In the late 1950s, adult education was limited to GED tests, which at first were restricted to veterans, but gradually expanded to non-veterans in 1947. What distinguished SCLC's citizenship schools from other civil rights activities, especially voter registration drives, was how the school curriculum embedded good black personal ethics in literacy instruction and lessons of what counts as good citizenship. The citizenship school pedagogy consisted of handwriting lessons, phonology practice, and word comprehension, as well as speaking styles and tones that produced good black citizens.

Ella Baker spearheaded SCLC's focus from voter registration to organizing citizenship schools. SCLC's other programs, like the "Crusade for Citizenship", sought to set up a network of citizenship schools, workshops, and clinics. The initial 1958 memorandum that outlined the goals of the Crusade for Citizenship stated that the original intention was "to set up voting clinics and workshops in local communities. There is a concrete job for you to do—giving out leaflets, or going with a friend to register, or visiting your neighbors, or helping people in your block learn how to fill out registration forms".<sup>42</sup> Baker wanted SCLC to work with existing black organizations, like churches, masons, and sororities to provide adult education classes to instruct blacks how to read and write.<sup>43</sup> Ideally, the citizenship schools would centralize and combine the various agents in black civic culture into a common place that served as the point to shape a unified black political identity.

Drawing from ideas popularized by the Adult Education Association, an organization formed in 1951 that viewed adult education as something that could improve American citizenship, Baker initiated contact with Edward Brice at the Federal Department of Education, Health, and Welfare in October 1959. Brice, who specialized in the department's "Fundamental and Literacy Education" program, approached adult education as not just acquiring literacy skills, but as a technique to sever representations of bad citizenship from marginalized groups: "These under educated Americans become hostile, bitter, socially inhibited, cheated in life, with a strong guilt sense over inabilities and limitations. They are prejudiced, superstitious, unwanted".<sup>44</sup> Brice recoded the problem of illiteracy in the black population to the problem that black Americans embodied bad citizenship because

they have not mastered the required ethics associated with good citizenship. Brice suggested to Baker an educational idea of “development through enlightenment” that would “secure for our masses basic literacy such as: occupational literacy, social literacy, civic literacy, personal literacy, which are so necessary for a survival and extension in the world social order”.<sup>45</sup> Through her correspondence with Brice, Baker began the process of developing a pedagogical component to SCLC’s deracializing focus. The important shift was the move away from measuring black citizenship in terms of the number of blacks registered to vote to providing blacks with the implicit lessons of good citizenship embedded in formal educational training. Yet, not until Baker brought in an external pedagogical program did the citizenship schools materialize.

The Highlander Folk School supplied the external pedagogical program for the liberal project’s citizenship schools. The Highlander model provided SCLC with a way to distinguish their movement programs from the NAACP. The NAACP already fought legal exclusions, like poll taxes, literacy tests, and school segregation. The citizenship schools gave SCLC their own focus which helped them expand the movement to include training on good citizenship that accompanied formal rights. SCLC did not just link with local black churches, but placed a citizenship school inside of them to reprogram the church’s political wings. This ensured that all students “definitely knew they were part of SCLC”.<sup>46</sup> However, SCLC did not adopt a systematic citizenship school model until 1961, after Baker left SCLC to advise SNCC.

### **The Highlander Model**

The Highlander Folk School, founded by Miles Horton, who attended the first SNCC meeting,<sup>47</sup> was originally formed to train labor activists.<sup>48</sup> Baker noted that Highlander enjoyed past success in training “functional illiterate” blacks on the importance of good citizenship. Septima Clark, the first citizenship schoolteacher on St. John’s Island in South Carolina, focused on practical things that local residents found pleasurable, like learning to write their name and filling out mail order forms, in order to encourage voter registration. The key was organizing the school day around the pragmatic needs of local blacks and focus on ‘hands on’ and practical assignments, like name writing and filling out applications.

The Highlander model provided the liberal project with the logistics of setting up and running a citizenship school. This included the training of supervisors, teachers, and how to make a neutral space conducive to learning. SCLC drew heavily from the Highlander’s 1960 manual, “Proposed Citizenship School Training Program”.<sup>49</sup> Highlander provided a once-a-week, six-week course on leadership training.<sup>50</sup> The suggested ratio of supervisor to teacher was 1:10.<sup>51</sup> Supervisors were selected based on their existing local cultural knowledge, such as knowing the “best time of year, best time of day, best place for a meeting, what are local voting requirements, what makes registration difficult”.<sup>52</sup> The school day was divided

between periods of formal instruction in the morning and informal instruction in the afternoon.<sup>53</sup> Late-night sessions between 8 and 10 pm were for “group singing, informal talk and recreation”.<sup>54</sup> This is when students learned freedom songs, such as “We Shall Overcome”. The informal and musical sessions were important for building social bonds between the students because it developed a ‘bodily rhythm’ that put all students ‘on the same page’. This was important for participation in protests that required singing in unison and marching at a controlled pace.

The schools were designed to be temporary, so it was important that the instructors already reflected good black citizenship. SCLC selected individuals who were already professionals, like teachers: “The teacher is a person living in the community. He may be a teacher by profession, a minister, a businessman or woman, a tradesman, a beautician, or any person qualified by demonstrated skill and responsibility and concern”.<sup>55</sup> Professional jobs accompany a style of dress and presentation of self that the liberal project wanted blacks to emulate. The teacher’s embodiment of good black citizenship mattered more than his or her position within the school because the teacher’s job was to provide the hidden curriculum through their embodied presentation.

The liberal project’s major modification to the Highlander model was incorporating the workshops and training sessions used by James Lawson and the MIA during the bus boycott. SCLC explained the importance of the workshops: “Demonstrations of actual teaching situations will enable the teacher–trainee to solve real problems. Available are refresher courses which the teacher may attend for advanced training”.<sup>56</sup> Since ‘real life’ situations provided the substance for the workshops, SCLC considered them more practical and desirable than theoretical discussions on the pros and cons of non-violence and good manners.

### **Citizenship Pedagogy**

The citizenship schools embedded good black personal ethics in good handwriting lessons and the phonology of a civic vocabulary. The importance of mastering good handwriting and pronunciation was expanding civic vocabulary and attaching an overall sense of cleanliness and neatness to good black citizenship. First, the workbook explicitly linked good handwriting with good citizenship: “It is important to have a handwriting that others can read. A strong, sure handwriting shows that you are a strong person. All of our first class citizens should have first class handwriting”.<sup>57</sup> The ritualized repetition of good penmanship, writing neatly and legibly, produced a confident and rational political agent who was neat, clean, and organized. In contrast, it was important to limit bad handwriting because it embodied bad cultural ideals of sloppy, unlearned, and uncommitted, which consequently reproduced black stereotypes.

In addition to good handwriting, blacks also practiced the correct pronunciation of political words in relation to mastering a civic vocabulary. The idea behind mastering a civic vocabulary was to provide blacks with a

way to limit the amount of frustration and anger they felt when interacting with whites during a performance. Building a civic vocabulary through spoken discourse limited emotional outbursts by attaching a rational form of argumentation to the embodied performance. A supplemental SCLC pedagogy handout “Helpful Hints in Teaching Citizenship Classes” suggested paying special attention to the pronunciation of words used in demonstrations: “Pronounce and define the following words. Make sentences from each. Larceny, Commissioner, Register, Congressman, Bonafide, Affidavit, Signature, Elector, Residence, Applicant”.<sup>58</sup> Articulate speech signified intelligence. In contrast, stumbling over or mispronouncing words represented blacks as unsure of themselves. Ensuring the pronunciation of key words when attempting to register to vote severed the association of race with intelligence levels. The consequence of improper pronunciations was an unsuccessful public performance. Whites used mispronounced words as an indication that blacks were not ready and did not deserve rights. Blacks who used words they could not pronounce appeared as if they were being used by political ‘outsiders’ and did not comprehend their actions.

Black participants practiced writing words and constructing narratives in relation to mastering a civic vocabulary. Social movements use narratives to assign meaning to their experience.<sup>59</sup> Rather than write basic or root words like ‘cat’, ‘sat’, ‘mat’, ‘pat’, etc. used in early primary education instruction, the workbook supplied a sample list of words for blacks to use while scripting narratives that defined blacks’ experience in the civil rights struggles. The sample word list included:

a attorney—amendments—abridged—alderman  
 c Chatham—congressional—county—circuit—citizen—constitution  
 e exercises—election—elect—executive—electorate  
 r representatives—rebellion—register—resident—regulation  
 w whites—workshop—world—white house<sup>60</sup>

The movement provided the words and context for the participants to script the ‘preferred’ way to proceed for racial equality and civic inclusion. The words were set up for the black students to emphasize or deemphasize key characters depending on the story. Some narratives could be heroic and emphasize the role of good blacks in desegregating trains or buses. Other narratives could emphasize the role of a repressive state in denying blacks rights. Either way, the repetitive motions of writing, speaking, and scripting were important to help limit displays of anger, frustration, and confusion.

## CONCLUSION

By 1961, good black citizenship became the dominant political representation of blacks within the civil rights movement. The liberal project used

discourses of good black citizenship to produce a normative and embodied ideal of black political representation that reflected idealized American citizenship. The movement's emphasis on good black citizenship highlights the limits of understanding of citizenship as a legal form of membership or republican ideal of active citizenship. Social movements make symbolic citizenship claims that they deserve rights. In order to fixate good black citizenship to the body, the liberal project developed a system of personal ethics to guide blacks on how to reflect good black citizenship in order to optimize their symbolic citizenship claims. It was at the level of bodily motions (postures, walking) and bodily sensations (emotions) that we find the exercise of power over the self to produce change in others.

Why did good black citizenship appeal to southern blacks? Because the body is the one thing that all marginalized people have control over, and the liberal project showed that in exercising power over the self all blacks had access to a form of power that did not rely on money or political connections. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a real and symbolic victory. In part, the boycott produced real gains. Although a small victory, it was a hard-fought victory. It was also symbolic of how to do things. King, in his demeanor and mastery over his emotions, symbolized how to deal with whites in an effective manner. The black students in SNCC embodied good black citizenship in their sit-ins that made the contrast between good blacks and bad whites apparent, and symbolized the importance of good black citizenship when engaged in public protests.

Good black citizenship required blacks to exercise power over the self for the purposes of producing changes in whites. Therefore, good black citizenship should not be understood as conformity or appeasement. If good black citizenship were about conforming or appeasement, then we would have found the liberal project arguing that violence and bad behaviors were justified because whites were doing it. Instead, the liberal project argued that all citizens needed to reflect good citizenship in order to change the structural basis of national membership. It should be understood as a form of power because it was about, to use paraphrase Robert Dahl's power equation, actor A compelling actor B to do something actor B did not want to do.<sup>61</sup> The key to understanding how power over the self can produce changes in others is the link between performer and audience. The symbolic citizenship claims fused good blacks with good whites. In turn, it not only severed whiteness from good citizenship, it also produced boundaries between bad whites and good whites. Good whites were not liberal or tolerant on racial issues. They were looking for ways to integrate blacks in a minimal capacity. However, good whites rejected the overt and violent practices of bad whites, which produced a tension between different white political groups, notably, between the Klan and the White Citizens' Councils. Good black citizenship also drew white students into the movement. The liberal project understood that integrating into the American polity without fundamentally altering what counted as good citizenship would



have resulted in token forms of integration without providing blacks with any real power or means of bettering the black community.

Understanding how the black movement used citizenship and the body allows us to rethink resistance within political struggles. Resistance did not mean blacks 'speaking truth to power', negating an other, or overcoming white hegemony. Resistance is a complex concept that cannot assume that the negation of an adversary will equate to something better or something different. The core aspect of black resistance was not found in the marches, sit-ins, or non-violence. It is found in how they made their bodies racially non-threatening, which in turn made the boycotts, sit-ins, and display of non-violence meaningful. Because of the degree and intensity of black stereotypes in the South, and North for that matter, blacks did not have the luxury of just showing up for a protest carrying signs. As the example of the SNCC sit-ins illustrated, blacks had to look racially non-threatening, like the idealized American citizen, in order to convince some whites that they were deserving of rights and that they desired civic inclusion. Thus, the liberal project illustrated how the black movement found more opportunities for social change when appealing to idealized American civic culture.

The liberal project's symbolic citizenship claims produced a way of making claims for equality independent of the race-first versus class-first debate. With the successful completion of the bus boycott and the impact of the black students' sit-ins, good black citizenship became the dominant political representation of black citizenship. However, the emphasis on individuality, the hallmark of liberal democracies, remained a nuanced problem for the black movement. At first, the liberal project overrode the race-first group approach to equality by emphasizing the autonomy of individual good black citizens as they were desegregating public amenities. However, the tension between individual and group rights remained, and would become the opening for the black nationalists to enter the movement. As I show in the next chapter, good black social ethics limited expressive forms of individuality and attempts at establishing intra-black hierarchies by regulating the social interactions between blacks. The potential inclusiveness of citizenship meant repressing competing social identifications rooted in class and race. Therefore, the effects of good black citizenship produced the embodied good black citizen, which kept the various factions of the movement under a single discursive umbrella, and gave the movement its unitary identity on the national level.

One potential criticism of my argument was that the black movement's emphasis on good black citizenship is that race does not matter. Nothing could be further from my argument. Race mattered then and continues to do so now. However, the idea that race no longer matters, usually found in perspectives that we live in a 'post-racial' America, is rooted in the civil rights struggles to downplay race and hide it in our bodies. The liberal project did not want race to matter because race was the determinant for access to economic and political power. I will explore the implications of good

black citizenship in the following chapters. For now, I want to highlight one of them: how good black citizenship reinforced existing idealized American citizenship and thus narrowed who counted as good Americans. This narrow idea was specific to blacks who reflected good black citizenship. As good black citizens began to climb the corporate hierarchy, obtained visible roles in the media, and won national elections, it indicated that race did not matter as long as blacks were racially non-threatening. And, because the black civil rights movement had such a transformative impact on American civic culture, all reform and inclusive groups have sought citizenship rights through their symbolic citizenship claims of being gender-conventional and sexually non-threatening, religiously non-threatening, and ethnically non-threatening. The combined effects have been to produce a neutered political body that hides social meanings in plain sight—in our good bodily motions and the absence of emotions.

## 2 Mobilizing the Black Community

### Social Ethics, Social Capital, and the Black Family

The emergence of good black citizenship during the formation of the early part of the civil rights movement was a major reason for the movement's political success. However, good black citizenship was not just an image or a way of framing blacks positively to whites to desegregate public amenities. The liberal project presented good black citizenship as a universal system of conduct. It was to organize black political mobilization and become part of their everyday cultural schemas.<sup>1</sup> This is one reason why it is hard to fit the civil rights movement into just the study of social movements—the importance of SMOs, strategies, and identities—because the movement had a much larger impact on the lives of black and white Americans. McAdam illustrated this in his study of how participation in SNCC's Freedom Summer changed how the white volunteers understood interracial relations, sexuality, and US politics.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explains how the liberal project used good black social ethics to physically and symbolically expand the movement into the rural civil spheres and the black private sphere.

Associational life in democratic society depends on some commonalities, such as a shared language or religious beliefs. In multiracial societies, the civil sphere tends to fragment along racial and ethnic lines, which breaks civil society into black and white public spheres and civic associations. Post-war American civil society was racially stratified despite shared religion, language, and ideas of the good life. During the civil rights movement, the black media provided the black community with alternative interpretations to events than the mainstream white media did.<sup>3</sup> Whereas black interpretations of civil rights events were important, it nevertheless reinforced the strict separation between the white and black civic communities. Whenever a political problem brought whites and blacks together, black participation was limited to an ancillary role, and they often accepted outcomes that lacked tangible gains. In larger urban centers like Atlanta, local black leaders' negotiated settlements with the white power structure over token forms of neighborhood, school, and local store integrations.<sup>4</sup> In Chicago, the local black leaders were intertwined with Richard Daley's political machine, where black access to the welfare state was predicated on the black leaders delivering the vote.<sup>5</sup> And in the heart of the black belt, and especially

in rural areas, white leaders completely dominated local politics and economic sanctions, such as job losses and eviction, to encourage blacks not to politically organize. Thus, a significant challenge to the liberal project was how to wrap good black citizenship around the black community while simultaneously creating connections to fuse the movement with the sympathetic segments of the white community. Their approach was emphasizing good black social ethics to minimize racial tensions in order to create social capital between the racially stratified civil spheres.

The liberal project also targeted the black private sphere. Common themes that ran through the citizenship schools and King's sermons, speeches, and other writings were heteronormative ideals of gender and family life that supported the male *and* masculine good black citizen. The liberal project used their citizenship schools to instruct "traditional gender roles" to black men and women that mirrored the idealized heteronormative post-war American family. Good black men were not just good citizens, but good family men who reflected an idea of the 'caring patriarch'. In contrast, black women's gender performances reflected domestic femininity, it that their performance played a supplementary role that optimized the good black citizenship of black men. Adhering to traditional masculine and feminine practices exhibited through wage or domestic labor, whether one works inside or outside of the house, was an attempt to provide stability in the black family by strengthening the institution of marriage. Whereas black-black and black-white relations were an unspoken struggle about establishing equality between men, black-men/black-women relations were about stabilizing the black family. In turn, the black woman emerged as an independent classification whose femininity was paradoxically embraced and vilified by the different factions of the movement.

Related to the gender contradiction embedded in good black citizenship was its silence surrounding sex, primarily sex between black men and white women, but also the invisibility of gay black men. Foucault identified the importance of silence in language and sexuality, noting that silence "is less the absolute limit of discourse . . . than an element that functions alongside the things said".<sup>6</sup> Thus, the negation and exclusion of gay and lesbians from good black citizenship functioned alongside the implication that good black citizens were gender-conventional and sexually non-threatening. Although Bayard Rustin was arguably the most important planner and organizer in the liberal project, King and the other leaders of SCLC kept him out of important public roles because he was gay and his sexuality threatened the ideal of good black citizenship. Furthermore, the liberal project explicitly sought to limit sexual relations between black men and white women because it was consistent with the overarching theme of being racially non-threatening. Indeed, white resistance toward school integration centered on the fear of interracial sex. Harold A. Petit, vice president and regional manager for the South Carolina Electric & Gas Co., at Charleston, explained why he stood for the

white southern way of life: “Yes. The basic fear in mongrelization of the races. I just can’t visualize a South which is predominantly mulatto.”<sup>7</sup>

The gender performances of the caring patriarch and domestic femininity combined with the exclusion of gay black men and black lesbians set the foundation for the construction of the good black public sphere by positioning black men in an equitable position relative to white men and pinning black women to the private sphere, whose own visibility was predicated on supporting good black citizenship. Good black social ethics organized the social interactions necessary to create a good black associational life and good black public sphere, thus producing the empirical condition of a strong civil society capable of producing social change. While this situation was not beneficial to black women or gay black men, it did allow the liberal project to reflect mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century family, gender, and sexual norms. Indeed, the contradiction at the heart of the public sphere is that while it is ideally integrative, publics are created on the basis of exclusion.<sup>8</sup>

### **GOOD BLACK SOCIAL ETHICS: GOOD MANNERS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Good black social ethics refer to the racially non-threatening style and mannerisms involved in social interactions and performances between social actors. The foundation of good black social ethics was the emphasis on exhibiting good manners in order to maintain a level of ‘civility’ in public life. The pace, decibel level, a fair back-and-forth exchange of words, and the absence of emotions in the speaker defined good manners. Good black social ethics organized the interactions between blacks in black civic associations, and between blacks and whites when interacting with whites and the media and interracial civic associations. The point of good black civic ethics was to challenge black stereotypes that blacks were bad mannered, loud, raucous, and generally uncivilized, which made them bad citizens. Subsequently, good black social ethics had an important integrative feature that sought to fuse the liberal project with blacks on the margins and with sympathetic white audiences.

SCLC’s citizenship schools instructed personal and social ethics in a sequential manner. The embodiment of personal ethics was the precursor to successfully practicing social ethics. The citizenship school workbook included lessons on good manners that focused on practicing how to be attentive and show interest in others. The attention lesson required blacks to perform the roles of ‘the good listener’ and ‘the good speaker’. An example of how to be attentive and show interest in others included: “When other people are talking, I listen. Harry likes me to listen when he talks. She likes me to listen when she talks. One has good manners if he listens when others talk. When I talk I want other people to hear me”.<sup>9</sup> An ideal conversation exchange should flow back and forth between speakers. Good

speakers managed their tone and pace of speech to limit overexcitement, which made one prone to misspeak and could confuse a listening audience. Good citizens should not appear trite or boring, nor do they want to appear domineering or as a braggart. Good citizens had to find an optimal middle ground where they were confident and interesting.

The attention lessons were supplemented with speaking lessons that trained blacks on what was considered ‘appropriate conversation levels’ and the correct pronunciation of words. The workbook offered an example of how good speakers managed their conversations with others:

I talk about things my friends are interested in. I speak so that everyone can understand me. It is not polite to do all the talking. Everyone likes to talk some . . . My friends like to tell me about their jobs. They like me to discuss their community problems with me. I like to tell them about my job and my children . . . It is not polite to interrupt. Everyone likes people who listen when he talks.<sup>10</sup>

Being attentive required understanding the pace of exchange in a conversation and mastering bodily forms of communication. The good listener positions their body to face the speaker, looking the speaker in the eye when the speaker speaks, and does not interrupt the speaker. In contrast, the bad listener exhibits an embodied show of disrespect, disgust, and rudeness by shaking his/her head, looking away while another speaks, or interrupting the other’s thought in mid-sentence.

Speaking like a good citizen was also embedded in SNCC’s community workshops. A 1965 speech lesson taught by Stokely Carmichael titled “What Is Good English” exemplifies the prolonged emphasis the liberal project placed on good manners.<sup>11</sup> Carmichael wrote four sentences on one side of the blackboard that represented the type of slang-infested southern drawl the liberal project wanted blacks to avoid sounding like. On the other side of the board, he wrote four corresponding sentences on what good black citizens said, and more importantly, what they sounded like. The sentences were:

I dig wine / I enjoy drinking cocktails  
The peoples want freedom / The people want freedom  
Wheresoinever the policemens goes they causes trouble / Anywhere  
law officers of the law go, they cause trouble  
I wants to reddish to vote / I want to register to vote<sup>12</sup>

Carmichael asked the class specific questions, like, “Which way do television and radio people speak?” and “If society rejects you because you don’t speak good English, should you learn to speak good English?”<sup>13</sup> While he gave students room to question why a uniform style of speech was imposed on all citizens, the only possible answers were ‘Yes, you need to learn to speak good English to be part of society’, or ‘No, you should not have

to speak good English, society should accept you no matter what'. The second response foreshadows how SNCC began to question the revolutionary potential of good black citizenship. However, according to Jane Stenbridge's notes, the class concluded that they, as southern blacks, would have to learn how to speak good English. She wrote that a child named Hank stated: "They [middle class] won't accept reddish. What is reddish? It's Negro dialect and it's something you eat".<sup>14</sup>

The embodiment of good black social ethics would ideally limit racial tensions of black-white social interactions. It also ensured cordial black-black relations, which was important for networking, organizing, and mobilizing southern black communities. The performativity of speaking styles fixated a pace, substance, and tone of conversation that debunked black stereotypes of being unintelligent, of being overly emotional, and having unarticulated speech. By bracketing out emotionally charged rhetoric, good black citizens could discuss matters of public concern and contentious issues of race that limited affective responses in times of disagreement. In short, it was a way to ensure blacks embodied a rational demeanor, even in trying circumstances, to make rational-critical discourse possible. Yet, for SNCC activist Mary Varela, the problem was not producing enough places "where people can act—and not just talk".<sup>15</sup> Varela identified a disconnect between thinking and doing, discussing and acting. Personal and social ethics could only be learned and mastered through doing. The goal was to change the body, its motions, movements, and postures for the purpose of changing the mind. The error to be avoided was equating educating the rural black populace with changing and politicizing them.

### **Ethics and Social Capital**

The development and spread of the liberal project throughout the southern black belt was due in large part to how they used good black social ethics to create social capital. Social capital refers to the value of who you know, defined by the number and quality of your personal connections.<sup>16</sup> Social connections are a source of power because social bonds produce the type of solidarity that makes democratic society possible.<sup>17</sup> Social capital comes in two forms. One form is bonding social capital, which refers to the connection made between members of the same group. The second form is bridging social capital that refers to connections made between different groups. A tension exists between bridging and bonding capital that leads to an inverse relationship between the two. Although one could easily point to the relationships between the black church, SCLC, SNCC, local chapters of the NAACP, black fraternal organizations, sororities, and labor groups to measure how much social capital existed at various points of the movement, I want to take a step back and analyze the role of social ethics in creating new forms of social capital. The liberal project used good black social ethics to create a symbiotic relationship between bonding and bridging social capital. SNCC sought to create bridging social capital as it expanded in the movement into

new communities. SNCC would then organize the local community into its own independent cell. After the local community was organized, SNCC would create bonding social capital back with the liberal project based on a common understanding of good black citizenship. Therefore, bonding capital was linked with bridging because an increase (or decrease) in one necessitated an increase (or decrease) in the other. In turn, this allowed the liberal project to spread at a uniform and rapid pace.

The liberal project looked inward to organize the black community before seeking white allies. The first problem was bracketing out competing political interests within the black community. The problem centered on the extreme positions characterized in the ‘Uncle Tom’ or the black nationalist. The liberal project viewed the Uncle Tom and black nationalists as distinct political threats. The Uncle Tom was a despised figure because blacks viewed him as a race traitor who exchanged information on blacks with whites for his own personal gain. For the liberal project, Uncle Tom reflected the mistaken idea that mimicking whites was desirable. The black nationalist was a much bigger threat than the Uncle Tom to the liberal project. Not only was black nationalism rooted in the race-first tradition of black politics, the black nationalists’ rhetoric of violence and separation reflected a black politics of nihilism: “[The Nation of Islam] is made up of people, who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable ‘devil’”.<sup>18</sup> The threat of black nationalism increased the probability of losing the federal government as an ally and keeping the black community mired in old political divisions. Indeed, James Farmer dismissed the black nationalists because they had no long-term solution: “With no real work to do in America, their advice to love blacks turns into a program to hate whites. Eager to act manfully, they can only imagine petty schemes of violence and revenge”.<sup>19</sup>

Good black social ethics constructed a moderate political field. This moderate field differed from the black old guard that negotiated political compromises with white political leaders by resetting the terms of negotiations around the question of what constitutes good citizenship. It also differed from the race-first approach of the black nationalists because the liberal project rejected the possibility that an empowered but isolated black civil society would produce change. Good black social capital kept the moderate field intact. To illustrate how the liberal project used good black social ethics to physically expand the movement throughout the margins of southern black life, I will focus my attention to how SNCC approached entering and rebuilding the rural black community.

## **SOCIAL ETHICS AND SNCC’S GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Unlike SCLC, which preferred to stay within the networks of the black church in urban southern areas, SNCC ventured into the rural black



community on the margins of southern political and economic life. Whereas the black church and local NAACP offices provided a starting point for the liberal project to expand, SNCC could not always count on them for support. In some instances, the NAACP viewed the black students as competition. Some leaders of the local black church did not respect SNCC's younger demographic and methods. In other cases, the real threat of white sanctions pressured the black church and NAACP from organizing their own communities. Whites used violence to intimidate blacks from going to meetings. When that did not work, Alabama used the legal power of the state to reclassify the NAACP as an illegal subversive organization. SNCC worked around this problem by establishing a model on how to enter an unfamiliar community, and then set up the subsequent citizenship schools and role-playing seminars to turn rural blacks into good black citizens.

SNCC entered new black communities to bridge social capital between all-black groups, and then transformed the bridging capital into bonding capital to build additional forms of bonding and bridging capital. In part, SNCC's move into the rural areas was a reflection of its grassroots style of organizing and desire to maintain a separate political identity from SCLC. SNCC also authenticated the rural black South, even adopting the black farmer's style of dress of blue-jean overalls as their unofficial uniforms. Nevertheless, SNCC's commitment to grassroots organizing necessitated a different style of political organization. They focused more on organizing political meetings and voter registration than establishing formal citizenship schools. SNCC organized local black communities into independent political cells. Political authority was spread horizontally between cells, rather than vertically or bureaucratically. Ideally, each cell directed their own local struggle, but could be called on to support and assist national demonstrations.

SNCC's ability to mobilize southern blacks was based on how well they worked with existing black groups outside the political wing of the black church. Therefore, they constructed a program to train field activists that drew from Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School and the experiences of seasoned activists such as Bob Moses, who successfully entered McComb County, Mississippi. He chose McComb County because no one else would. Moses focused on voter registration and set up a voter registration school to overcome the literacy test requirements. Charles Sherrrod followed Moses to McComb and brought the workshops after Moses set up operations.<sup>20</sup> The Highlander template was a comprehensive program for political organizing that dealt with voter registration and direction action (sit-ins). Yet, the specifics of the training focused on "projecting a student protest image" and "relationships with other organizations".<sup>21</sup> The idea of a student protest image was ensuring that the students reflected good black citizenship, which SNCC dealt with during the sit-ins. The latter problem on the relationships with other organizations indicates how SNCC provided guidance on how to build social capital to establish working relations with other black political groups. Rather than use a formal school setting

like SCLC's citizenship schools, SNCC used a combination of workshops and internships that activists could deploy in the field.<sup>22</sup> They included lessons from Lawson's workshops that focused on solving practical problems, rather than on developing leaders, and "role-playing" where people could learn "new habits".<sup>23</sup> The emphasis on learning through the body allowed SNCC to diffuse the good black personal and social ethics necessary deep into the black belt where white privilege was enforced through physical and economic sanctions. This indicates that non-violence was not the causal factor in the spread of the civil rights movement but an effect of the spread of good black citizenship.

### **How to Enter an Unfamiliar Black Community: Obtaining Knowledge**

Entering a rural town was a risky endeavor. SNCC activists had to navigate a political field where Jim Crow set the rules. SNCC developed a series of guidelines for black activists to follow that would allow them to enter and organize an unfamiliar rural black community. The guidelines reflect the logic of caution, in that networking with an unfamiliar community required lots of prep-work, in the form of obtaining 'objective knowledge', in the form of the local social demographics, and 'subjective knowledge', in the form of personal narratives and observations. Collecting both forms of knowledge allowed SNCC to produce a 'map' of the black community. One training booklet produced by SNCC, written by Charles Sherrod, a Virginia Union University student who joined SNCC in 1961 and worked in the field until 1965, was simply entitled "Non-violence".<sup>24</sup> The manual focused on how to identify and interpret the local black population to distinguish friends from enemies.

According to Sherrod, the first thing a SNCC field worker had to do was collect the macro-information that provided an objective overview of the population. The macro-knowledge included the ratio of blacks to whites, the history of Klan membership, lynching, and slavery, the local communities' political and economic structure, type of black leadership (churches, intra-black conflicts), and presence of the federal government (did the justice department and FBI do its job, any schools or hospitals supported by federal funding).<sup>25</sup> The bodies of rural blacks told the activists a lot about the current state of black political life. Visual evidence on the appearance of physical structures provided important information on levels of poverty and relative inequalities between blacks and whites. Once a field worker actually entered the local black community, the training guide recommended focusing on local bodies. Specifically, the field worker should identify "shifts in population in facts about people moving in and out of the community—their skills, ages, sex, etc.", the "work habits of self-employed people", and "changes in thinking and loyalties of people toward various images".<sup>26</sup> Demographic patterns indicated the number of young blacks

and students, whom SNCC appealed to more than the NAACP. SNCC in general appealed to the younger generation of blacks who did not identify with their parents or the black church's political infrastructure.

SNCC wanted the written reports on the objective knowledge to be accompanied by a self-narrative on how they acquired the data, whether through interviews or their general "experiences in the field, in the county".<sup>27</sup> The subjective experiences of the activists were given equal weight to the numerical and historical data because, to use Dubois's metaphor, the 'veil' blacks were forced to wear when they interacted with whites and unknown blacks made social relationships a Jim Crowesque scripted performance.<sup>28</sup> SNCC trusted their organizers to see through the veil and the elaborate social theater of southern race relations to get at the 'real' problems. Sherrod's manual also suggested that field workers should take extreme caution when socializing and interviewing local blacks whose employment positions placed them in close relations with whites, like a porter who worked on the railroads and in the bus stations. The point was not just finding out "what white folks say" but also identifying "known Toms. These persons, so close to whites in some ways, may be approached indirectly".<sup>29</sup> Here, the performativity of good black social ethics made the SNCC worker non-threatening when interacting with blacks that the movement could not trust. Good black social ethics were also useful when approaching locals who overheard whites' discussions about black civil rights. This included grocers who had information regarding the "spending on food, clothing and general household supplies; gossip", local repairmen who had information on "changes in spending for farm equipment", barbers and beauticians who had information on important "local issues" and "gossip".<sup>30</sup> What the locals talked about indicated what the community valued, feared, respected, and hated. Gossip and folk knowledge brought the field worker closer to the population they were attempting to work with. Good black social ethics helped to minimize the risk of the field worker offending anyone or putting their 'foot in their mouth'. In short, learning the small talk was akin to learning the language and customs of the rural populations that would facilitate the building of bridging social capital.

### **How to Set Up Operations Once Inside an Unfamiliar Black Community: Working with Locals**

Another training guide, written by Charles McLaurin, a SNCC activist who set up a field office in Rueville, Mississippi, home of the archsegregationist, White Citizens' Council member, and US Senator James Eastland's district, outlined a set of good black social ethics on how to enter a community "the invited and the uninvited way".<sup>31</sup> The easier way was the former. McLaurin notes:

An invited person goes to live with person X in Y community, Mr. X carries the person to church on Sunday. He introduces him to his

friends and neighbors. You are there to do a job at which at this time is undefined; so you act friendly, smiling and greeting the ladies as they approach you. Then, with your warm, friendly face you say to the people ‘I want to do something for this community’ that afternoon you’re asked out to someone’s home for dinner. Go, because this in one time you will be able to talk with a family, or maybe several families. Remember, try to answer all questions asked of you at this point, because you are on trial. You must impress as well as express.<sup>32</sup>

The invitation was pointless if the field worker’s bodily presentation did reflect good black citizenship. McLaurin argued that local blacks based their initial assessment and interpretation of the SNCC worker based on the “smile” and the “warm friendly face”. Before one could talk politics, or organize mass meetings, the field worker had to look like they could be trusted. No rational argumentation and statistical knowledge in the world was going to change any minds or allow the field worker to reach local blacks if they did not look pleasant and trustworthy. This sentiment was echoed by Sherrod, who wrote: “We build images of respect, courage, suffering, Tomism etc, using various personalities as points of reference”.<sup>33</sup> In the process of creating new images of good black citizens, Sherrod also noted, “We also destroy images”.

The uninvited worker faced a much more difficult task, and McLaurin instructed the uninvited field worker to embed themselves in the community any way they could, be it staying with a well-known black family or getting a room at a boarding house.<sup>34</sup> The uninvited worker had to reflect good black citizenship as close he could. This required mastering the basic elements of social ethics that organized social exchanges—politeness, listening, not interrupting, but also laughing and joking to seem less threatening. Joking and laughing were one way for the field worker to show local blacks that they were not a political threat. The most effective way to do this was to “talk with the people, laugh with them, joke with them; do most anything that gets some attention on you or some kind of conversation. It is very important to learn what bugs them”.<sup>35</sup> Practicing good black social ethics made the uninvited worker appear trustworthy, and thus, created the situation for SNCC to create bridging social capital.

SNCC workers were also encouraged to modify their bodily presentations to the audience to increase the probability of fusing with the audience. For example, when the field worker stayed with a host family, they should practice a familial social ethics by calling the host family “moms, pops—that’s home”.<sup>36</sup> It was okay to display an intellectual side when in the company of “professional peers” such as “preaching for ministers; playing chess, discussing medicine, politics, insurance, education, business, etc.”.<sup>37</sup> But this may not be the best approach when interacting with illiterate farmers. Thus, the flexibility of good black citizenship was not found in pushing the limits of good black citizenship, but rather, in how SNCC modified the types of conversations and activities in relation to specific audiences.

Once the SNCC field worker successfully entered a community, they faced the problem of how to recruit locals into the movement. SNCC scripted how to hold a meeting that could simultaneously recruit locals into the movement and prepare them for leadership roles. McLaurin indicated that a house, a church, or even an empty building were ideal places to hold a meeting.<sup>38</sup> However, the pace of the meeting was more important than the place of the meeting. The gradual pace gave locals both formal positions to empower them as well as the time to learn and adjust to the increased responsibility. The point was to find a balance between minimizing apathy, which McLaurin said “will disappear when you give the people some responsibility”,<sup>39</sup> and overwhelming them with new responsibilities that accompany formal positions. McLaurin argued that field workers should “elect a chairmen to chair the meetings; you should not do this after the first meeting. Each meeting, give more and more of the responsibilities to this group”.<sup>40</sup> The successive phaseout of SNCC’s control over the meeting and local movement allowed SNCC to indulge the newly identified local leaders in the liberal project. It was too big of a risk to let a local activist or farmer, who may be motivated by personal interests, to assume control over a newly formed movement.

Despite a gradual pace, the meeting should be upbeat and planned around emotional peaks. Affect was used to create bridging social capital. Meetings should excite people, rile them up, and create an emotional wave over the audience to recruit blacks into the movement. SNCC’s use of emotions to ‘arouse’ the audience differed from SCLC’s approach that urged blacks to manage their emotional responses to minimize black stereotypes.<sup>41</sup> Where SCLC strictly limited the display of emotions in public, SNCC used the emoting body as the point for recruitment, to excite locals and make them believe that the impossible was possible. Bodies emote, and shared emotions can create a sense of ‘us’ necessary to form a collective identity. Collective memories can also be re-felt later, which can renew commitments to the movement long after the meeting has ended. Therefore, the field workers must learn how to arouse and manage the emotions of the crowd. Sherrod wrote, “Plan development of emotional peak in meeting or some kind of development—may be intentional development but you many intend to be unintentional”.<sup>42</sup> Emotional peaks in meetings shaped the audiences’ evaluation of the problem and how to solve it. By using examples of courage to excite and motivate the audience, usually with words that signified feelings of outrage or anger, they created motivation to join the movement. One suggested way of creating an emotional peak in the audience was emphasizing how students risked their bodies for the betterment of all: “Our best selling point is that we are students with nothing but our bodies and minds, fearlessly standing before the monster who killed our mothers and castrated our fathers—yet we stand with love”.<sup>43</sup> A meeting organizer emphasized how students used the one thing that they

controlled and that everyone in the audience could also control, their body, as a weapon of social justice.

### **Security Measures and Protecting the Body**

Personal safety was the most important security issue for SNCC workers when in the field. SNCC produced security handbooks and manuals that provided field workers guidance to protect their bodies from local whites. The security handbooks emphasized a cautious approach to personal safety that ranged from not traveling alone and calling the headquarters when they reached their destination point, to locking car doors, gas tanks, car hoods, and keeping the windows rolled up.<sup>44</sup> Security in the field was based on minimizing risks. How to minimize risk was also situational. One risk was physical violence from the Klan and other violent whites. There was also the risk of police harassment and unwarranted arrest. Advice to minimize police harassment was to remove anything “which could be constituted as weapons (hammers, files, iron rulers, etc.) Absolutely no liquor bottles, beer cans etc. should be inside your car. Do not travel with names and addresses of local contacts”.<sup>45</sup> While there is nothing technically illegal with carrying a hammer, field workers were not working in conditions where police cared about legal technicalities, and punishments for committing minor infractions were extreme. For instance, in 1962 SNCC activists Bob Zellner, Dion Diamond, and Charles McDrew were arrested on charges of criminal anarchy in Baton Rouge, Louisiana for possessing protest literature—a charge that carried a sentence of the death penalty.<sup>46</sup> Liquor bottles and beer cans were prohibited because many southern counties still operated under prohibition norms: “Mississippi is a dry state and though liquor is ostensibly outlawed, it is available everywhere. You must not drink in offices or Freedom houses”.<sup>47</sup>

However, the most important way to minimize risk was maintaining a racially non-threatening appearance. “Try to avoid bizarre or provocative clothing or beards, be neat”.<sup>48</sup> Although the bodies of students, especially from the North and urban areas, were not marked by the hardships of laboring in fields under the hot sun, SNCC members wore blue overalls in an attempt to blend in, and kept a neat, beardless appearance to be racially non-threatening. Exercising power over the self to reflect good black citizenship had a protective element because it did not provoke bad whites. It did not make a bad situation worse. Exhibiting good black citizenship provided the field worker with a degree of invisibility from white authorities.

Another security practice was regulating what was said and how one talked over the radio channels. Phones were not readily available in rural areas of the Deep South. The radios were vital for communications and by extension the safety of field workers. SNCC used an open-frequency radio. The open frequency made SNCC communications subject to eavesdropping

and federal regulations. “All messages must be in plain language. Do not use number codes or any obvious other codes. No profanity on the air. Do not send false messages. Never call emergency when it is not real and immediate. Keep your messages as short as possible”.<sup>49</sup> In part, these guidelines ensured that SNCC field workers were talking to one another in a way that seemed professional. However, eavesdropping and spying were expected, and if whites were listening, SNCC wanted to make sure whites heard blacks speaking in a manner, tone, style, and dialect that reflected good black citizenship.

In sum, the field worker’s embodiment of good black citizenship created social capital between the liberal project and blacks in the rural black belt. The field worker’s good black social ethics allowed them to gain a bit of trust and embed themselves within the unfamiliar community. Good black social ethics guided the embodied mannerisms, social interactions, personal security, and served as the point to create an emotional response to recruit locals into the movement. Once in the community, SNCC was able to build a considerable degree of bonding social capital through the various workshops, citizenship classes, and refresher courses that all activists had to complete to be a part of the movement. This was possible because good black citizenship created a discursive structure that tied the local communities with the core ideological base of the movement. This prevented a situation where bridging of social capital led to a decrease in bonding social capital.

## GOOD BLACK WOMEN AND GOOD BLACK FAMILIES

The spread of the liberal project enrolled local black communities into a cautious and moderate liberal political field defined by good black citizenship. The stability of this field rested on the embodiment of good black citizenship, the subsequent exclusion of bad blacks, the continued strength and vitality of the various SMOs working in the voluntary sector, and on the exclusion of black women from public life. Much has been written about the role of gender in the movement, noting how SNCC and SCLC placed women activists in menial roles, how women resisted this marginalization, and how non-violence posed a challenge to black men’s masculinity.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, it would be a mistake to say black women were not involved in the movement. Ella Baker played a very prominent role in the organization of SCLC, and Diane Nash of the sit-ins and Birmingham Movement. However, the civil rights movement as a whole approached civil rights as the responsibility of black men. Women and their bodies had distinct roles. For instance, on the topic of recruiting local blacks into the movement, Sherrod wrote that the most effective way to develop personal relationships is to “observe the basic sexual attraction between sexes and utilize this”.<sup>51</sup> In this regard, SNCC used the woman’s body as a sexual object to get men to join. SNCC also drew from gendered

assumptions that women were less threatening than male counterparts, noting, “Women make the best images (impressions)”.<sup>52</sup> Black women were expected to practice a personal ethics that fashions an ideal of femininity around the female body to make the struggle for civil rights appealing for men, recruiting more black males to the cause.

Rather than rehash the marginalization of women in the civil rights movement, I want to explain how the liberal project’s use of non-threatening gendered assumptions of women as ‘weak’ and ‘inferior’ corresponded to gendered and heteronormative meanings of citizenship that equated good black citizenship with black men. While good black citizenship rejected the southern white’s insistence on a gradual approach to change, the liberal project shied away from making too many changes. They embraced social institutions of the heteronormative family organized around a gendered division of labor. Therefore, rather than say black women were excluded, it is more accurate to say that black women were placed in the private sphere to prop up black men’s good black citizenship. Whereas the private sphere is autonomous from the public sphere and civic life, the autonomous male citizen has enjoyed the benefits of each sphere at the expense of women. Therefore, I want to focus on how the gender contradiction in the liberal project anchored good black citizenship in the good black family.

### **The ‘Caring Patriarch’, ‘Domestic Femininity’, and the Heteronormative Black Family**

Establishing a heteronormative family meant repositioning black men as the family patriarch. Because the emphasis of good black personal ethics made non-violence meaningful, hegemonic forms of masculinity associated with tough, violent, and muscular working class bodies were excluded. Therefore, good black masculinity was reconstructed around the ‘caring patriarch’. Black men could optimize their good black citizenship by being the head of the house, the breadwinner, and family decision maker. The power of the caring patriarch stemmed from his ability to support and care for his family, but his ability to be head of the house was based on the embodiment of the masculine ideals of strength, independence, and autonomy. The liberal project used the caring patriarch to situate good black men and good white men with idealized meanings of citizenship, not at the expense of bad black men and bad white men, but at the expense of black women.

In order to wrap black masculinity around the caring patriarch ideal, the liberal project organized different sets of social ethics for black men and black women on how to care for the home in their citizenship schools and community centers. A household organized around a black matriarch essentially feminized black men by making them doubly dependent—on black women and on whites. Matriarchy established an inverse relationship between black masculinity and white masculinity because it made race a salient marker for citizenship based on the lack of access to the public



sphere and lack of mastery over the private sphere. King, especially, associated patriarchy with cultural conditions that ‘artificially’ elevated black women above black males and degraded the entire black family:

When a Negro man is inadequately paid, his wife must work to provide the simple necessities for the children. When a mother has to work she does violence to motherhood by depriving her children of her loving guidance and protection; often they are poorly cared for by others or by none—left to roam the streets unsupervised . . . The Negro mother leaves home to care for—and be a substitute mother for—white children, while the white mother works.<sup>53</sup>

King argued that black women’s participation in the labor force mixed up gendered family roles. He expected good black women to raise the children and good black men to work. The black family became more fragile the more black women worked. Indeed, black women frequently worked as ‘domestics’ fulfilling the roles of childcare and maid for white families that, as King noted, led to the neglect of black children. It is the idea of family instability that the liberal project focused on. They gave black women and black men different family responsibilities in order to make the black family more stable and thus, less threatening.

Good black men worked on the outside of the house while good black women inside the house—symbolically and literally. The majority of the political workshops and job training classes focused on improving the political capabilities of black men. They were meant to prepare black men to enter and excel in public life. However, the liberal project’s community centers also offered classes that were particular to the private sphere. They included how to fix up one’s home for men and sewing for women.<sup>54</sup> The community centers in particular sought to teach women how to be good mothers and good wives, in order to attach black femininity with domestic and childcare roles inside the house. Community centers offered classes on nutrition (self and child), daycare services, and “public healthcare such as prenatal and infant care, basic nutrition”.<sup>55</sup> A CORE pamphlet asking for donations for their community centers relied on heteronormative gender roles:

Recently, fabric for 110 dresses was sent by the IGWU’s Local 23–25 to Mississippi. Many of the women who learned to sew by making a dress at the community center had not had a new dress for 4 or 5 years. Their involvement in the sewing class encouraged most of them to start voter registration classes.<sup>56</sup>

The liberal project defined black femininity in relation to domestic care. Her position and role of a homemaker should reflect the post-war nuclear family. The liberal project did not view domestic femininity as something that

was harmful to black women. Good black citizenship not only produced an optimal and ideal nuclear family, but a normative femininity enhanced her political participation because it allowed her to organize in feminine circuits—the PTA, women’s associations, and at the salons.

The political implications of black men not reflecting good black citizenship was their continued subordination to whites. Dividing black men and black women between the private and public sphere *and* within the private sphere enhanced the idea of the autonomous and rational political male agent. However, culturally, the idea of intact black heteronormative families represents the symbiotic aspects of the public and private sphere, in that mastering the domestic sphere adds an additional aspect of status and associations of being “good” to black symbolic citizenship claims. Therefore, the liberal project’s symbolic citizenship claims relied heavily on the performance of the caring patriarch because it aided the public representation of good black citizenship.

In short, the liberal project provided a set of ethics on how to care for the home and the family to enhance their good black symbolic citizenship claims. Gender differences were a key contradiction for the liberal project. The liberal project emphasized equal relations between men but a differentiated citizenship between men and women. Ann Orloff identified the gender-citizenship paradox of increased welfare state benefits in countries that treat women differently based on maternal and child-rearing obligations.<sup>57</sup> The US emphasized a universal understanding of equal citizenship that accompanied a welfare system with minimal benefits to women and mothers. In contrast, Australia and the United Kingdom emphasized a differentiated citizenship between men and women that accompanied a comprehensive welfare system to women and mothers. However, there is little evidence to support the thesis that the movement’s contradiction citizenship helped black women in any meaningful way. The contradiction of idealizing the placement of black men in the public sphere as equal citizens meant that black women had to be pinned to the private sphere. To be a good black woman became synonymous with motherhood, childcare, and family life, while bad black women failed in their maternal and domestic duties that kept the heteronormative family intact.

### **Silence, Sex, and Citizenship**

Sex was a threat to good black symbolic citizenship claims. On the one hand, idealized citizenship implied heterosexuality. The liberal project made gay black men invisible by denying them public positions in the movement. The marginalization of Bayard Rustin, who was vital to the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the organization of the 1963 March on Washington, provides evidence to the marginalization of gay black men in the movement. The movement felt that public knowledge of Bayard Rustin’s sexual practices would be harmful to the movement.<sup>58</sup> Rustin and King’s

political rival Adam Clayton Powell threatened to expose Rustin to the public to discredit SCLC unless King gave Powell input on intra-political matters.<sup>59</sup> Roy Wilkins, president of the NAACP, also used Rustin's sexuality to undermine Rustin's work and decision making over the March on Washington.<sup>60</sup> Despite personal contempt for Powell, King obliged and kept Rustin as a background advisor. Rustin worked primarily behind the scenes with white advisors Stanley Levison and Jack O'Dell, who were former members of the American Communist Party. Rustin obtained no leadership position in any black organization until he directed the A. Phillip Randolph Institute in 1965. Indeed, other gay black men in the movement like James Baldwin left Harlem for Paris because he felt exiled by the black community because of his sexuality. Following Baldwin's exodus from Harlem, Randolph and Rustin moved to together New York's SoHo district, where Rustin cared for the aging Randolph until Randolph's death.

The other type of threat sex produced to good black symbolic citizenship claims was interracial sex. Interracial sex reflected how anyone can potentially be bad sexual citizens because all sex acts can potentially be classified as deviant and abnormal.<sup>61</sup> Good black citizenship emphasized all aspects of idealized American citizenship—including the gendered and sexual meanings. The movement could not reject interracial sex practices to appease the fears of southern whites because it would undercut their claims to equal citizenship. However, they also could not publicly acknowledge interracial sexual practices because it would repel whites who supported equal rights but did not want their sons or daughters sexually involved with blacks. The White Citizens' Councils and other school segregation groups used photos of interracial couples and stories of the 'mongrelization of the South' and the 'moral and mental degradation' of whites to garner support to maintain segregation. Emmet Till was murdered for daring to look at a white woman. Because of the potential ramifications for interracial sex, black men had to pay particular attention to their public practices around white women.

The movement took a cautious approach to interracial sex and remained ambivalent on the subject. They would only say that interracial sex and marriage was not part of the movement's goals. For example, King notes, "The Negro's primary aim is to be the white man's brother, not brother-in-law."<sup>62</sup> And although James Farmer was critical of anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited interracial marriage (in 1965, 19 states had such laws on the books), he sidestepped talk on interracial sexual practices by claiming that marriage and sexual practices were property of the private sphere: "And we are not advocating interracial marriage. I believe that such advocacy is as dirty-minded as the prohibition. One simply must not dictate to the human heart this way."<sup>63</sup> Whereas the presence of gay men in the movement threatened black audiences, the threat of interracial sex was the potential loss of a supportive white audience.

## CONCLUSION

The liberal project's ability to spread was determined in large part on the field workers' ability to perform good black social ethics. Although SCLC preferred to organize through the black church, they still had to overcome political rivals and appease individual egos. SNCC, on the other hand, worked outside the SCLC-black-church umbrella, which included the local chapters of the NAACP, and focused on rural black areas. Therefore, SNCC had to rely on the bodies of individual field workers to successfully enter an unfamiliar community and convince local blacks to join the movement. It is important to remember that SNCC accomplished this with only a handful of field workers, often as little as two people. They did not have a local organization to lend them credibility. The initial entry into the unfamiliar county illustrated how SNCC was able to create bridging social capital. The bridging of social capital (SNCC to local community) was transformed into bonding social capital (local to liberal project), as the ties and connections within the local community strengthened as they coalesced around good black citizenship. Indeed, the creation and setup of local organizations, the development of leadership posts, and instructions on non-violence came after the scripted entry. In fact, all of this was scripted—the use of emotional peaks at meetings, who to approach and how to approach them for recruitment—to ensure a uniformity. Therefore, the symbiotic link between bonding and bridging occurred by the purposeful exclusion of local blacks that the liberal project perceived as unable to reflect good black citizenship. The result was a uniform black civil rights movement.

At the core of SNCC's scripted performance on how to mobilize an unfamiliar black community was the body. One part of the performance focused on the bodies of field workers. SNCC required that field workers exhibit good black personal ethics, but also provided guidelines how to exhibit good black social ethics in how they interacted with the unfamiliar locals. The dangers of working in the rural areas necessitated that field workers take extra caution to protect their physical safety, but not too much caution as to make them appear cowardly in the face of white threats. Field workers had to embody as many 'heroic' qualities as possible because it was the basis of their recruitment. The heroic body overlapped with the second part of the script: using emotions to arouse and motivate the audiences. SNCC scripted how to run a meeting that emphasized using heroic tales of SNCC's current and past work to motivate locals to join. Unlike SCLC which shied away from rousing up audiences for fear of reproducing a black stereotype, SNCC was able to strategically use emotions to bring locals into the movement without having the rally denigrate into a ruckus. In this regard, the body ties together cognition and emotions into a singular whole. As Eyerman showed, contemporary politics create new

interpretations of past events.<sup>64</sup> However, our bodies can also re-feel sensations attributed to events just as it can remember collective events. The mind remembers but the body does not forget.

The emergence of good black citizenship followed a pattern excluding forms of black political representation that would threaten its dominant position in the civil rights movement. This included excluding bad black citizenship as its logical other. However, it also meant excluding forms of femininity and masculinity that were not compatible with black men's good citizenship. The roles of gender and sexuality illustrate how good black citizenship was based on a major contradiction that emphasized the equal citizenship of black men at the expense of black women. The distinction between the public and private sphere is basically a conceptual one. In reality, the two spheres also share a symbiotic relationship. The legal status of citizenship limits the state's power over things like how to raise a family or which religion one can practice. The private sphere, specifically the family form and corresponding gender roles, enhanced the normative ideas of good citizenship and made active citizenship possible. The distinct roles of good men and good women enhance the character of good citizenship by drawing from heteronormative values, which in turn, reinforces those same values it draws from. The liberal project reconstructed an idealized black masculinity in the image of the caring patriarch as an attempt to bracket out competing forms of masculinity associated with a tough blue-collar culture to place men as the head of the private sphere. In part, bracketing out a 'tough guy' form of masculinity was important for ensuring that a demonstration would remain non-violent. Yet, demonstrations were only a sliver of the movement. It also meant remaking the black family to reflect an idealized post-war nuclear family to make neighborhood and school integration less threatening to whites.

The position of the caring patriarch as the head of the family was relational to emphasizing the domestic femininity of black women. While domestic femininity played an important part in emphasizing black men's good black citizenship, the amount of attention the liberal project gave the black family also indicates that a considerable degree of anxiety existed around the status of black family. Indeed, a considerable amount of political anxiety for both projects existed prior to Moynihan's infamous report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, which documented the socio-economic hardships of lower class blacks in urban neighborhoods. I will not rehash the debates surrounding the controversy to how Moynihan's report linked matriarchy and instability with bad black families or the overall silence on behalf of King towards the report.<sup>65</sup> However, I will note that this anxiety over the status of the black family continues today, exemplified by the reactions Bill Cosby and Barack Obama received when they urged black men to be involved in their children's lives, to improve their grammar, and stop acting like "boys".<sup>66</sup> This is simply the rearticulating of the good black caring patriarch that emerged during the movement and

shows how discourses of good black citizenship continue to shape political discourse. However, the debates, especially the opposition to Cosby and Obama surrounding their criticism of the status of the black family, also indicate how the tensions between good black citizenship and black authenticity contribute to the lack of a solution which leaves impoverished black families in a perilous state.

While both gendered expressions of good black citizenship reflected the gender-conventional and racially non-threatening heteronormative family, the effects were not good for gay black men involved in the movement. Good black citizenship made gay black men invisible and never publically acknowledged the presence of black gays and lesbians in the movement. Additionally, interracial sex threatened the movement because whites used the imagined threat of the 'mulattoization' of the South to mobilize whites against the civil rights movement. Therefore, the liberal project was also careful to emphasize that they were not advocating interracial marriage without dismissing it. Nevertheless, the topic of interracial sex was a topic of public discourse. Whereas interracial sex provoked white violence, I think much of the silence surrounding the sexuality of Rustin in particular was to protect the movement from white ridicule and rival black opposition to the liberal project.

Despite the liberal project's attempts to make the good black family, white flight prevented the development of interracial political communities and integrated neighborhoods from ever having a chance to materialize. Despite good black families, whites still fled, redlined, and burned down houses that blacks bought in 'white neighborhoods'. The civil rights movement could count on whites to donate money, but very few put their bodies on the line. Thus, faced with the lack of cooperation from local whites, the liberal project decided to bypass pressing for continued local reform, such as desegregating public spaces and organizing local communities, and switched their sights to the federal government who had the power to override local authorities. This required the liberal project to organize a national drama around good black civic ethics that would pit good blacks against bad whites on the national stage to secure new civil and voting rights legislation.

### 3 Civic Ethics and Embodied Performances

Social movements involve some element of public protest. Protests can be marked by physical confrontation, as in the case of labor, the black civil rights movement, and the anti-globalization movements of the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Protests can be physically non-confrontational, but met with sneers and degrading remarks, such as the women's movement of the 1970s or the gay and lesbian movement of the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Protests can also be non-confrontational, festive, and cooperative, as in the case of the breast cancer "race for the cure" and GLBT pride parades.<sup>3</sup> The point is that social movements have to take to the streets—the real and virtual streets represented by the media—to get their message across. If social movements had access to political elites, then they could simply set up a meeting with them to address their grievances. But they don't. This chapter explores how the liberal project's good black citizenship claims influenced national public opinion, made non-violence meaningful, and compelled southern whites to examine themselves.

By the early 1960s, the liberal project began to use what they called 'direct action' campaigns to make claims for federal rights. Good black embodied performances organized the direct action campaigns. Embodied performances capture how the presentation of the body is a key variable in any form of protest and highlights how the body serves as a form of symbolic communication independent from its actions. Audiences not only listen to grievances, but they see the body as part of an overall performance. One has to look the part to be convincing even if one's claims are rational. Talking and strategy are not enough. Therefore, accounting for the rhetoric, discourse, and/or frames does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the movement's success. As this chapter shows, the liberal project used good black civic ethics to make the body appear racially non-threatening to 1) distinguish good black citizens from bad white citizens, and 2) minimize possible negative responses from the more moderate segments of the white community. Non-violence was part of the equation, but it was not a causal factor. When whites responded with non-violence, the movement found no success. As I show in the next chapter, the black nationalists were non-violent and found no success even when confronted with a bad white response.

The liberal project required blacks to prove they could be good black citizens while whites verbally and physically assaulted them before any aspiring black activist could participate in the public protests. The risk the liberal project had to guard against was not blacks physically fighting back, but the dangers of any kind of emotional response because the display of ‘negative’ emotions like anger jeopardized the good black embodied performance. You could not be angry and non-violent. Therefore, the liberal project used good black civic ethics to redefine the sensations of pain. Specifically, they trained blacks on how to absorb a hit and how to ‘deaden’ one’s weight to minimize the probability of ‘losing control’ of their emotions. For instance, CORE instructed the students involved in the sit-ins how to protect their bodies. Men were to “kneel down and arch over, with skull and face protected” while women were “to prevent internal injury from kicks, lie on the side and bring the knees upward to the chin”.<sup>4</sup> Whereas positioning the body helped to minimize the pain, the overall mental framework associated with good black citizenship moderated and transformed the act and sensation of being struck. Absorbing the blows for a cause hurt, but it hurt differently from being hit for no reason. Whereas there was little evidence that blacks experienced any pleasure from being struck by whites, the pain was no longer associated with the reproduction of white power. The sensation of pain was now understood as the crumbling of the southern white power structure, and black empowerment.

Good black embodied performances also loosened the old South’s chokehold over southern politics. Southern whites exercised power over blacks at the level of the black body for some time. Death by lynching was a physically brutal and symbolic form of social control that targeted blacks on the margins of southern life.<sup>5</sup> Whites hung black bodies from trees as a spectacle for other blacks to view. White men could seduce, rape, and keep black women as clandestine mistresses while black men were murdered for looking at white women. The black body experienced Jim Crow emotionally through the auditory sensations of overt racial slurs. The demands of physical agricultural labor inscribed poverty onto the surface of black bodies darkened from the sun and stained with dirt. Thus, it was logical that the body would also serve as the point of resistance to white power. Controlling the body by refusing to scream, cry, or fight back denied the white police a moral claim to exercise the state’s monopoly of violence. It was by exercising power over the self to remain calm and racially non-threatening in response to bad whites that the liberal project compelled all whites to examine their own actions because whites not involved in the opposition to the movement increasingly viewed the physical beatings of good black citizens as unjust.

The embodiment of good black citizenship was only part of the equation for a successful demonstration. The other part required a bad white response to create the good black/bad white binary. The successful embodied performance produced its own effects if it managed to separate white



audiences and fuse good blacks with good whites. To do this, the liberal project chose locations where a bad white response was most likely, such as Birmingham and Selma, because the good black/bad white binary sent a clear message about blacks deserving rights. The logic of my argument is that non-violence alone was not enough and it was only effective when performed by good black citizens and opposed by a bad white response. Next, I will show that the liberal project's good black civic ethics prepared the black body for protest.

## PREPARING BLACKS FOR PROTEST

Despite the glamorization of the black movement's mass protests, the liberal project spent the majority of its resources setting up citizenship schools and registering blacks to vote. It used public demonstrations only when federal and local governments refused to allow blacks to register to vote and desegregate public facilities. While mastering personal and social ethics were essential to build the foundation of the black movement, the liberal project understood that it would have to prepare blacks for entrance into public protests as the movement shifted from desegregating local sites to making national symbolic citizenship claims. This meant that the liberal project had to figure out a way to make blacks reflect good black citizenship while facing bad white opposition. This required more than a sermon or a speech. The liberal project had organized a series of workshops and role-playing simulations that started in Montgomery and lasted until the Memphis Movement. Before engaging in a prolonged movement against a local white power structure, the liberal project looked inward. King recounted the screening that took place when asking for volunteers during the Birmingham Movement: "Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: 'Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?' 'Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?'"<sup>6</sup> All potential black activists had to complete the workshop before they were allowed to participate in any aspect of the movement.

The workshops were significantly different from the citizenship school in that the workshops deemphasized group discussion in favor of "role-playing" because, as SNCC argued, "New habits must be learned."<sup>7</sup> Highlander founder Miles Horton argued that "the seminar type training—where numerous speakers and people sit around and talk about organizing—can do nothing but reinforce the talk."<sup>8</sup> For instance, a citizenship school discussion asked open-ended questions like, "Is the movement the germ of a new society? Would we want a whole society in which people related to each other as they do in the movement?"<sup>9</sup> Citizenship school discussion groups on the topic of non-violence debated questions such as, "What would happen in your town if minority groups used violent racist means

to solve their problems? What happens when nothing is done to overcome community problems?” and “How can non-violence be used in your community?”<sup>10</sup> The open format ensured that everyone had the opportunity to speak and that there was potential for group consensus. Yet, civic groups and social movements get bogged down in talking and it is easier and safer to talk than to act.<sup>11</sup> Talking about political problems does not necessarily mean that the group will reach a consensus on how to solve the problem. Talking could create a shared understanding of good black citizenship, but it could not reinforce how to maintain good black citizenship when faced with white violence.

In contrast to talking, role-playing involved the simulation of social situations involving good blacks and bad whites who provided opportunities for blacks to practice good black citizenship. Role-playing allowed civil rights volunteers to identify and fix their weaknesses because role-playing gave potential activists “an idea of what to expect and how to react in the best way . . . Mistakes are less likely later on”.<sup>12</sup> The scenes that were simulated included how good black citizens dealt with white landlords and the threat of eviction, the right way to approach their congressmen, what to do if a barbershop refused to cut black hair, how to practice good manners in court, how to protect the body during a sit-in, how to hold cordial committee meetings, how to ensure an orderly picket line, and how to avoid having a demonstration transform into a riot.<sup>13</sup> The different scenes allowed the liberal project to test blacks on what they could handle. Some activists may exhibit self-restraint to shouts of ‘nigger’ but not to police batons, or vice versa. It was also important to make mistakes and identify one’s limits in the simulations before engaging real demonstrations. Regardless of the situation, the repetitive role-playing and the repetitive simulations fixed good black citizenship with national black political representation. Cultural practices can be mastered to the point that movements and motions appear instinctive.<sup>14</sup>

The workshops provided outlets for managing the conflicting emotions produced by protesting. This included how to manage the highs, the lows, the burnout, and avoiding the desires, temptations, and satisfactions associated with revenge. Role-playing provided an outlet for the right way to:

Get rid of tensions. It is important, when in action, to keep tensions under control . . . People ‘crack’ under strain and ‘blow up.’ After a while, some begin to suffer the equivalent of ‘battle fatigue.’ Obviously this presents a real danger if it takes place in an actual situation. In the workshop the opportunity is created to get rid of tensions before the action.<sup>15</sup>

Having a safe outlet to release emotions guarded against long-term emotional and bodily fatigue. The tired body, or the physically beaten body, was susceptible to mistakes. Emotional fatigue and feeling ‘burned out’ increased the possibility of mistakes, loss of interest, and wavering

commitment to the movement. Therefore, role-playing was advantageous for both the novice and seasoned veteran civil rights workers. For the novice, it was a technique to keep tensions resulting from anger, outrage, and resentment from slipping to bodily practices. For the civil rights veteran, it was a way to express tensions, by expelling the emotional outbursts in scripted yelling and/or hitting, or by reinforcing the commitment to good black citizenship through the repetition of affective control practice.

Role-playing required blacks to perform the roles of bad whites and good blacks, meaning they had to be the performer and audience during the simulation. One technique built into role-playing was taking on the role of other, "to understand your opponent. By playing opponents' roles, the worker gets to feel how the opponent thinks and feels. This will be of tremendous value in the real situation, because the worker will be better able to make judgments as to possible reactions to various tactics".<sup>16</sup> Playing the role of the bad white also helped blacks to destabilize white citizenship into good and bad white citizenship. They were forced to ask themselves how much of the insults were shouted for self-relief, for marginalizing blacks, or because other whites expected them to. How did whites who did not shout or participate in violence perceive the protests? Were they supportive in their silence? Performing the role of whites helped blacks understand the multiple interpretations open to whites and thereby reinforced why it was necessary to counter with good black citizenship.

The role of the audience was not just to act out bad white responses, but to judge and confirm if activists were ready to participate in a demonstration. This required the audience to observe while they acted. The manual stated, "The audience must be cautioned not to laugh or react. They are the observers and will be asked to evaluate and comment after the 'scenario' is concluded".<sup>17</sup> Audience members had to be serious because they were responsible for making the simulation 'more real'. The simulation depended on the audience staying in character and being mean and threatening. Audiences had to control their own affective responses such as laughter, crying, or outrage. They had to refrain from appearing condescending or demeaning because it made them external to the performance.

While role-playing provided blacks an opportunity to test themselves on how far they could be pushed and remain calm, the members of SNCC and SCLC carried and read manuals on other ways to practice good black citizenship in between protests. In addition to booklets on how best to train new leaders, non-violent periodicals circulated throughout SNCC, indeed, through all of the civil rights movement. One such periodical, *Theory and Practice of Civil Disobedience*, was written and published by New Hampshire pacifist Arthur Harvey.<sup>18</sup> Harvey first published this periodical in July 1961 with a print run of 105 copies. By December 1961, it was in its seventh printing totaling 5,070 copies. While the periodical discussed a general theory of non-violence, it also outlined a set of practices in relation to civil disobedience and Christian virtue. Civil disobedience emphasized the

importance of controlling one's emotions by limiting the body's exposure to external stimulus. Indeed, the peace movement understood that the key to practicing non-violence, and in turn, creating a more just society, lay in the problem of emotions. Early pacifists, frustrated with the continued escalation of violence after World War 1, championed meditation and using sport as an 'emotional outlet' and alternative to violence.<sup>19</sup>

Harvey equated non-violence with religious asceticism, where mastering non-violence equated to avoiding or limiting pleasures that tempted, and thus corrupted the body. Harvey described a list of temptations to master, including "pleasure-seeking, luxury, ease, wealth and power should be avoided; self-restraint, simplicity, physical labor and identification with the lowest classes through service—all these strengthen nonviolence".<sup>20</sup> Practicing non-violence required monastic devotion. It could not be activated as needed. The non-violent person must constantly exercise power over the self, by practicing embodied self-restraint, to elevate his- or herself from others. Harvey notes non-involvement: "In social terms this attitude has effect. The practice of celibacy and vegetarianism, for example, strongly suggests that sex and meat-eating are inferior types of behavior—at least to many observers who look for values in the attitudes and conduct of others".<sup>21</sup> The idealized non-violent subject mastered all temptations that indicate inferior behavior—including eliminating dietary practices of consuming animals and refraining from sexual practices. Mastery over these 'worldly' temptations distinguished and transformed the pacifist into a symbol for others to emulate. In short, non-violence was the effect of good black citizenship.

## **Public Demonstrations and the Media**

The challenge for the liberal project was having blacks reflect good black citizenship in all of their public activities. Indeed, good black civic ethics organized all engagement in the civil sphere, not just the confrontational and direct action portions of marching, parading, picketing, and performing vigils. Black volunteers that reflected good black citizenship regardless of the immediate white response prevented white opposition from discrediting the movement because of past bad behavior. One method to ensure a unitary collective identity was either through "silence, or singing in unison".<sup>22</sup> Collective singing was also taught at the citizenship schools and workshops. Instructors taught activists the songs they were permitted to sing. Collective singing and silence was a form of power over the body that produced a group effect. Exercising control over the voice—its pitch, decibel, and tone—reduces the chances of any one individual acting out and polluting the group identity. During boycotts, the liberal project demanded that all participants appear neat and orderly at all times. When organizing a picket line, "expect participants to walk erectly and not slouch, call out, laugh loudly, or use profanity; smoking may be ruled out in some

situations".<sup>23</sup> Control over one's vocal cords was linked with overall good bodily postures and movements.

The civil rights movement was the first social movement that was extensively filmed because it coincided with the post-war technological innovations that made radio and television common in American households. King's speeches were broadcast on local radio stations. Civil rights leaders went on NBC's *Meet the Press*. When southern whites attacked blacks, it led off the national nightly news. Whites, especially the White Citizen's Councils, also took their anti-civil rights messages beyond print by sponsoring radio debates and made films on why segregation was good for blacks and whites. However, we should not confuse the medium with the message, or in this case, the embodied messenger. The liberal project's good black civic ethics also guided blacks on how to conduct a media interview. Advice included:

Watch your language. Use English that makes sense to the community in which you are working. Watch your appearance. Appearance is a communicating device. You cannot expect people to raise their own standards of cleanliness, or look up to you as a leader, if you act like a slob. The civil rights worker gives up some of his private rights when he joins the movement.<sup>24</sup>

What the body looked like was more important than what the body said. The liberal project understood that whites interpreted what was said, how it was said, and who said it. Blacks understood that they had the potential to influence the national audience only to the extent that the black speaker reflected good black citizenship. The importance of the media was how the liberal project used it rather than its expansion or existence.

### **Bodies and Police Violence**

The white southern power structure used police violence to reproduce their control over the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the community. However, their liberal use of police violence proved to be their biggest weakness. The irony of the police violence was that the police have the legitimate use of violence, but they did not have the moral power of interpretation rooted in the discourse of civil society. While picketing, sit-ins, and media appearances were important to disseminate good black symbolic citizenship claims, white police violence provided an ideal opportunity to set up a good black/bad white binary because it questioned the moral authority around police power, and thus, state power. Withstanding police violence without lashing out and deviating from the good black script was the ultimate test for the liberal project. Public demonstrations placed the black body, and subsequently the entire civil rights movement, at risk because it exposed the body to physical

punishment. The immediate risk was the demonstration transforming into a riot. Rather than good blacks exposing an unjust southern society, rioting would legitimate further police violence and end the black movement. The liberal project's good black symbolic citizenship claims activated the moral power embedded in civil society to resist the juridical power of the state by establishing the good black/bad white binary.

To ensure that blacks would maintain good black citizenship in spite of police violence, the liberal project instructed blacks how to protect the body by emphasizing reinterpreting pain, minimizing emotions, and maintaining a purposeful and orderly performance. First, the liberal projected implemented lessons from James Lawson's non-violent workshops. Lawson said that when meeting physical attack, "There are two nonviolent reactions to a physical attack. One is to stand up to it and try to make eye contact with the attackers; the other is to fall down and cover up".<sup>25</sup> Lawson suggested that civil rights activists should follow the second technique of covering up and protecting the body when attacked. Covering up:

It is intended to protect the most vital parts of the body, through adopting a crouching position with hands over the head and ears, while lying on the ground. If a buddy is undergoing severe attack, and is on the ground, it is often wise to place yourself between the attackers and the victim by means of falling over the victim, face down, approximating the position of a person doing a 'push-up' on the 'up' part, but keeping your face down and tucked into your chest.<sup>26</sup>

Covering up was a technique of absorbing physical blows to limit the amount of physical punishment. Learning how to take physical punishment changed the sensations of pain. Understanding that one was taking a blow for the movement and the betterment of all blacks made it easier to practice self-restraint.

Police violence varies by spatial proximity. Intimate police violence, such as a direct blow from a police nightstick, bat, or fist, required an increase in individual self-restraint because the personal nature of the attack allows one to enter into a temporary relationship with the perpetrator. There were certain tricks blacks could employ to assist them to endure such police violence. One was wearing multiple layers of clothes in a way that each layer provided padding.<sup>27</sup> However, activists could not layer clothes for protection to the extent that it affected an individual's personal appearance. While a helmet and football pads may have provided the most optimal levels of bodily protection, too much protection would have made blacks racially threatening and thus appear deserving of police violence. The body had to be exposed enough in order to be used as a political weapon. Therefore, the manual suggested that other individuals situate their body in between that of the victim and the attacker. Absorbing physical punishment for a friend, sacrificing one's body, is a selfless act and would strengthen bonds between

protesters. It also depersonalized the intimate violence and decreased the probability of a protester taking it personally. A general form of violence, such as shooting tear gas into a crowd, was not as intimate, but still required understanding the best bodily response to minimize chaos. When the Dallas County sheriff's office shot tear gas at members of SNCC as they attempted to cross the Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, doctors working with SNCC shouted instructions on what to do to remain calm: "You think you're blinded and the danger is you'll panic and rub your eyes. Don't rub your eyes. You'll be blinded temporarily. Don't panic".<sup>28</sup> While bad whites and the police may have enjoyed the legitimate use of police violence, the liberal project ultimately made it their biggest weakness.

In sum, the liberal project dispensed good black civic ethics to instruct black activists how to reflect good black citizenship in relation to bad whites. Non-violence was the effect of the performativity of good black citizenship. Good black citizenship could not be reduced to non-violence because the appearance and response of the black body conveyed meanings to whites that were independent of the question of violence. However, as I will show in the next section, good black citizenship was not enough. The movement had to establish the good black/bad white binary.

### **THE SOUTHERN WHITE RESPONSE: THE GOOD BLACK/BAD WHITE BINARY**

Because of the role-playing simulations and workshops, the liberal project ensured that activists maintained good black citizenship during their embodied performances. Therefore, the black response was constant in each protest. Indeed, the only variations we see in the liberal project were the forms and combination of protest—sit-ins, marches, or boycotts. What differed was the white response. The civil rights gains were not linear nor were they a given. On the occasions where whites did not reflect bad white citizenship, the movement did not make any gains. Even on the occasions where whites did reflect bad citizenship, the success of the protests was laced with paradox. Whereas the early struggles for integration made some local impact, they did nothing to change white control over the regional and national political and cultural structures. National gains, in the form of civil rights legislation, made racial discrimination formally illegal, but did not end the local practice of discrimination pertaining to jobs and access to state welfare programs.

The shape of the white response was patterned by the broader post-war struggle to economically and politically modernize the South.<sup>29</sup> The struggle to modernize the South can be simplified between proponents of the old South and supporters of the new South. The old South were the white agrarian elites, whose power was rooted in land ownership and control over the agricultural section of the economy, and the industrialists who

controlled the manufacturing sector. In contrast, the new South were the new liberal business class, whose power was rooted in the service sector of the economy, including retail, advertisement, finance, and new industries like aluminum and technology. While the new South was more moderate in racial matters than the old South, they did not support civil rights legislation. The new South was more concerned with figuring out how to minimally integrate blacks into the new southern economy so as not to jeopardize federal money and northern industrial expansion. Indeed, by the late 1950s the new South whites understood that overt 'Jim Crow'-style racism was bad for business. The southern industrialists benefited from the northern expansion of economic capital, severed ties with the agrarians by 1962, and emerged as an independent political force. Thus, by the mid-1960s, the old South/new South struggles were a political struggle between the industrial elites and the growing service sector.

The tensions between the old South and new South produced the form and style of the white response to the civil rights movement. Just as it is a mistake to assume a monolithic black movement, it is a mistake to assume a monolithic white response. Each response corresponded to the normative idea of what the South should look like, not the instrumental or pragmatic strategy of winning or defeating the movement. To illustrate, I will compare three cases between 1961 and 1965—the Albany Movement, Birmingham Movement, and the Selma Movement. I will explain 1) that non-violence was effective only because it was coupled with good black citizenship and deployed against bad white adversaries, 2) how minimizing bad white practices hurt the liberal project and divided white segregationists, and conversely, 3) how bad white performances helped the civil rights movement and strengthened the resolve of the white segregationists.

### **The Albany Movement**

Albany, Georgia is a rural community in the southwest part of the state. Georgia went through many structural changes in response to the increased economic and political influence of Atlanta. The key change was the end of the state's 'county unit' system that gave the less populated rural areas a disproportionate amount of political influence over the state at the expense of the more populated urban areas.<sup>30</sup> Atlanta was the idealized new South city because its diversified modern economy was organized around carbonated beverage manufacturer Coca-Cola, airline giant Delta Airlines, and was home to a branch of the Federal Reserve Bank. Amid the demise of the county unit system and Atlanta's emergence as a regional economic center, Albany's civic leaders sought to diversify their rural economy. Albany's economy was based primarily on pecan and peanut farming. Local leaders wanted to attract new industries in defense, textile, candy, farm equipment, and furniture manufacturing to Albany to strengthen its political and economic position relative to the region.



The Albany Movement's origins are rooted in local reform organizations like the NAACP comprised of local black teachers, preachers, and business leaders.<sup>31</sup> In 1961, SNCC activists Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagan entered Albany. They networked with the existing black groups, organized meetings, and set up workshops to diffuse the system of good black civic ethics. What made the Albany Movement different from past movements was its goal of ending all forms of racial segregation instead of ending a specific form of segregation. Otherwise, the forms of protest were familiar. Blacks marched, boycotted, and performed sit-ins at the bus terminal and civic buildings.

It was during the Albany Movement that the liberal project first encountered a good white response. Unlike other southern cities, Albany had an existing centralized political structure that consisted of a mayor and city commission. They did not face opposition from the planter class. Albany's existing political culture nurtured a working relationship between the different groups based on the common objective of wrapping an idealized new South image around the city. This working relationship limited tensions with the mayor, Asa Kelly, and the city commission negotiated over how to police the protesters. Albany's police chief, Laurie Pritchett, noted the city commission objective was preserving Albany's image as a good place to do business in southwest Georgia.<sup>32</sup> The problem for Pritchett was how to police the civil rights protests, not to defeat the movement, but to minimize any adverse effects the demonstrations would have on Albany's desired new South image. Although SNCC continued organizing and protesting, Pritchett's good white response frustrated the black students. The lack of any tangible gains forced the Albany Movement to seek assistance from SCLC in July 1962. Twenty-four hours after he arrived, King led a march from the Shiloh Baptist Church to City Hall. However, even King's presence did not matter when confronted with the good white police.

Pritchett's police response was in stark contrast to the white response in Montgomery, the sit-ins, and the Freedom Rides. Pritchett and Kelly collected information on the liberal project to familiarize themselves with the movement's strategy. Pritchett studied some of King's writings noting that, "I researched Dr. King. I read about his early days in Montgomery, his methods there. I read that he was a great follower of Gandhi's".<sup>33</sup> Pritchett understood that the liberal project was different from previous civil rights and labor struggles. He also recognized that recent civil rights protests exploited stereotypical southern violence. In order to neutralize the movement's good black embodied performances, he focused his attention to his own police force. SNCC member James Forman summed up Pritchett's good white approach: "Arrest quickly, quietly, and imprison. Move before white mobs can form, avoid brutal actions which can mobilize national support. Play it cool".<sup>34</sup> By familiarizing themselves with the liberal project, Pritchett fashioned a police response designed to prevent civil rights protesters from exploiting the brutish southern stereotypes. This is not to say that white violence disappeared. Rather, white public violence

was minimized and the police response shifted from controlling bodies to controlling space.

Good black citizenship compelled a change in whites evidenced in how they focused inward before addressing the civil rights protesters. Pritchett's good white response relied on four interrelated practices: 1) surveillance, 2) the non-threatening presentation of the police, 3) the use of space to decentralize the movement, and 4) recoding blacks as 'nationals'. First, surveillance meant the ubiquitous monitoring of protest practice so that police could intervene prior to the protest escalating. Pritchett relied on police surveillance to make efficient arrests rather than a symbolic public arrest. An efficient arrest meant arresting the protesters and removing them as quickly as possible without incident. A symbolic public arrest was arresting protesters to send a message to the movement that the city was in control. For Pritchett, the problem with symbolic public arrests was the timing. Arresting after the protest assembled provided images for the media to capture on film. To illustrate, on July 23, 1962 Pritchett placed officers at and around the Shiloh Baptist Church to spy on a civil rights meeting. Because the police presence adversely affected the crowd's emotions, creating tensions between blacks and the police, Pritchett removed the visible show of officers at 8 pm. After the meeting let out around 10 pm, Minister Vincent Harding led a small band of civil rights activists down the street, stopping in front of City Hall. Pritchett requested they leave at 11:05 pm. When the protesters refused, the police returned at 11:20 pm and arrested the protesters for failing to obey an officer and obstructing a sidewalk.<sup>35</sup> The police observed this procession in a little over three hours, and it took them fifteen minutes to arrest the black protesters and clear the streets.

Second, Pritchett modified the bodies of the police. He instructed them to dress in standard police clothing rather than riot gear to limit the visual images of racially intimidating white police. He also limited the number of Georgia state troopers to 65 to minimize the symbolic presence of force and maintain local control over the demonstration. At one point during a protest, some black onlookers not affiliated with the movement threw bottles and rocks at the police. Pritchett's police did not respond with overt violence, thus prompting praise for Albany's police force in northern newspapers.<sup>36</sup> When combined with the legitimate use of violence embedded in the police, Pritchett's good white response communicated the idea that the South did not have a race problem, they had things under control, and it was safe for doing business here.

Third, Pritchett used space to create physical and symbolic distance between the protesters in order to control the temporal dimensions of the protest. He spread out the imprisoned activists to minimize communication between jailed protesters. Pritchett noted that he

made preparations that at no time would any [protesters] be housed in our facilities in Albany or Dougherty County. I had made arrangements, and we had it on a map—Lee County, which was ten miles,

and then we'd go out twenty-five miles, go out fifty miles, a hundred miles—and all these places had agreed to take the prisoners . . . We sent personnel along to see that they were not mistreated . . . stayed with 'em in the jails to see that nobody in the other counties mistreated or mishandled 'em.<sup>37</sup>

By dispersing imprisoned protesters throughout the county, civil rights lawyers and allies were forced to travel back and forth between jails, and thus slowed down the movement. Separating the protesters minimized the potential to create social bonds between activists. Indeed, the movement planned for and used imprisonment to create solidarity by holding refresher courses and discussion groups on non-violence while in prison. Additionally, Pritchett was aware of the importance of where blacks protested. He limited arrests in front of symbolic architectural and spatial locations, denying the civil rights movement a 'backdrop' for their protest.<sup>38</sup> When he ordered arrests in front of City Hall, he made sure that the police did not 'mishandle' the protesters. For instance, police made sweeping arrests of 250 marchers in the demonstration led by King on December 16, 1961 and arrested 75 visiting preachers while conducting a prayer vigil outside City Hall on August 28, 1962 without a violent incident.<sup>39</sup> The efficient arrest performed by good white police denied the liberal project from recoding local spaces into symbols of racial oppression.

The last thing Pritchett did was reconceptualize blacks as nationals rather than as marginalized and despised subjects. Unlike citizenship, which guarantees individuals rights and protection from an abusive state, nationals may claim protection from the state without receiving formal legal protection (i.e. rights). In part, we can understand designating blacks as nationals as part of the civil rights movement's 'liminal' moment towards citizenship rights as the South experimented with different forms and intensities of racial integration. We see this in how Pritchett approached the handling of King. King staged his arrest and subsequent imprisonment to signify the unfair treatment of southern blacks. Pritchett, aware of how King's presence drew media attention, neutralized King's self-imprisonment strategy by ordering his release. Pritchett claimed an anonymous "well-dressed Negro male" posted bail. This created doubt about King's intentions, commitment, and credibility in the black movement, especially with SNCC. King recalled that his response after being notified of his release was,

'Well Chief, we want to serve this time, we feel we owe it to ourselves and the seven-hundred and some-odd people of this community who still have these cases hanging over them.' His [Pritchett] only response then was 'God knows, Reverend, I don't want you in my jail.' This was one time that I was out of jail and I was not happy to be out.<sup>40</sup>

The handling of King as a political prisoner not subject to the types of abuses blacks typically faced in prison, along with ensuring no overt or

excessive physical abuse for all imprisoned blacks, illustrated how the good white response neutralized good black citizenship and made non-violence a non-factor.

Thus, organizing the Albany police response around good white citizenship represented a break from previous southern police practices that sought to defeat a social movement by 'destroying' it through violence and intimidation. Unlike the Montgomery Movement and Freedom Rides, the outcome of the Albany Movement produced no national or local policy changes. King ultimately negotiated a settlement with Albany's city leaders that led to no changes in the local white power structure. The local Albany Movement remained together and continued to operate as a voting registration group. They were confronted with the same good white response from Pritchett. However, as I will explain next, Pritchett's approach, despite being well known throughout the South, was not embraced by other southern locales. That Pritchett's approach was not desirable to the liberal project is obvious. Why Pritchett's approach was not attractive to other southern leaders is another question. If we understood political culture as rational, then it makes no sense, and we could explain the outcomes in Birmingham and Selma as products of rogue elites. However, the style of winning was more important than just winning. And the style of winning was connected to the larger normative cultures represented by either the bad white or good white citizenship. To let blacks protest and limit bad white violence was an admission that the old 'white' South was dead.

### **The Birmingham Movement**

Birmingham, warmly described as 'Bombingham' by the civil rights movement, is located in Jefferson County, Alabama. Birmingham was firmly in the political and economic throes of the Big Mules. The Big Mules, the executives in the coal and iron industry, were the most influential group in Birmingham and the state of Alabama.<sup>41</sup> The Big Mules gained political control over Jefferson County by backing James Simpson as their local state representative in 1926. In 1935, Simpson helped pass civil service reform, also known as the 'patronage system', designed to deregulate public civil service and make it possible to hire, fire, and promote through patronage.<sup>42</sup> The patronage system applied only to Jefferson County, not to any other part of Alabama, and therefore politically insulated Jefferson County from the rest of the state.<sup>43</sup> Jefferson County's patronage system produced quasi-cultural and political sovereignty for the Big Mules. Because the Big Mules resided in the suburb of Mountain Brook, not the city of Birmingham, they were not concerned with urban decay or Birmingham's poor civic image. They blocked efforts to diversify and expand the service sector economy in favor of specialized tax breaks for industry and anti-union and pro-segregation stances designed to strengthen industrial manufacturing. There were minimal tensions between labor and capital because the Klan was politically aligned with the Big Mules.<sup>44</sup>

Based on their perceived shortcomings in Albany and Birmingham's reputation for violence, the liberal project came to Birmingham in 1963. They wanted to use the city as a test case to make a national claim for rights, specifically, the right to equal employment opportunities. Birmingham would test blacks' ability to maintain good black citizenship, but it was better than dealing with another Pritchett. One adjustment the liberal project made was the plan to use black children in the protest. Wyatt Walker calculated the number of steps and length of time it would take both an adult's and child's body to march to the courthouse from different city blocks and intersections. The liberal project also tested the children to see if they were capable of reflecting good black citizenship under duress.<sup>45</sup> The liberal project's planned use of children indicates that they were not entirely sure if Connor would provide the necessary bad white response. Children, an almost universal sign of innocence and purity, enhanced the good black position because any form of police mistreatment could be read as a bad white response. This adjustment in the field was controversial at the time, and there was no assurance that it would work. Looking back, this established some of most visually striking images of the movement.

Curiously, Connor invited Pritchett to Birmingham for advisement on how to police the developing civil rights protests. This was surprising in a historical sense because Connor's reputation was based on his use of violence to stop labor unrest in Birmingham's steel mills in the late 1940s. He also oversaw the violent beatings of the Freedom Riders as they attempted to travel into Alabama. During the meeting, Pritchett advised Connor to minimize violence and to protect King at all times. Recalling his meetings with Connor, Pritchett said that:

In Albany we had a bodyguard with him [King] at all times . . . We afforded him protection. This caused some criticism that we were payin' tax-payers' money to protect this man, and I felt it was proper. As I told them, if this man was killed in Albany, Georgia, the fires would never cease—that if he were ever killed in any city that the fires would be there.<sup>46</sup>

Connor was initially receptive to Pritchett's good white approach. Connor limited the amount of police violence, and by all accounts, the liberal project was having a difficult time building a sustained movement in Birmingham. Segregationist political and economic leaders, including Federal Judge Clarence Allgood, advised Connor on the merits of his continue restraint. Press reports questioned King's leadership. Two Alabama council members called off negotiations with the movement. Theoretically, the civil rights movement could have ended in 1963. However, the logic of bad white citizenship prevented Connor from continuing the application of Pritchett's approach. The style and manner in which the civil rights movement was policed had broader regional symbolic and political importance than the just defeating the movement.

Connor's subsequent response is well known by now. He used fire hoses to stop good blacks from marching. The pressure from the fire hoses ripped the clothes off the protesters, and the bark off neighboring trees. He unleashed police dogs on marches and imprisoned children. The problem of viewing Connor as a 'rogue elite' who continued to use violence for future gains despite getting rational advice not to neglects an understanding of the material and symbolic aspects of bad white citizenship. To organize a good white response like Pritchett's would have betrayed the political culture that empowered Connor and the Big Mules. Therefore, what I want to focus on is how Connor organized his police response around bad white citizenship.

Whereas Pritchett focused on surveillance and letting blacks protest to a certain degree, Connor focused on isolation. Connor isolated the civil rights protests within the black neighborhoods to prevent the protest from spreading throughout the city. Connor erected physical boundaries—road-blocks in front of a white tank—to ensure blacks remained in the 'black part' of town, at 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and away from City Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> Street. The isolation practices became fixated on protecting boundary lines as opposed to surveillance practices fixated on bodies. In turn, the isolation practices produced 'blind spots' that forced the police to act and arrest only after the protest was under way. The isolation practices worked to the civil rights demonstrators' advantage because it produced 'free spaces' for meetings, deliberation, and pedagogy to reinforce the good black citizenship. In contrast to Pritchett's surveillance and jailing practices that dispersed the protesters throughout the county, Connor housed arrested protesters in makeshift jails located within Birmingham's municipal boundaries.

Connor also made Birmingham's police racially threatening. Besides using the police dogs and fire hoses, the Birmingham police dressed in full riot gear topped with white World War 2-style helmets. The style of dress coupled with the use of violence turned each arrest into a public spectacle because the threatening style of the police sharply contrasted to the good black embodied performances. Rather than control the environment, the threatening police presence heightened emotional tensions, induced a riot, and prompted federal intervention to reestablish social order in Birmingham. Combined with the expectations of violence and constant police intervention whenever blacks congregated, Connor's bad white policing allowed the movement to do more with less, and increased the movement's probability for success, despite the liberal project's difficulty in recruiting local black involvement.<sup>47</sup>

Connor's bad white police approach attempted to criminalize the movement, especially King, Fred Shuttlesworth, and the black youth involved in the protests.<sup>48</sup> The logic behind criminalizing and targeting political leaders is tied to the logic that to stop a challenge for power, those in power must 'cut off the head' of a movement by targeting the movement's leaders. Therefore, Connor directed police violence toward Shuttlesworth, which

sent him to the hospital.<sup>49</sup> Connor imprisoned King for a prolonged period, where King scripted the infamous “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. Connor imprisoned black teenagers who participated in the marches. He jailed approximately 2,425 students at the city’s Boys Home and local 4-H Club, including 25 children, ages 10–15, who marched down 19<sup>th</sup> Street toward City Hall while holding a banner that read “Love God and Thy Neighbor”.<sup>50</sup> This differed from Pritchett’s approach that used Albany’s juridical apparatuses to lecture underage protesters on the undesirability of civic participation in social movements rather than jail them.

Birmingham’s bad white response provided the ideal symbolic adversary for the liberal project’s embodied good black performances. Reflecting on events during the movement, SCLC director Wyatt Tee Walker said, “I prayed that he’d keep trying to stop us . . . Birmingham would have been lost if Bull had let us go down to the City Hall and pray; if he’d had let us do that and stepped aside, what else would be new? There would be no movement, no publicity. But all he could see was stopping us before we got there”.<sup>51</sup> Whereas the deployment of the good black embodied performances had a strategic element, they cannot be reduced to strategy, framing, or non-violence. If it were just strategy or frame, the movement would not have screened applicants who embodied good black citizenship. If it were just about non-violence, they could have used any black protester and waited for the white violence. Yet, non-violence without the good black citizenship would not fuse the movement with good white audiences and produce civil rights legislation.

### **The Selma Movement**

The Selma Movement was the climax of the civil rights movement, the moment at which the movement enjoyed its biggest success, and the point it began to decline. It was the liberal project’s last legislative victory until Johnson passed the 1968 Civil Rights Act on fair housing after the assassination of King and as homage to King’s work. The Selma Movement traces its origins to the NAACP’s effort to fight the ‘Fisk Trials’, and voter registration groups, like the Dallas County Voter’s League.<sup>52</sup> In concert with the Dallas County Voter’s League, SNCC began organizing Selma’s black population and mapping the local community’s birth, death, and infant mortality rates in 1963.<sup>53</sup> SNCC held meetings, led demonstrations, and networked with local high school students as it produced the social capital necessary to shape a unitary good black response. SCLC arrived in 1965 to launch a voting rights campaign because they predicted Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark would organize a police response the same way Connor did, and thus, the bad white response would prompt more federal intervention and help convince whites that voting rights legislation was necessary.

The key to understanding the outcome of Selma is how the tension between good white and bad white citizenship produced two different

police responses that were simultaneously implemented at different levels of government. The county and state level used the bad white approach and the city of Selma used the good white approach. Dallas County Sheriff Clark and Al Lingo, Alabama director of public safety and head of the state police, represented bad white citizenship. Clark's support was rooted in rural Dallas County. Lingo, on the other hand, reported directly to George Wallace, the pro-segregationist governor whose political career was based on his public opposition to racial integration. The municipal officials in Selma, specifically public safety director Wilson Baker and Mayor Joseph Smitherman, drew from Pritchett's good white police model. Baker was not a native Selma resident, but the new South white business class, whose influence over Alabama's political affairs had been growing since the late 1950s, supported him.<sup>54</sup> After Birmingham, Alabama's liberal business classes became aware of how being defined as an old South city negatively affected their ability to secure federal and northern capital.

By 1965, the tie between 'white' and 'good citizenship' had unraveled. This was evident in how tensions arose between competing segregationist groups over what constituted a bad civic image. On the one hand, former Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett addressed a Mississippi White Citizens' Council meeting on the topic of Mississippi's civic image, noting, "There are a lot of people who have been talking about the need to improve the image of Mississippi. But let me ask you people here . . . is there anything wrong with Mississippi's image? No."<sup>55</sup> In contrast, the Selma-based Dallas County White Citizens' Council placed an ad in the *Selma Times-Journal* to recruit members around the idea that the Citizens' Council could prevent the civil rights movement from turning Selma into Birmingham. Rhetorically, the ad stated, "Ask yourself this important question: what have I personally done to maintain segregation? Is it worth four dollars to prevent a 'Birmingham' here? Is it worth four dollars to you to prevent sit-ins, mob marches and wholesale Negro voter registration in Selma?"<sup>56</sup> The Selma Citizens' Council appealed to whites based on its potential to maintain racial segregation and economically revitalize the city.

Selma's good white response differed from Pritchett's good white response because the liberal business groups engaged in a war of words to define the Selma as good and the liberal project as provocateurs of violence and bad citizenship because they incited bad white responses. The fight on the public relations level was very different from using police. Rather than use the presumed legitimacy of state violence, they used the power of 'marketing' to advertise Selma as the victims of a civil rights demonstration. The liberal business class used the Dallas County Chamber of Commerce to publish a pamphlet in 1965 titled "Selma Alabama: The 'Old' and 'New' South" that attempted to market a modern Selma. The pamphlet shows off the architectural heritage of Selma alongside new monuments, including an air force base and the upscale Hotel Albert. It was designed to produce a prospective and possible future idealized Selma.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the Dallas County



Chamber of Commerce also produced and distributed 100,000 copies of a booklet titled “The Story of Selma or ‘The Other Side of the Coin’”.<sup>58</sup> David Lawrence wrote the main editorial titled “The Wrong Way”, which associated Dallas County with the side of democratic order. He accused King of provoking violence: “The race question will never be solved with a policeman’s club anymore than by ‘sit-ins’ or other incitements to disorder and mob violence.”<sup>59</sup> Lawrence sought to silence the debate over racial equality by switching the topic to the presence of violence. Focusing on the presences of violence simultaneously distinguished good whites from blacks and old South whites, and linked police violence with good black citizenship to discredit both. By making the debate over the presence of, not cause of, violence, he created a method for discrediting blacks’ claims for equality without acknowledging the claim.

SCLC’s arrival at Selma changed the tone of the white response. For instance, when SNCC originally set up operations in Selma in 1963, it documented how Clark organized and deputized a posse of 300 to 500 men “dressed in old army fatigues, and armed with pistols, rifles and shotguns” in addition to the existing police force.<sup>60</sup> However, because of the national media attention that accompanied King after Birmingham and the March on Washington, SCLC was in a better position to transform local forms of bad white violence and racial intimidation into a national referendum. In contrast to Connor, who sought advisement from a fellow southern sheriff, Baker and Smitherman requested the advisement of the US Justice Department’s Community Relations Service (CRS), headed by Burke Marshall. Robert Kennedy originally sent Marshall to Albany to study the liberal project and develop subsequent police practice to stop it.<sup>61</sup> Despite the Kennedys’ legacy of being pro-civil rights, they wanted the movement stopped for political reasons. The movement was causing white southern Democrats to leave the party. In essence, CRS based their advice on Pritchett’s good white response designed to neutralize the liberal project’s capability to create a national response. Baker adopted the CRS model because it correlated with the new South objectives to produce a good civic image of Selma. In contrast to Baker, and similar to Connor, Clark and Lingo rejected the CRS’s advice. Similar to Connor, Clark initially sought to limit the use of bad white police practices once SCLC arrived. Also similar to Connor, Clark’s restraint did not last long even though his initial calm demeanor prompted SCLC to explore alternative locales.<sup>62</sup> The logic of bad white citizenship coupled with additional coercion from the state of Alabama to avenge past defeats ensured the application of a bad white police response.

The two separate police styles that were implemented simultaneously during the demonstrations created a contradictory police response. Baker used good white practices, especially the ideas of surveillance and managing the temporal dimensions of the protest. He instructed civil rights protesters to line up in groups of two or three, with space between each group, on the sidewalk, to slow down the pace of the march to the courthouse.

During the same demonstration, Clark stationed himself in front of the courthouse, forcing black protesters to line up in the alley behind the courthouse and enter one at a time through the back door. Once contained in the alley, Clark began harassing and arresting blacks. Wallace ordered the state police to intervene in the demonstration despite Baker's success at frustrating the liberal project. When protesters attempted to cross the Pettus Bridge on their first march from Selma to Montgomery, Clark and Lingo responded with police (and posse members) armed with tear gas, electric cattle prods, and batons. Some police were on horseback. The violent spectacle became known as 'Bloody Sunday' because of the amount and intensity of police violence captured on film and broadcast over network television. During the violence, Baker sought to get blacks to 'safety' in the church, where he told leaders that the state troopers "just took it out of their hands."<sup>63</sup> The following day, state police constructed a border by the church. In this case, they strung a clothesline across the street in the black ghetto 200 yards from the chapel, and blocked the road leading from the church to the courthouse. Baker, however, proceeded to cut down the clothesline, which had become a new symbol and location of protest, and allowed blacks to march to the courthouse in a symbolic gesture of 'opening up' Selma to blacks. Indeed, violence was not reserved only for black civil rights activists. After Bloody Sunday, a mob of whites killed James Reeb, a white minister, after leaving a local diner. An unknown group of bad whites killed Violet Liuzzo, a white woman from Michigan volunteering in Selma, while driving a young black civil rights worker from Selma back to Montgomery. The deaths of the white activists induced a stronger federal response than deaths of any of the black activists, a point not lost on SNCC.<sup>64</sup>

The outcome of the Selma Movement signaled a decisive point for the South and the civil rights movement. Good black citizenship became synonymous with national rights, and the liberal project became wed to their good black embodied performances despite their limited results after the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which caused many blacks to seek alternative forms of political struggle. Bad white citizenship was marginalized and the industrial elites supported the new southern economic arrangement that embedded a language of race in tax cuts, privatization, and deregulation. As I argue in the book's conclusion, the marginalization of bad white citizenship was essential for the neoliberal turn in American politics.

## THE PARADOX OF VICTORY

One of the key myths surrounding the black civil rights movement was the overemphasis on non-violence as the driving force behind the movement's success. This myth is centered on a combination of King's rhetoric and the homogenization of the white response to the movement. As the cases of Albany, Birmingham, and Selma showed, non-violence was not

enough to produce the kinds of rights blacks needed. Good black citizenship required blacks to refrain from emotional outbursts and present a general appearance that made them appear racially non-threatening, and thus, sympathetic to good white audiences to obtain new rights. It was especially important that black bodies looked like good black citizens and spoke like good black citizens. Whites and blacks not involved in the movement read and interpreted the words *and* bodies they saw. While no media discourse is ever hegemonic, the performativity and embodiment of good black citizenship minimized alternative readings of the liberal project.

The fleshy and corporeal nature of the embodied performances produced new understandings on citizenship, the state, and white authority. Above all else, exercising power over the body did produce collective change in how blacks understood their social positioning in the political field. Blacks no longer feared whites and white police. This did not mean that they trusted or liked them, but the embodiment of good black citizenship changed the meanings of the sensations of white violence from fear of whites to black empowerment. While terms like black empowerment are usually reserved for the impact of black liberationists groups, the liberal project did empower blacks to overcome their fear of southern municipal officials and mistrust of the federal government to make the struggle for civic and racial inclusion possible.

The liberal project's adherence to an ethics of caution prevented them from seeking broader change. SCLC looked at the Albany Movement as an example of haste, and explained the failures in Albany as a local movement that tried to do too much at once. Even though SCLC avoided southern locales that were not stereotypic of southern violence, they continued to associate speed with haste. Therefore, they approached racial equality in a step-by-step process that had the effect of the liberal project focusing on policy instead of local changes in the distribution of power. The second reason is that local blacks were confronted with a different form of racism that was not only more subtle and color-blind, but increasingly coded in silence in supposedly racially neutral political and economic policy. The new South was the mindset that the South's civic image must be protected in order to continue securing northern industrial expansion and federal funding to replace the old agricultural sector. After 1965, most of the white South was using some form of Pritchett's good white approach to policing civil rights struggles.

The liberal project's victories were laced with paradox. Despite national attention and new rights from the states, local black conditions remained unchanged. Local blacks in Birmingham and Selma became increasingly frustrated at the lack of improvements despite new federal legislation. Whereas some bad whites were confined to the margins, the segregationists continued to press on through legislative victories. Connor remained somewhat of a segregationist folk hero for his actions, and won the statewide race as public service commissioner. George Wallace overwhelmingly won

reelection based, in part, on his developing southern strategy that blamed the federal government for intervening in Birmingham to restore peace. Yet, it was the liberal project's good black citizenship that prompted whites to change, and by exercising power over the self, the liberal project not only produced changes in white citizenship, but the change it prompted provided the point for an identifiable new South to organize around.

The emergence of good black citizenship splintered American citizenship into four distinct types—good black, good white, bad black, and bad white. The new South whites directed their efforts to define good white citizenship by embedding white privilege in social policy and hiding race in racially neutral terms. The black nationalists looked upon the splintering of black citizenship as an opportunity to steer the black movement away from their cautious approach to address the structural issues of poverty. As I will show next, while unintentional, the black nationalist's attempt to wrap black authenticity around local black political struggles transformed local activism by cementing the association between black authenticity, urban black poverty, and bad black citizenship together, and in the process, hardened the boundaries between national and local black struggles.

## 4 Black Authenticity and an Ethics of Autonomy

Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax's 1959 television documentary *The Hate that Hate Produced: The Study of the Rise of Black Racism* formally introduced the American public to Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and black nationalism.<sup>1</sup> In the documentary's introduction, Wallace characterizes the Nation of Islam as a "group of negro dissenters [that] is taking to street corner step ladders . . . to preach a gospel of hate that would set off a federal investigation if it were preached by Southern Whites."<sup>2</sup> Shapiro noted how this introduction framed the black Muslims as extremists to the American public, and thus, their political project was never taken seriously.<sup>3</sup> However, accounts of whites or the media polluting the black nationalists overlook how black nationalism was never about integrating and assimilating with the broader civic culture the nationalists defined as 'white'. The black nationalists rejected white America and the liberal project's good black citizenship. It was a revolutionary alternative meant to produce an autonomous and empowered all-black political community. Thus, despite the liberal project dominating the first half of the 1960s' public discourse on how to achieve racial equality and the media's portrayal of the Nation of Islam, the liberal project could not maintain its hold over black political representation.

Rather than a nation of good black citizens, the black nationalists suggested that blacks organize their struggle around "black authenticity". Black authenticity refers to how an idealized 'racially pure' black political agent could be achieved by rejecting anything that signified whiteness. Black authenticity was achieved through the "distance" between an idealized black culture and white culture. For Benjamin, distance created authenticity because it produced ideas and social statuses that were unattainable by the majority.<sup>4</sup> In this case, black authenticity was unattainable to whites because whites could never understand the black lived experience. Black authenticity was an embodied practice exclusive to blacks, and the black body became the point at which the black nationalists constructed a racially threatening black agent. Malcolm X in particular believed that blacks could create and maintain an authentic black existence by exercising a power over the self based on abstaining from vice, from mutilating the body, and refraining from interracial sex—all of which he identified as specific points of white culture

to resist. The black nationalist discourses of black authenticity corresponded with an overall ethics of autonomy that guided blacks on how to absolve or ‘purify’ the black body from the negative effects of white culture in order to construct an empowered black community.<sup>5</sup>

One significant difference between the two projects was the black nationalists’ insistence that struggles for equality were always organized around the racial group, and subsequently, equality was the property of racial groups. Rather than use good black citizenship to make claims for additional rights, the black nationalists used black authenticity to make claims for political autonomy. Black authenticity produced a form of black citizenship that emphasized the importance of the racial group at the expense of national citizenship. For example, the Nation of Islam felt that inclusion into American culture required blacks to be subservient to an inferior European/western culture responsible for colonialism, social vice, and deception. They rejected American citizenship and Christianity because they considered them white cultural practices. They wanted whites to fear them because they wanted whites, especially the police and social workers, to stop breaking up black families through the systems of foster care and imprisonment. Consequently, the black nationalist project was more of a project of nation building than a project of citizenship.

In this chapter, I explore how the black nationalist project introduced black authenticity to the question of black political representation. I focus on the question of how the construction of the racially threatening body communicates specific political ideologies of liberation and bad citizenship to whites and blacks. The one constant between good black citizenship and black authenticity is the black body. Therefore, the presence of race is simultaneously everything and meaningless. It is everything because one never ceases to be black, so the limits of good black citizenship is that some forms of racism will remain. It is meaningless because the causal factor is the cultural meanings corresponding to the embodiment of good black citizenship versus the embodiment of black authenticity. To illustrate this difference, I use a concept I call “figurative violence”: the idea of the body provoking fear, terror, agitation, and panic in others despite never engaging in an act of violence. Figurative violence demonstrates how a group can be defined as frightening and violent without harming another human being. The legacy of figurative violence and its relationship to black authenticity is how the bodies of urban blacks became frightening and threatening to whites, who in turn viewed the racially threatening body as evidence of the ‘cultural failures’ of blacks in poverty as a justification that urban blacks did not deserve rights and access to the welfare state.

I approach the black nationalists as an autonomous and distinctive political project within the black civil rights movement that made important contributions to American civic culture. This is a sharp departure from how other scholars have defined the black nationalists’ role in the civil rights movement. McAdam and Eyerman and Jamison credit the black

nationalists for splitting the movement and dissolving the unified organizational structure and movement identity.<sup>6</sup> Haines portrayed the black nationalists in a more sympathetic light, noting that their emergence, while destructive to the civil rights movement, helped the overall civil rights of black people by serving as a “radical flank.”<sup>7</sup> For Haines, the ‘frightening’ black Muslims made the liberal project more appealing to whites. I differ from these scholars because I view the liberal project as being in a constant tension with all race-first political movements. Therefore, the civil rights movement was never a unitary movement. The limits of the liberal project ensured that there would always be a competing political project. The nationalist’s articulation of the race-first argument took root at the margins of the black community because national gains were not translating into improved local conditions (i.e. jobs, better housing, and a voice in political matters). Therefore, there was no split, but rather, an intensification of the tensions between the two projects which made black authenticity emerge as the alternative to good black citizenship.

Although the Nation of Islam produced multiple social institutions to regulate black culture, they did not have a political wing to their organization. They strictly forbade members from voting and becoming personally involved in the civil rights movement. Therefore, I will focus primarily on how Malcolm X used discourses of black authenticity to articulate an ethics on how to make racially threatening black bodies the alternative to the liberal project’s good black citizenship. My purpose here differs from other research and scholarly work on Malcolm X. Scholarly writing on Malcolm X and the civil rights movement has focused on his use of black nationalism as a political ideology.<sup>8</sup> Others have argued that Malcolm’s ideas began to overlap with the liberal project by the time of his and King’s assassination, and they could have achieved a common ground between the two political styles.<sup>9</sup> Since Malcolm’s ideas of black authenticity did not change, I do not spend time with detailed nuances of the evolution of his thought, but rather, on his overall argument on how blacks should struggle for power and racial equality. Subsequent black nationalist groups, including SNCC and the Black Panthers, drew almost exclusively from Malcolm’s articulation of black authenticity.<sup>10</sup> In turn, black authenticity reproduced strategies that made racial inequality possible in the first place.<sup>11</sup>

## **BLACK AUTHENTICITY AND THE ETHICS OF AUTONOMY**

The origins of black nationalism pre-dates the modern black civil rights movement. Its earliest uses in America were found in the mid-1800s, when Martin Delaney challenged Frederick Douglass over the issue of integration and argued that blacks should create a separate black nation.<sup>12</sup> Marcus Garvey’s “Back to Africa Movement” accompanied the production of a

separate black culture, including all-black children's toys, as part of a political movement to empower blacks.<sup>13</sup> Black nationalism became an influential alternative to the class-first approach to racial equality in the 1930s. Detroit, Michigan, in particular, had several black nationalist groups competing for influence. They included a chapter of Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Moorish Science Temple Movement, the Nationalist Movement for the Establishment of a Forty-Ninth State, the National Union of People of African Descent, and the Nation of Islam.<sup>14</sup> Although local black nationalist groups came and went, and membership never approached the levels of the NAACP, the various groups were collectively part of a broader black nationalist political project that sought power through cultural and political sovereignty by first creating an idea of a race-first group identification.

Of the many black nationalist groups of the 1930s, only the Nation of Islam survived. One of the reasons the Nation of Islam outlasted their contemporary black nationalist peers was that they focused more on cultural changes within the black community rather than political and economic changes.<sup>15</sup> They also had a strong institutional and organizational structure. Their schools and internal police force instructed blacks how to practice black authenticity and punished them when they violated its strict rules. The Nation of Islam's "University of Islam" taught black history and how to speak Arabic. Their "Muslim Girl Training Class" trained black women on the proper way to clean a house, sew, cook a Muslim meal, and take care of children.<sup>16</sup> Their police force, which went by the name 'Fruit of Islam', was responsible for administering judgment and punishment for any Nation of Islam member who violated the group's strict cultural codes. Lincoln noted that during a trial, the Fruit of Islam read the charges then pronounced the verdict, and that the defendants were not allowed to present their case.<sup>17</sup> Punishments ranged from performing manual labor at a local Muslim temple to expulsion from the group. Violations included misusing temple funds, using narcotics, sleeping during meetings, eating/selling pork, being overweight, and disrespecting Muslim women.<sup>18</sup>

### **Abstention and the Personal Ethics of Black Authenticity**

Abstention defined the personal ethics of black authenticity. This differed from the liberal project's emphasis on blacks optimizing or enhancing their good citizenship by becoming closer to an exaggerated idealized citizen. Abstention meant distance from the same cultural ideals valued by the liberal project. Similar to the personal ethics of good black citizenship, the personal ethics of black authenticity started at the body. The practice of abstention was a form of resistance that negated, or neutralized, the influence of white culture over blacks, which the Nation of Islam blamed for the number of blacks confined to the extreme margins of urban life. Black drug addicts, drug dealers, pimps, and prostitutes were caught in a mutually



enforcing web of white vice and white state control. Black authenticity provided the way out of this trap because it was linked to an ethical system of autonomy that defined freedom and independence as something that could be achieved by abstaining from all things associated with whiteness and white culture, specifically vice and state institutions.

The personal ethics of black authenticity required blacks to purify their mind and body of the harmful effects of white culture. Purifying the self simultaneously meant purifying the group. Malcolm viewed the personal ethics of abstention as part of a broader self-help project: "We need a self-help program . . . Black nationalism is a self help philosophy. This is a philosophy that eliminates the necessity for division and argument, so that if you're black, you should be thinking black".<sup>19</sup> However, an articulation of self-help through abstention alone was not enough to wrap black authenticity around black political representation. The Nation of Islam used their institutional structure to dispense and enforce a set of authentic black personal ethics pertaining to 1) the self-regulation of 'improper' bodily pleasures, 2) the elimination of bodily mutilation, and 3) the shaping of bodily postures that represented black pride and power.

One improper desire blacks had to distance themselves from was the taste for slave foods. Changing what one eats is a form of power over the self that does not depend on access to economic or political resources. The idea behind establishing a set of dietary restrictions was to cleanse the body from the symbolic associations with slavery and southern black rural culture. Blacks could achieve the status of black authenticity only when blacks negated all associations with historical forms of white domination. Nation of Islam members were required to fast three days each month. Meals were limited to one a day, at sundown, consisting mostly of beans and vegetables. Restrictions on food sought to "eliminate physical and mental sluggishness and leaves more time for industry".<sup>20</sup> Black Muslims could not eat any hog, duck, goose, possum, or catfish. Nor could they eat black-eyed peas or cornbread. Southern cuisine was defined as 'slave food', and their continued enjoyment reproduced the sensations of slavery and Jim Crow. The only animals black Muslims consumed were the lamb, the chicken, and the cow. The Nation of Islam used monetary fines as punishment for being overweight. Thus, dietary restrictions produced a black body that could work efficiently toward building an idealized black-only community.

Sexual practices were strictly limited to heterosexual black men and black women to produce authentic black bloodlines. The Nation of Islam only viewed 'black' as the natural or authentic race. Whites were artificial. The Nation of Islam constructed a story to explain how whites were created by a geneticist named Yacub. According to the story, Yacub created whites 6,000 years ago by extracting the "brown germ" from black bodies and grafting them with other "brown germs". The brown germ was weaker than the "black germ", so over time, as these new humans became white they also became weak: "Their blood became weaker, their bones

became weaker, their minds became weaker, their morals became weaker. They became a wicked race; by nature wicked”.<sup>21</sup> After his exile from civilization, Yacub would take blood samples from his 59,999 followers to determine if they were a match for marriage and childbirth. Yacub would only let people with two brown germs procreate and killed black babies—what Elijah Muhammad described as Yacub’s “birth control law”. Black history, in contrast, started 66 million years ago. Modern black people were created by another geneticist named Shabazz who wanted to create a tougher race and took his family to the jungles of Africa. Shabazz’s race was described by Malcolm: “They are black as night, but their hair is like silk, and originally all our people had that kind of hair”.<sup>22</sup> Malcolm’s logic that blacks pre-dated and created whites was based on a simple logic, “You never find a white aborigine”.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the story of Yacub, as bizarre as it is fascinating, is organized around the origins of a pre-discursive embodiment of black authenticity. Authentic black bloodlines could be remade—by rejecting interracial marriage, rejecting integration, and claiming control over black communities. Because whites were genetically inferior, it made them naturally bad, weak, undesirable, and by extension, so was white culture. Thus, distance between blacks and whites was not only desirable, but also natural.

Interracial sex and rape stemming from American slavery ensured that no black Americans were 100% black. However, over time, black couples having black children would purify black bloodlines by removing all genetic traces of whites from black bodies. For the Nation of Islam, the problem was not in the science or the history, but the problem of how opposites attract. Since the Nation of Islam could not control whites, they concentrated their resources on training black men to master their desire for white women because it encouraged other bad practices. Malcolm recounts in his autobiography how he and his friends’ involvement with white women reinforced their drug habits and criminal activities.<sup>24</sup> Thus, refraining from interracial sex was posited as a method to limit risk in the probability of succumbing to other forms of vice.

The Nation of Islam approached black women’s sexuality as something that needed protection. Despite an ethos of autonomy, its views of the roles of black men and black women mirrored America’s mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century patriarchal norms, and subsequently, the liberal project’s views toward the roles of black women. The Nation of Islam defined black women as passive and impressionable. Rather than instruct black women to refrain from having sex with white men, the Nation of Islam used their women’s training centers to teach black women how to protect themselves from predatory white men because “no white man has honorable intentions toward any black women”.<sup>25</sup> They classified white men as sexual deviants because of the history of rape in the slave system, and white men’s failure to acknowledge their interracial offspring. White women also posed a threat to the purity of black women because black women were

impressionable to white sexual norms. The Nation of Islam argued that black women copied white women by “displaying their bodies, neglecting their children and abandoning their men”.<sup>26</sup>

Controlling black women’s sexuality reinforced the ideal of the heteronormative black family. Indeed, despite the outrage over the 1965 Moynihan Report that blamed the black family for reproducing a culture of poverty within black neighborhoods, the liberal project and black nationalists both mirrored the concern and anxiety over the black family. A key difference between how both projects constructed gender around the home was the discursive ordering process that placed race before gender in the black nationalist project. Therefore, black women secured their status in the black community by remaining in the house. The “Muslim Girl Training Classes” taught all Muslim women domestic practices of how to cook, manage the house and children, as well as good hygiene and medical practices, in order to accent their femininity. The home was separate from public life, and thus, black women were safe from external white influences. While black nationalism prepared black men for entrance into public life, it came at the expense of isolating black women in a black-only domestic sphere, thus equating authentic black femininity with domestic labor. Thus, the Nation of Islam encouraged marriage by rooting black women’s security and femininity in the home.

Finally, black authenticity could only be achieved by abstaining from bodily pleasures produced by ‘social vice’, specifically marijuana, cocaine, heroin, tobacco, and alcohol. In order for drugs to enter the body, they must be inhaled, snorted, or injected directly into the veins. The Nation of Islam approached addiction as corrupting the black body which corrupted the black mind. It made the black body unproductive and linked blacks with undesirable statuses, such as the “prostitute”, the “juvenile delinquent”, and the “fornicator”.<sup>27</sup> Malcolm noted that Islam supplied the best approach to rehabilitating the body:

Complete separation; not only physical separation but moral separation. This is why the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches black people in this country that we must stop drinking, we must stop smoking, we must stop committing fornication and adultery, we must stop gambling and cheating and using profanity, we must stop showing disrespect for our women, we must reform ourselves as parents so we can set the proper example for our children. Once we reform ourselves of these immoral habits, that makes us more godly, more godlike, more righteous.<sup>28</sup>

Authentic blacks did not poison their bodies. The productive black body debunked black stereotypes that blacks would rather get drunk, high, or shoot dice than go to work. Refraining from vice was also important for building separate black communities. It helped stabilize heteronormative black families and directed excess money to black-owned businesses. The

consequences of drug use increased black poverty, which subsequently increased their exposure to whites and state surveillance through the state's social work and welfare agencies. Black poverty and broken families were akin to forfeiting black self-governance. The political machines that governed northern cities used Aid to Dependent Children (aka 'welfare') to secure black votes, thus attaching urban blacks to the dilapidated slums and housing projects. Welfare kept blacks dependent on whites and impoverished. Blacks who refrained from using drugs kept black families together. It kept black men out of jail. Abstaining from vice provided some 'invisibility' from the most hated whites—social workers and the police—which simultaneously benefited the black body and the black community.

Poverty marks the body in many different ways. Malnourishment deprives the body of nutrients and renders it thin, pale, and weak. Inexpensive and deep-fried foods makes the body fat, tired, and prone to other diseases like hypertension and diabetes. However, nothing marks the body quite like a venereal disease. Malcolm argued that because of the urban ghetto culture, blacks were

exposed to every form of indecency and vice imaginable. Our young girls, our daughters, our baby sisters become unwed mothers before they are hardly out of their teens. . . . It becomes almost impossible to practice the rules of good hygiene. And therefore tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhea, and other destructive social diseases are on the rampage throughout our community.<sup>29</sup>

Addiction and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), left untreated, visibly mark the physical body. Addiction and STDs have a 'history', in that they have been attached to marginalized groups to explain and justify their civic exclusion.<sup>30</sup> The association of syphilis with black blood before WW2 created racially segregated blood banks, a practice that continued in Arkansas until 1969 and Louisiana until 1972, although officially stopped by the Red Cross in 1958.<sup>31</sup> Malcolm viewed the visibly sick black body as infecting blacks as a group. Refraining from vice materially and physically cleansed the social body. It produced a physically clean and healthy body that removed the symbols of pollution that provided the basis for black stereotypes and collective shame. Cleaning the black body also decriminalized the black body. The healthy body has no need of public health services. The police had no reason to approach a body symbolically cleansed of vice. Once blacks became invisible to state institutions, they would have space to rebuild the black community.

Malcolm used discourses of black authenticity to argue against black bodily modification or mutilation. He argued that blacks mutilated their bodies out of shame, and that authentic blacks did not modify their hair texture or skin color to mimic whites' hair and skin. Malcolm recalled how bodily mutilation was "my first really big step toward self degradation:

when I endured all of this pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair".<sup>32</sup> Malcolm noted that bodily mutilation was especially true of blacks who obtained higher levels of formal education, where the practice of relaxing the hair was common. Bodily mutilation brought educated blacks closer to whites at the expense of the rest of the black community. For example, he described the black college graduate as "ashamed of what he is, because his culture has been destroyed, his identity has been destroyed; he has been made to hate his black skin, he has been made to hate the texture of his hair, he has been made to hate the features that God gave him".<sup>33</sup> In contrast, Malcolm portrays Elijah Muhammad as an authentic black leader, in part, because his lack of formal education prevented him from identifying with whites:

They ridicule him because of his lack of education and his cotton-field origin in Georgia. White America chooses to listen to the Negro civil rights leaders, the Big Six. Six puppets who have been trained by the whites in white institutions and then placed over our people by these same whites as 'spokesmen' for our people.<sup>34</sup>

Elijah Muhammad was authentic because his 'field origins' were far from the privileged position of whites. Here, Muhammad's authenticity was achieved by both his embodied and biographical distance from whites. His lack of formal education was a badge of honor because it allowed him to think outside white systems of thought. In short, uneducated blacks were more authentic than educated blacks were because of the lived experience of blacks' marginalized social position that by default kept them safe from the corruption of white culture.

Malcolm argued that blacks needed to improve their bodily postures in order to produce a body that symbolized power and respect. Unlike black Americans, Malcolm saw Africans as exhibiting good bodily posture. Malcolm noted that prior to being enslaved,

you were walking erect, upright. You ever watch your walk? Now you're too hip to walk erect. You've come up with that other walk. But when you're yourself, you walk with dignity . . . I was amazed when I was in Africa to see the sense of poise and balance that these people over there have, all throughout Africa and Asia.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to the liberal project's idea that good posture was necessary to deracialize the self for the purposes of integrating, Malcolm used discourses of black authenticity to argue that good bodily postures represented a powerful, self-assured and self-respected authentic black self. Good bodily postures overcame the shame of being black. Good posture communicated to whites that one was proud of who he or she was. Yet, the difference between the two uses of good posture was good posture with a smile versus good

posture with a scowl. The overt seriousness of the black Muslims combined with an ethics of autonomy made black bodies hard, rigid, and cold in relation to the warmth and openness of good black citizenship.

### **The Social Ethics of Racial Separation**

The black nationalists organized the social ethics of racial separation around black authenticity to create a distinct political field. Authentic black social ethics guided the accumulation of authentic black social capital. Authentic black social capital is simply the connections used to produce an all-black civil sphere focused on solving problems specific and disproportionate to the black community. While the exclusion of whites was a given, authentic black networks also excluded the black church and all groups associated with the liberal project. In contrast to good black social ethics that linked marginalized black communities with the core, the black nationalists used authentic black social ethics to create a racially separated political field on the margins. Racial separation differed from racial segregation. Racial segregation is racial separation minus political and economic power. Specifically for the black nationalists, racial separation meant that “once the black man becomes the political master of his own community, it means that the politicians will also be black, which means that he will be sending black representatives even at the federal level”.<sup>36</sup> Racial separation equated into creating cultural distance from whites. Once cultural distance was achieved, blacks could assume political control of the black community. Although physical separation was more of a dream than an actual project, creating physical and cultural separation was not as difficult as it seemed.<sup>37</sup> Two hundred years of slavery and Jim Crow segregation had already given the black nationalists a large degree of cultural and physical distance from whites. The black nationalists defined integration as a “trick” used by whites to keep blacks subservient to the state. Even in places where whites ‘allowed’ blacks to integrate, Malcolm noted that whites all moved away to the surrounding suburbs to reestablish new forms segregation.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to good black social ethics that dealt with social interactions between blacks and between blacks and whites, discourses of black authenticity concentrated solely on the social interactions between blacks. Malcolm emphasized that all black people faced common struggles because they were black: “Instead of airing our differences in public, we have to realize we’re all in the same family. And when you have a family squabble, you don’t get out on the sidewalk. If you do, everybody calls you uncouth, unrefined, uncivilized, savage”.<sup>39</sup> To create authentic black bonding capital, Malcolm focused on black-on-black crime that created a general sense of fear and mistrust in the black community. The sense of fear and mistrust hardened boundaries between blacks. Malcolm blamed the white press for criminalizing blacks, arguing that whites “hold you in check through this science of imagery. They even make you look down upon yourself, by

giving you a bad image of yourself keeps the black community in the image of a criminal".<sup>40</sup> For Malcolm, blacks would obtain power only by unifying the black community around a positive idea of what it means to be black. Black authenticity, not good black citizenship, was the cultural construct that could unify the black community.

The black nationalists also drew from other racial and ethnic group struggles, nationally and globally, to model their own method for obtaining different forms of power. The racial models differed by national and global racial group struggles, as well as the types of power each struggle secured, but all corresponded to how a claim of cultural authenticity could secure power. The differences between national and global racial groups is that domestic racial groups have obtained primarily economic power in order to obtain civic inclusion, whereas global racial groups have struggled for political power to gain "freedom", or independence from the dominant racial group. Global racial struggles have embraced violence as a means to an end, where national racial groups have used economic power to get access to political power. However, violence was a method of last resort, and was only to be used if blacks could not obtain domestic economic and political power without violence.

The black nationalists lumped together all whites, Jews, Chinese, and Latin Americans as national racial groups. Their struggles provided a model to obtain economic power, and followed the logic that economic power could be converted into political power once you controlled your community's local economy. For instance, post-war urban blacks, stretching between New York and Chicago, would have viewed Irish pubs, Italian bakeries, Jewish jewelers, and Polish outdoor markets as indicators of racially organized communities that produced white ethics elites, e.g. Chicago Mayor Richard Daly. Despite facing discrimination from other Christian whites, Malcolm argued that Jews became powerful because "the Jew never went sitting-in and crawling-in and sliding-in and freedom riding, like he teaches and helps the Negroes do".<sup>41</sup> Similarly, he argued that the Chinese obtained economic power because "Chinese in Chinatown control all their own business, all their own banks, their own politics, their own everything, whereas the so-called Negro community everything is controlled by outsiders".<sup>42</sup> Although Jews and Chinese did not have the same amount of cultural inclusion as Irish and Italians, they did have economic power, which made other white ethnic groups respect them and grant them political access.

Global racial struggles provided a revolutionary model for obtaining political power through violence. Although Native Americans lost, Malcolm argued whites respected Native Americans more than they did blacks because Native Americans used violence.<sup>43</sup> Native Americans fought back, and whites 'rewarded' them with land that Native Americans controlled. African independence models were the other global racial struggle Malcolm suggested blacks model themselves after. The

black nationalist project wanted American blacks to stop identifying as western subjects and to start identifying with other global minority group struggles.<sup>44</sup> Malcolm depicted anti-colonial struggles, such as the Mau Mau in Kenya, as a violent struggle between two races. Thus, the black nationalists did not exclude violence because global racial groups were able to secure material gains, such as land and power, over symbolic gains like desegregated buses and lunch counters.

Despite articulating how a divided black community only hurt blacks, the black authenticity was a framework of exclusion. Its ethos of autonomy was never matched with an ethos of sacrifice or negotiation. It was one thing to speak the need for a unitary authentic black identity and dispense the personal ethics necessary to purify the black body from white culture. Yet, the black nationalists never seemed able to move from the practices of abstention, and ethics of how to say no, to the regulatory practices of building extensive black networks. The Nation of Islam built tight in-group networks in and around the temples. The exclusivity of black authenticity and the Nation of Islam's refusal to formally enter the civil rights movement hardened boundaries between them and other local black groups. While an ethics of autonomy logically supported the 'go it alone' approach and emphasized building bonding social capital, it inadvertently produced limits as to how far the black nationalists could diffuse black authenticity to other local black groups, especially black groups outside the urban ghettos. Thus, authentic black social capital ended up reproducing the inverse relationship between bonding and bridging social capital the liberal project overcame, which helped root black authenticity in the local urban areas.

### **Civic Ethics and Figurative Violence**

The Nation of Islam did not directly get involved in political matters. Its members did not vote because they viewed every president and white politician as reneging on their promises to help black Americans.<sup>45</sup> Despite Malcolm's rhetoric of achieving equality 'by any means necessary' they never organized any violent armed resistance movement. Despite the emphasis on race and modeling the black community off other racial and ethnic groups, there was an underlying assumption in the black nationalist logic that cultural and economic equality would produce political equality. They did not view politics as its own independent source of power that could create cultural and/or economic equality. That was the liberal project's game. However, Malcolm gave the black nationalist project a civic ethics based on the racially threatening black body that defined authentic black political representation more so than anything else the black nationalists associated with black authenticity.

The uses, representations, and practices associated with "violence" are broad. Weber's definition of the state was based on the state monopolizing the legitimate means of violence, meaning, the ability to raise an army and



police force for the purposes of killing and waging war in the name of the nation-state rather than a feudal lord or estate.<sup>46</sup> Foucault understood the gradual disappearance of overt violence targeting the body as the result of more efficient disciplinary forms of power, as found in the decline of corporal punishment and the rise of prisons.<sup>47</sup> For feminists, the collective practice of violence against women—the ubiquitous threat of rape and physical and emotional abuse—embedded in patriarchal norms have been used to keep women subservient to men.<sup>48</sup> Collective violence is abstract and embodied, and creates political representations of male power in the developing and developed world, which are embedded in national understandings of citizenship. Thus, a term like violence needs to be understood in relation to the subject it is exercised over.

When analyzing the black nationalists, I found two types of violence informing their civic ethics on how to secure an all-black community. The first, “operational violence”, corresponds to the aforementioned rhetoric of using violence for the purpose of winning a specified objective, such as money or territory. Operational violence is used in social actions such as self-defense, strikes, attacks, and revolution. The second and more important form of violence for the black nationalists was “figurative violence”. I use figurative violence to refer to how political agents make their bodies threatening for the purposes of instilling fear in their adversaries. Individuals can make their bodies threatening through the expression of emotions (yelling, screaming, shouting), exhibiting a ‘tightly’ disciplined and muscular body, rejecting gender-conventional gestures and postures, dressing the body in culturally threatening colors (all black), wearing masks to cover the face and wearing non-western fashions, and even specific types of facial hair (the prisoner’s mustache), tattoos (gang symbols), and facial piercings. Combined with the personal ethics of abstention, figurative violence created distance from associations of whiteness while anchoring black authenticity with a racially threatening meaning.

The general practice of figurative violence was found in the Nation of Islam’s training classes that prepared black men to be a member of the Fruit of Islam. The Nation of Islam trained black Muslim men, primarily between the ages of 16 and 35, on practices of bodybuilding, physical hygiene, judo, military drills, and fighting with knives and black jacks. The bodies of black men were made muscular to be physically intimidating. They were made to reflect, even emphasize, the black stereotypes whites feared the most. The discourses of black authenticity intertwined black masculinity with figurative violence to make a racially threatening body synonymous with black hypermasculinity by defining authentic black masculinity in relation to physical prowess, violence, and toughness because it signified power and respect.

In addition to shaping a physically intimidating body, figurative violence also refers to the unrestrained use of emotions. Malcolm argued that blacks should present the body and freely use emotions because it represented how

blacks really felt. Outrage was an authentic black response. Blacks who let whites know that they were angry, fed up, and were no longer going to take white abuse practiced a direct form of political communication rather than the symbolic political performance of good citizenship. Therefore, Malcolm suggested blacks were better off using their emotions to create distance and gain power. Malcolm noted,

Here the man has got a rope around his neck and because he screams, you know, the cracker that's putting the rope around his neck accuses him of being emotional. You're supposed to have the rope around your neck and holler politely, you know. You're supposed to watch your diction, not shout and wake other people up—this is how you're supposed to holler. You're supposed to be respectable and responsible when you holler against what they're doing to you . . . He dies with a responsible image, he dies with a polite image, but he dies. The man who is irresponsible and impolite, he keeps his life.<sup>49</sup>

Malcolm linked the repression of emotions with the repression of the black community. While social scientists have documented how emotions are culturally conditioned, Malcolm viewed them as natural and characterized emotions as a core feature of human nature. In turn, removing emotions from black political discourse neutered black's "natural" response to repression. In this regard, Malcolm isolates the suppression of emotions as a form of white power that has led blacks to accept their inferior social position. Training blacks to not hate or lash out was preparing them to remain obedient to whites.

Thus, figurative violence gave black authenticity a political ethic that any black man or woman could reflect because it was rooted in primordial sensations of affect to which any individual who has suffered an injustice can relate. Figurative violence made black nationalism meaningful in the context of citizenship. However, for the liberal project, figurative violence was frightening, scary, secretive, exclusive, and thus the expression of bad citizenship. In order to show how black authenticity was practiced and became racially threatening in a political context, I will use SNCC's Atlanta Project, the first systematic attempt to organize a civil rights campaign around black nationalism and black authenticity.

## THE ATLANTA PROJECT

The Atlanta Project was the first post-Voting Rights Act movement SNCC organized after it abandoned the liberal project. SNCC's Lowndes County Black Panther Party drew from black nationalism to organize a tent city in rural Alabama, and became the inspiration for the Oakland-based Black Panther Party, but the Atlanta Project was the first attempt in an urban

area. Despite Malcolm's portrayal of an abstract authentic black figure, differences existed within SNCC over who and what represented black authenticity. While the Atlanta Project used the urban black subject as the representation of authentic blackness, groups like the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) used the rural black subject as the dominant model for black authenticity, and organized subsequent practices around what was best for rural black farmers. In part, the romanticism around the authenticity of the black farmer resulted from SNCC's prior work in rural Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama. However, the Atlanta Project was a sharp departure from SNCC's legacy of organizing the rural South. It was a local urban movement focused on local urban problems, and thus, a new understanding of the embodied urban black subject emerged to assume the representation of black authenticity.

The Atlanta Project based their movement on four issues: local political representation, the quality of local housing, the military draft, and prisoners' rights. The issue of local political representation centered on the election of Julian Bond to the Georgia State Assembly and the city's subsequent denial of allowing him to assume his democratically elected seat. While involvement in democratic politics may seem like the antithesis of an ethics of autonomy, the Julian Bond issue actually corresponds to one of the black nationalist's central themes of control over the local black community. In a public pamphlet, Carmichael stated, "In Atlanta, Julian Bond is running in the Democratic Primary—but with an independent platform geared to the needs of his constituents".<sup>50</sup> The city's denial of letting Julian Bond assume his democratically elected seat transformed him into a symbol of why blacks needed someone to represent real black interests. The Atlanta Project proceeded with attempts to place those whom they defined as authentic blacks in the civic sphere as a symbolic gesture to communicate to other blacks that there were alternatives to the liberal project.

The second issue dealt with the quality of housing in the urban slums and ghetto. The Atlanta Project was based in the Markham Street and the Vine City neighborhoods. Vine City was the 'known' part of Atlanta that represented some of the worst housing conditions in the city. Indeed, even SCLC leaders King and Abernathy noted how Markham Street was home to some of the "worst conditions ever seen."<sup>51</sup> The Atlanta Project's focus on the material conditions of the ghetto stemmed from the same logic of purifying the black body. The Atlanta Project identified body-environment relations experienced by urban blacks but not by urban whites, specifically the effects of deteriorating buildings and the omnipresence of disease-carrying vermin, especially rats, in the black community. The Atlanta Project documented the conditions of Markham Street: "There are pockets of dilapidated, rodent infested unheated dwellings scattered throughout the predominant Negro area city. Here live people who are sapped up by parasitic slumlords, lying peddlers, cheating insurance men and Election Day only politicians."<sup>52</sup> While abstention from vice and abstaining from bodily

mutations were important self-practices of abstention, rat bites also mutilated the body. As early as 1964, SNCC noticed that stores in Harlem, but not stores in white New York neighborhoods, were full of products to treat the problems of cockroaches and rat bites.<sup>53</sup>

Black authenticity and an ethics of autonomy required keeping the ghetto intact and replacing white ownership with black ownership. Based on his observations of Harlem's black political culture and visits with the Harlem group Harlem & You (HARYOU), Atlanta Project leader Bill Ware associated the idea of urban renewal with "Negro removal".<sup>54</sup> He proposed that blacks wanted to remain in black communities, therefore, black urban renewal should be directed at improving the existing black community by tearing down the slums and replacing them with public housing, rather than move blacks to another part of the city. Thus, the Atlanta Project wanted the ghetto to remain, albeit in a better condition, because the intact ghetto was the urban milieu that could be organized into an authentic black neighborhood.

The Atlanta Project fixated their struggles against urban blight against the local white slumlords. Rather than wage an abstract fight against 'poverty' or 'housing conditions', the Atlanta Project outlined specific slumlord practices and confronted specific landlords. A handwritten flyer announcing the start of a picket line, titled "Slumlords Must Go", noted that the protest was to "stop evictions, raggedy houses, no gas, no hot water, high rents, rats and roaches, no lights, no bathroom."<sup>55</sup> The Atlanta Project emphasized that it was the slumlords' responsibility to maintain the property and called on the city to enforce existing housing codes in Vine City.<sup>56</sup> To do this, they concentrated their efforts at a single slumlord named Joe Shaffer. The Atlanta Project noted that Shaffer made

exorbitant profits by renting a house with five or six rooms to three, four and even five families and collecting \$20 to \$40 a month from each, and has established a plantation-like system in which he acts as landlord, employer, grocer, creditor, sheriff, judge and jury over the people who live on his property. He cashes their welfare checks, controls their credit.<sup>57</sup>

Because specific slumlords regulated most, if not all, of black economic relations in Vine City, the Atlanta Project felt the elimination of specific slumlords would have a ripple effect throughout the city. The Atlanta Project perceived, correctly or not, slumlords as powerful political figures networked with other powerful whites. They defined slumlords, along with police and social workers, as specific whites who prevented blacks from having intact nuclear heteronormative families and from governing their own communities. However, rather than cave in to the Atlanta Project's demands to improve the physical living conditions of his buildings, Shaffer chose to demolish one house at 444 Markham Street.<sup>58</sup>

Along with the problems of slums, the Atlanta Project made the third and fourth issues, the drafting of black men into the army and prisoners' rights, issues that disproportionately affected marginalized blacks into general black issues. Because of the style, rhetoric, and embodiment of black authenticity attached to these problems, problems that the liberal project would not discuss but cut across racial and class lines, the Atlanta Project made these issues into local black issues.

Guided by an ethics of autonomy, the Atlanta Project was not opposed to using forms of protest that indicated black political sovereignty. Rather than limit direct action to marches and boycotts, they used revolutionary practices of forming "tent cities". Historically, land ownership and territorial claims have been markers of independence, legitimacy, and domination.<sup>59</sup> The Atlanta Project drew from the tent city model used by blacks in Lowndes County, Alabama who constructed a tent city to protest white landlords who evicted over 40 black sharecropper families in December 1965 after blacks began to register to vote.<sup>60</sup> In Lowndes County, SNCC reported that, "Each tent has two beds, a fire of some sort, and a gun."<sup>61</sup> For storage, the families used trunks, which they kept under the beds. Blacks in Greene County, Alabama also erected a tent city in March 1966, comprised of five tents housing two families, where the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) held political workshops.<sup>62</sup> Whites burned down the Greene County tent city on October 3, 1966. The Atlanta Project's tent city, the first tent city practiced in a large urban area, was set in a vacant lot on Markham Street to protest the eviction of a black family for refusing to pay rent until the landlord finished the proper upkeep on the building.<sup>63</sup> The use of tent cities was not just a claim for better housing, but a revolutionary practice that marked public space for blacks. This practice combined the idea of black authenticity with territorial claims. It represented an idea of black sovereignty, in that blacks did not have to rely on whites for economic security or housing, and that blacks were capable of governing an all-black community.

The Atlanta Project's embodied performances were organized around figurative violence. At a rally to free imprisoned Atlanta Project activists, Bill Ware, who always wore 'African' clothing and beard during protests, told the crowd gathered on the street corner that "black cops represented the white power structure in the neighborhood" and that black cops "are white men with black skins" and were the enemy of real black people "as any white Ku-Klux Klansmen."<sup>64</sup> At another rally protesting the drafting of black men for the Vietnam War, the Atlanta Project picketed outside of the Industrial Center building in Atlanta, which housed the army recruiting headquarters. One picket line was composed of all women, who dressed in "long black dresses", and were "heavily veiled."<sup>65</sup> They carried picket signs depicting a 1919 lynch scene with text that read, "Did the Vietcong do this", and another sign that read "The Vietcong Never Called me Nigger."<sup>66</sup> At another anti-draft protest, the Atlanta Project confronted police

verbally as an expression of ‘real’ outrage to police brutality. The emotions and tensions escalated after an army personnel grabbed and lifted up a black woman protesting. The black men responded by ‘defending’ the black woman, and ordered the army personnel to “take their hands off the black woman or there would be trouble.”<sup>67</sup> The officer in charge ordered his men to take their hands off the woman. This differed from how the liberal project spoke out against the Vietnam War. When King finally spoke out against America’s involvement in Vietnam, he used a language of pacifism rather than address how blacks were being asked to give their bodies for the freedom they could not enjoy at home.

The liberal project would not touch the issue of prisoners’ rights either. By focusing on prison abuse, the Atlanta Project isolated and made public the dangerous and ‘bad’ blacks that did not reflect good black citizenship. Atlanta Project member Frank Robinson wrote a letter to Atlanta’s Mayor Ivan Allen to protest the mistreatment of black women inmates. He noted how black women “are forced to wear men’s shoes and shorts while the white women inmates wear women’s shoes and panties. Colored women inmates are ordered to work in the kitchen, dining room, laundry, cannery etc. while the white women inmates sew and stir beans ever once and a while” and that the safety of the black women inmates was compromised by not having a matron to supervise them from 3 pm to 7 am.<sup>68</sup> The issue of prisoners’ rights not only aligned bad blacks with black authenticity, but further drove a wedge between the black and white communities over the issues of law enforcement and perceptions of police. At the court hearings regarding a black activist arrested during one of the anti-Vietnam protests, the Atlanta Project spoke out that it was the protester’s body that was on trial: “The only reason that Larry Fox was on trial here this morning was that he was black, wore a beard, had long, nappy hair and didn’t wear a three-buttoned suit and had views on Vietnam that are anti-demonstration”.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the opposition from whites, the emergence of black authenticity created its own problem over what and who counts as authentic. An ethics of autonomy means no compromise, even internally. While different cultural ideals of black authenticity corresponded to the different geographical areas that SNCC worked in, being authentic soon became an end itself. In turn, it hardened boundaries between blacks instead of weakening them. Indeed, as a social construct, the performativity of black authenticity must be reproduced, which subsequently makes it open for contestation. For instance, a problem that started over a \$3,000 monetary dispute and a missing Dodge Dart automobile ended in a verbal war between Ware, James Forman, Cleveland Sellers, and Stokely Carmichael over how real blacks struggled for freedom, which led to Carmichael firing Bill Ware as leader of the Atlanta Project.<sup>70</sup> This fight included accusations by Ware that Forman was not authentic enough because of Forman’s white wife, and how Carmichael’s willingness to use the police to settle a black dispute represented how “the Atlanta project has descended to the level of calling

a racist henchmen cop of the white master Allen of Atlanta to settle an internal dispute between the supposedly black people of SNCC".<sup>71</sup> In short, the claims of authenticity became an end itself, which ultimately began to destroy SNCC from the inside.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter documented the emergence of a second form of black political representation which I defined as black authenticity. The Nation of Islam and Malcolm X drew from an ethics of autonomy to define black authenticity as synonymous with an idealized black agent capable of governing a racially pure black community. In contrast to approaches that viewed the civil rights movement in unitary terms until the black nationalists showed up, I argued that the tension between the race-first approach to racial equality and the liberal project was proof that no unitary identity ever existed. The black nationalists' race-first approach pre-dated the liberal project. The tensions between the two merely heightened as the liberal project continued to deliver national rights that were not affecting local black communities.

The personal ethics of black authenticity used the body to create distance between white culture and an idealized and racially pure black culture. In order to create cultural distance, Malcolm in particular emphasized abstaining from substances and behaviors that would reproduce negative black stereotypes and make the body unproductive. For the Nation of Islam, abstaining from whiteness was more than just rhetoric. They had an organizational structure capable of training blacks how to master their desire for slave foods and vice, and had the administrative capacities for enforcing sanctions for members who drank, ate too much, or committed injustices against fellow blacks. Abstention was a form of power over the self that communicated to others that there was a way of life that was superior to present ways of living. Authentic black social capital focused on improving the life of the in-group. In this regard, black authenticity was only capable of producing bonding social capital. The black nationalist's emphasis on creating distance between blacks and whites for the purpose of empowering the black community necessitated strengthening and renewing the social bonds between blacks. Segregation already produced physical separation between the races. Black authenticity added the element of cultural separation to physical separation as a means to change the self-perception the black community had of itself.

Although black nationalism has been linked with violence because Malcolm X refused to dismiss the use of violence as a means to achieve racial equality, the use of violence within the black nationalist project was rare. Violence in the black nationalist project was symbolic and figurative. Figurative violence added visually racially threatening meanings to cultural separation and local black poverty. Although it was the least stressed aspect of

black authenticity, figurative violence became its hallmark feature because of the urban civil rights struggles, urban race riots of the late 1960s, and the publicity of the Oakland Black Panther Party brandishing guns, dark sunglasses, and black leather coats. Cultural distance itself is threatening to the dominant groups because it is a rejection of their belief and value system that rationalizes racial stratification. The different styles of dress during the protests and child-naming practices that drew from African roots were the materialization of cultural rejection.

Despite the differences, there was some overlap between black authenticity and good black citizenship. They shared a concern and anxiety over the role of black women and the black family. The black nationalists viewed the racially pure black body and family as foundational for creating cultural distance between the black and white communities. While the liberal project shared with the black nationalists the importance of a stable and heteronormative black family, it was because it made the black family racially non-threatening to facilitating neighborhood integration, not to further separate from whites. They both envisioned the role of black women as performing a supportive role to black men, in that black men were excused of domestic duties and allowed to concentrate on their public and economic activities. Yet, the liberal project assigned black women to the private sphere in order to enhance individual black men's good citizenship, while the black nationalists assigned black women to the private sphere as the foundation to rebuild the black community. Whereas gender existed as an important contradiction for both projects, it seems as if black women found more opportunities in race-first projects like black nationalism, which connected their gender performances to the production of an empowered black community, than the liberal project's use of domestic femininity to enhance the good black citizenship of men.

The black nationalists did not set out to be bad black citizens. However, because they were the only ones leading local black struggles against economic and political issues that had confined blacks to the margins, black authenticity became synonymous with bad black citizens. Local issues like urban blight, ghettos, prison abuse, and failing schools became black issues, which subsequently masked the realities of white poverty, and helped make blacks the face of poverty in America and the embodied enemy of neoliberal republicanism.<sup>72</sup> Although both political projects struggled to defy black stereotypes, the result was two mutually exclusive forms of black political representation, which, when coupled with the two mutually exclusive forms of white citizenship, produced a period in American history where national citizenship came unraveled. While unintentional, the black nationalists helped empower the rise of republican neoliberalism in the 1970s. But before turning to the relationship between the civil rights movement, citizenship, and neoliberalism, I will take a step back and look at how black authenticity helped the movement split, but was unrelated to its decline.



## 5 The Transformation of SNCC and Local Activism

After the series of violent episodes that comprised the Selma Movement, an embattled James Forman addressed a gathering of civil rights supporters. SNCC's news periodical, *COFO News*, did not focus on what Forman said, but how he looked: "His outfit that day was super Snick: blue overalls which looked brand new. He had a stubble of growth on his chin and he needed a haircut. The uniform you wear should depend on the battle you're fighting".<sup>1</sup> In 1965, at the high point of the civil rights movement, Forman's body is a crossroads of symbols. SNCC members wore the blue overalls because that was what the farmers wore. The black farmers embodied the legacy of white domination. Slaves worked the fields. Although the system of slavery was replaced by sharecropping and Jim Crow, blacks remained in the fields. For SNCC, the black farmer was the 'real' or 'authentic' form of blackness that the entire civil rights movement should represent. However, Forman's unshaven face and unkempt hair symbolized a change within SNCC. Indeed, in May of 1966, a year after the Selma Movement, a young black nationalist activist named Ulysess Everett wrote a letter from his Boston home to Gwen Robinson of the Atlanta Project. Besides contrasting his experience in Boston to the South, noting that he still had to ask "Charlie", or whites, for a job instead of doing things for himself, he lamented over the shaving of his mustache: "Would you believe that soon I will be able to grow my beard, long hair, and also grow my mustache back. Since January, my upper lip has been shaved. Maybe I should not have mentioned this to you".<sup>2</sup> Everett's lamenting of his physical features and the denial of a mustache, however trivial to contemporary readers, weighed heavily on the young activist because it represented how little the national gains were impacting everyday black life.

The limits of acquiring formal voting rights protection highlighted a key limitation of the liberal project that, when combined with the emergence of black authenticity, created a political environment defined by an uncertainty over how to proceed. The liberal project's good black citizenship helped a small slice of the black community, but national legislative gains were not trickling down to local areas. For instance, a year after the Selma Movement, Shirley Mesher, the project director of the Dallas County Voters League,

noted in a church pamphlet asking for donations, “What was behind the need for the vote—oppression and a never ending cycle of poverty—remains . . . And the vote is meaningless unless people have a choice”.<sup>3</sup> New rights did not guarantee cultural change. Local officials did not enforce laws. Similar to the *Brown v Board of Education* ruling, the southern implementation of voting and civil rights legislation was slow and uneven. And in northern cities, where blacks could freely vote as long as they were voting as part of the urban political machines, voting rights legislation meant little. Yet, good black citizenship accompanied the Voting Rights Act and remained the national political representation of black citizenship.

The increased uncertainty of the post-Voting Rights era over questions of what to do next and how to address urban black poverty, combined with other national political issues like the Vietnam War, pushed SNCC activists away from the liberal project. SNCC declared,

The civil rights movement is dead. With the passage of the civil rights and voting rights bills, all legal measures for securing civil rights for black people in this country have been exhausted. All civil rights demonstrations aimed at securing jobs, integration of schools, better housing, and an end to police brutality, have ended in tokenism, compromise, and in most cases, no promises at all . . . It was never a movement of, by, and for black people.<sup>4</sup>

While this statement reflects their public departure from the liberal project, SNCC struggled with the problem of what to do even before the passage of the Voting Rights Act. The bifurcation of black citizenship only exacerbated the problems surrounding organizational cohesion and uncertainty going forward. The broad question of poverty, including jobs, poor housing conditions, and limited access to healthcare, reintroduced the tension between the class-first or race-first approach to racial equality. Could there be universal policy that could simultaneously help poor blacks and whites without alienating middle and upper class whites? Or should the movement concentrate on those most in need—the growing population of poor blacks crowded into urban ghettos? The liberal project chose the former while the black nationalists chose the latter. This chapter analyzes the transformation of local black activism and SNCC’s demise that left marginalized blacks isolated from the national civil rights movement and with a political designation of being bad blacks.

## SNCC’S TRANSFORMATION

The legacy of SNCC’s abandonment of the liberal project and subsequent embracement of black nationalism changed the image, focus, and state response to local activism. As I noted in the previous chapter, black

authenticity emphasized creating real and symbolic distance from whites exhibited through bodies and by focusing on problems that disproportionately affect the black community. Subsequently, SNCC cared less about voting rights and integration and more about gaining political control of the black community. However, the embodiment of black authenticity during this transformation made it difficult to attract sympathetic whites to their cause. For instance, police violence on good black protesters created outrage among whites. Police violence during the urban race riots did not. If anything, the figurative violence of the riots reinforced ideas that urban blacks were bad citizens and accelerated the exodus of whites from cities in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The standard explanation of the civil rights movement's decline and SNCC's break from SCLC and the NAACP views the split as causing the decline, and is rooted in social movement theory that emphasizes how the important transformation that started the movement was lost and things returned to normal, and the movement then declines.<sup>5</sup> McAdam explained that the movement's political opportunity closed, the Christian and non-violent frames that were effective up until the Selma Movement stopped working, and the various SMOs stopped cooperating and lost their organizational readiness.<sup>6</sup> Other explanations of the relationship between SNCC's split and the movement's decline are more nuanced, but still follow the pattern of linking origin with decline. Eyerman and Jamison proposed that the civil rights movement declined because key movement intellectuals could no longer articulate a unitary collective identity that was vital to their early success.<sup>7</sup> Eyerman continued to develop his explanation for decline, noting that dominant narratives used to remember Africa, especially the 'progressive narrative', declined and the movement began to emphasize individuality and self-determination rather than the collective good of blacks.<sup>8</sup> For Eyerman, these changes mirrored the structural changes in American values toward an individualistic and consumer-orientated society. Therefore, the civil rights movement had to end because blacks stopped politicizing black culture and returned to the more mundane aspects of everyday life.

Other studies have focused on how SNCC's departure impacted the movement as a whole. Haines's thesis supported the link between SNCC's split and the movement's decline while emphasizing the 'heterogeneity' of the civil rights movement from its start.<sup>9</sup> He argued that SNCC's split and movement toward black nationalism was vital for the civil rights movement's success because they made the movement around King more appealing to whites. However, the shift to black nationalism doomed the movement because it split the movement causing its decline. Poletta argued that SNCC declined because of the internal frustrations of what to do next.<sup>10</sup> The frustrations were produced by the limits of participatory democracy and the gross imbalance between discussion and action. The move toward black nationalism became as much a rejection of white styles of organizing as it

was a political philosophy. Once participatory democracy became an identity, and once that identity was associated with being 'white', black SNCC leaders such as Stokely Carmichael argued for more strict bureaucratic structure. Then SNCC left and the movement declined.

I find the story on why the movement ended based on SNCC's departure to be more complicated than that black students were simply frustrated, became black nationalists, and scared whites away. Basically, explanations of the civil rights movement's decline fits neatly into the theoretical pattern that explains how the social phenomenon that started the movement ended or was lost, such as a political opportunit or a unitary identity. There are too many empirical realities that question whether or not non-violence and Christian frames ever had an impact (see Chapter 3). Nor is there any proof that society is more individualistic today than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, evident by the number of classical social theorists who questioned the rise of 19<sup>th</sup> century individuality.<sup>11</sup> The explanations put forth by Haines and Polletta that focus on how the transformations of SNCC made them more frightening to whites and less willing to identity with policy or organizations defined as white are more nuanced, but only tell part of the story because the elimination of the 'scary black' part of the movement should have been something that helped the movement as a whole by either 1) reunifying the movement around a single identity or organization, à la McAdam and Eyerman's argument, or 2) being followed with more national gains by the liberal project, who were the clear white-favored alternative to black nationalism. As I showed in the last chapter, the emergence of black authenticity pre-dated SNCC's adoption of the black nationalist project and did not go away after SNCC declined. In any case, I am more concerned with the legacy of good black citizenship and how black authenticity continues to shape racial performances and political action rather than how the movement ended.

SNCC's decline was the result of the broader transformation in local action that resulted in the separation of local struggles from national struggles. The network structure of liberal black groups from the pre-civil rights era, groups like the NAACP and fraternal organizations that had a national organization linked with local chapters that overlapped with black churches, ensured that local and national black struggles were linked. For example, the desegregation struggles aimed at schools and public services were a combined local and national struggle. *Brown v Board of Education* started when a local group filed a lawsuit against the state and the NAACP took on the case. The Montgomery Movement started when a local group used Parks as a test case, formed the MIA to unify the local black community, and made desegregation into a national struggle. Rather than the split, it was the expansion of the movement around good black citizenship to include the smaller and regional groups like CORE and SNCC rather than those groups leaving that started the divergence and relational features of national and local black struggles.

Table 5.1 The Four Stages of SNCC

	<i>Phase 1: National and Interracial</i>	<i>Phase 2: Local and Interracial</i>	<i>Phase 3: Local and Racially Exclusive</i>	<i>Phase 4: Global and Racially Exclusive</i>
Discourse	Good Black Citizenship	Good Black Citizenship	Black Authenticity	Black Authenticity
Group	National	Local	Racial	Racial
Territory	State	Regional- Geopolitical	Regional- Geopolitical	Nomad

Table 5.1 provides a model of the transformation on local action from the entry of SNCC into the civil rights movement until its departure. The model is based on three variables: the dominant discourse used to define how the struggles would be waged (good black citizenship, black authenticity), the group level (national, local, and racial), and territory (state, regional, and nomadic). Phase 1 corresponds to the rise of the black students during the initial sit-ins and subsequent formation of SNCC as an independent political force. In this phase, SNCC embodied good black citizenship, their sit-in performances represented national differences between good blacks and bad whites, and they made claims for citizenship rights.

The second phase corresponded to the period after SNCC began successfully organizing rural black areas and the events surrounding the 1964 Freedom Summer. SNCC sought to organize local blacks and whites based on the notion that they shared a common geopolitical culture defined by low socio-economic status and a common history of Mississippians. The important difference between phase 1 and phase 2 is the focus on problems specific to the local level rather than national issues of rights. This resulted in the early formation of boundaries between local/national and rural/urban that foreshadowed the limits of the liberal project.

Although phase 3 corresponded with the start of the post-Voting Rights era of black struggles, it started because the limits of organizing interracial political groups in the rural South opened up room for competing discourses of black political representation. There was little white involvement and public support to form interracial political alliances. This led to a split between SNCC on racial lines, where blacks would organize black communities and whites would organize white communities. SNCC began to draw from discourses of black authenticity and focused on organizing blacks as racial groups in local rural and urban areas. This is the phase that others have identified as SNCC's break from the rest of the civil rights movement because of its refusal to cooperate with other civil rights groups and engage in national economic struggles. The difference between phase 2 and phase 3 is the addition of black authenticity that attached blacks politically with the racial group and a local identification.

Contemporary local black struggles have remained at the third phase, focusing on a racial-group struggle, despite wavering from any kind of strict adherence to the form of black authenticity that emerged during the civil rights movement. The final phase of SNCC's transformation, which was their decline, is characterized by how they switched from a local group to a global group, or a "nomadic group" that identifies with no territory. In part, identifying with global struggles, human rights instead of citizenship rights, was always the pinnacle of Malcolm's black nationalism. However, he too found little success when he organized the OAAU as a global group. Thus, SNCC declined because they abandoned the local focus and created too much distance between local struggles and black authenticity. By this point, SNCC was no longer a causal factor in the civil rights movement and their decline had no impact on the liberal project's inability to secure further housing and economic policy.

### **PHASE 1: THE BLACK STUDENTS AND GOOD BLACK CITIZENSHIP**

I have previously noted in Chapter 1 how the black student emerged as an independent category within the civil rights movement, but was quickly brought under the umbrella of good black citizenship. Here I will briefly recap how good black citizenship not only linked SNCC with the liberal project, but made local activism synonymous with the national movement for comparative reasons. The sit-ins were meticulously planned events, where students who reflected good black citizens were pitted against bad whites in order to question merits of white equating good citizenship. James Lawson's non-violent workshops gave the black students a chance to practice good black responses to bad whites, and the chain of command from the line captains to the everyday activists ensured that only students who reflected good black citizenship in the most trying conditions participated. SNCC's initial focus was on desegregating public spaces, be it a lunch counter, a movie theater, a hotel or a bus terminal. Desegregation was a local and national black problem. School desegregation was a national and local struggle. However, it was SNCC's increasing presence of bringing in unfamiliar local black communities to the movement and the failures surrounding the Albany Movement that modified SNCC's focus from national issues that could be highlighted by local action to a focus on improving the material conditions of local areas. Consequently, this was the first move to separate local activism from the national movement.

### **PHASE 2: THE LOCAL TURN AND "FREEDOM SUMMER"**

In the summer of 1964, SNCC launched their Freedom Summer in Mississippi. It was SNCC's most ambitious plan to date that set up schools and

community centers to create an independent political party that could break the Southern Democratic chokehold around southern politics. The sociological and historical accounts of Freedom Summer have documented how it challenged and changed ideas of racism, sexual mores, musical styles, foreign policy, and citizenship.<sup>12</sup> It has also been studied to develop theoretical models for why people join social movements, form activist networks, and establish social ties.<sup>13</sup> Rather than focus on what Freedom Summer did, I want to analyze what it could not do: create a mass movement around the idea that blacks and whites shared a common condition of poverty and a common history of Mississippians.

Two things made Freedom Summer different from SNCC's sit-ins and voter registration drives. The first difference was how Freedom Summer concentrated on a centralized location in northern Mississippi. This differed from SNCC's prior political efforts represented by the sit-ins, which were organized as decentralized independent cells scattered throughout the South. Rather than focus on general problems of segregation and racism, the focus on a single region included a new objective of mobilizing Mississippi blacks into an independent political party. One of the limits SNCC identified to registering individual black voters was the choice between the Democratic and Republican Party, neither of which had any real interest in helping blacks. The second difference was the increased emphasis on community health standards. White and black SNCC field workers were unprepared for the realities of rural black poverty because it was unlike the levels of destitution found in urban and northern areas. Before SNCC workers could teach good black personal and social ethics to the rural black populace, they had to do something about the sick and malnourished bodies that visibly communicated a set of black stereotypes rooted in biological and medical discourses of racial-biological inferiority. These two differences represented a general shift from national to local activism. However, rather than reject good black citizenship, they sought to bring in whites under the good citizenship umbrella in an attempt to revolutionize southern political culture.

### **Freedom Schools**

The Mississippi Council of Federated Organization, known as COFO, was a conglomerate of all national and local civil rights groups, as well as fraternal organizations operating in Mississippi. SNCC was the dominant member, and the liberal project's discourse of good black citizenship bound these various groups together. COFO originally formed in 1961 after SNCC workers began to enter the rural black communities and set up voter registration drives. It was the result of the symbiotic relationship between bridging and bonding social capital nurtured by good black social ethics. In 1962, white anti-civil rights sentiment forced SNCC to focus its political activities in the northern Mississippi Delta region and Greenwood,

where SNCC created ties with the “Holmes County Voters League” and the “Ruleville Citizenship Group”.<sup>14</sup> SNCC moved its operations to the Mississippi Delta because they believed that the “vague antipathy of the hill folk for the rich planters” provided better opportunities for interracial political organizing, since blacks and poor whites ‘shared’ impoverished social and geographical space.<sup>15</sup> That is, SNCC believed that blacks and whites could organize around the idea of a shared geopolitical culture and low socio-economic status.

COFO divided its Freedom Summer programs into three interrelated parts—voting registration, Freedom Schools, and community centers. The Freedom Summer Schools drew heavily from SCLC’s citizenship schools model.<sup>16</sup> The Freedom Schools followed the same structure and learning strategies as SCLC’s citizenship schools. They included discussion groups rather than lecturing because of the need to train “children of the non-verbal ‘culturally deprived’ community the ability to formulate questions and articulate perception”.<sup>17</sup> Curriculum was structured by the time of day. Morning classes were organized around topics like “Negro history and citizenship” while late morning classes focused on cultural development of typing, learning French, drama, or working on the school newspaper. Unlike SCLC’s uniform citizenship school model, COFO differentiated the Freedom School into three classifications, “rural, urban with strong civil rights movement, urban with weak civil rights movement”.<sup>18</sup> By July 1964, COFO counted 41 functioning schools dispersed throughout 20 Mississippi counties, totaling 2,135 students.<sup>19</sup>

The Freedom Summer Schools focused on good black personal ethics through reading and writing lessons that had students construct their own narratives and forms of media. A typical lesson was writing for and creating a news periodical: “Report for, and edit, a newspaper to exchange with other freedom schools”, and how to “report or exchange information (e.g. their work on voter registration).<sup>20</sup> COFO’s “Overview of the Political Program”, a manual for Freedom School teachers, contained a subsection titled “Techniques for Field Work” that defined issues pertaining to safety, and the right way to canvass and run a workshop. COFO used discourses of good black citizenship to emphasize the importance of good black social ethics: “You should try to present yourself in a way that will make them want to talk with you”.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Freedom Schools used good black citizenship to bring in rural blacks and the few white students in attendance into the liberal project.

What made the Freedom Schools different from SCLC’s citizenship school model was the emphasis on weaving the realities of local poverty in Mississippi with the structure and pedagogy of the schools. For one, this meant organizing the day around the everyday lives of rural blacks who were busiest in the summer. Freedom schools were held in basements, black storefronts, homes, and the outdoor areas of local black churches.<sup>22</sup> Rather than select locals from the community who already embodied good black



citizenship as SCLC did, COFO used psychiatrists to screen and weed out volunteers considered “dangerous to the movement”.<sup>23</sup> COFO defined dangerous individuals as too idealistic, anti-political, and those who had their own ideas of what to do that contrasted with the Freedom School program. Individuals accepted to teach were required to familiarize themselves with a shared foundation of knowledge, organized around mastering certain texts that the movement as a whole was reading or had read. COFO sent a letter to all accepted teachers asking “all summer participants to read several books so we can assume some knowledge in common”.<sup>24</sup> The required book list, ranked in order of importance, was *The Mind of the South* by W.J. Cash, *Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Dubois, *The Other America* by Michael Harrington, *Stride toward Freedom* by King, and *Killers of the Dream* by Lillian Smith.<sup>25</sup> These texts ensured not only the familiarity of southern culture and the history of the movement, but they also told a specific history of how blacks had successfully struggled for equality.

In addition to the structural and organization set-up of Freedom Summer, COFO modified the pedagogy, especially when it came to good black social ethics. In part, SNCC had a pedagogy and training program in place that instructed good black personal and civic ethics. There was only a slight modification to the handwriting lessons. Rather than construct a meta-narrative over the struggle for citizenship rights, the Freedom Summer handwriting lessons were tied in with writing local field reports. Students were

given practice activities to improve their skills with reading and writing. Writing press releases, leaflets etc. for the political campaigns is one example. Writing affidavits and reports for arrests, demonstrations, trials etc. which occur during the summer of their town will be another.<sup>26</sup>

However, the accumulation of past experiences and knowledge about entering and networking in the rural South introduced a more drastic modification to good black social ethics that combined lessons on good listening and speaking with how to listen to silence.

The good-listener and good-speaker lessons highlighted the need to understand what is not said or left silent in a conversation. Listening to what was not said was an art form and a skill that varied between white and black field workers. COFO called this “active listening”: “Cultivate this attitude of respect and real listening and honest answering right down to the bone. It’s very hard to listen—practice it over the lunch table. But listen actively, not passively”.<sup>27</sup> When interacting with local black residents, COFO emphasized to “keep listening, and remember that fear will often cause words to mask real responses and that you must learn to hear what is beneath the words.”<sup>28</sup> Field workers had to learn to listen differently and infer that the farmer meant something other than what they said. Many local black residents feared talking or cooperating with civil rights activists

because of the likelihood whites would respond violently. This was a modification of SNCC's earlier approach to entering a community based on making a good impression.

COFO advised white volunteers that local blacks would tell them what whites wanted to hear to make the white volunteers leave. Therefore, field workers, especially white field workers, had to find other ways of listening and acquiring information. For instance, COFO instructed that "if a person closes the door in your face or will not talk with you, try to find out selsewhere [sic] why he did it. Everybody can be approached, but it may take much time and patience to reach some people", and "if a person talks but show obvious reluctance, don't force a long explanation on them. Come back another day . . . This builds confidence and builds a relationship".<sup>29</sup> This meant the white field workers had to learn how to be racially non-threatening. COFO emphasized that, "The worker must give the impression of being courageous but not foolhardy, competent but not all knowing. Be yourself, do your job, preach freedom, and the community will come".<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the lessons on good listening, or, more aptly described, the lessons on how to listen differently, represented how the SNCC attempted to overcome the challenges of building an interracial political movement. The focus was more on white field workers rather than rural whites because white field workers entering rural black communities was already proof of an interracial political effort. SNCC realized that by sending out racially non-threatening whites it could potentially modify how local blacks and whites perceived the civil rights movement as a general and more encompassing movement for all marginalized groups.

### **The Biopolitics of Community Centers**

The second difference in SNCC's Freedom Summer was the introduction of community centers that emphasized the importance of public health and good black citizenship. For instance, COFO published and distributed booklets like "The General Condition of the Mississippi Negro" in October 1963, where they detailed birth rates, death rates, and infant mortality rates of the southern black population.<sup>31</sup> The community centers' focus was on the body's health and providing instruction on how to care for the body. They focused on medical care because of the generally poor health conditions, a lack of medical service in the black community, and a lack of knowledge on how to use the existing medical services in the rural black community. Because of the need for public health, COFO hoped the community centers would become a "permanent institution rather than a summer 'crash' program".<sup>32</sup> The goal was to make healthy clean black bodies as a method to dissociate black stereotypes from the rural South and to improve a state of absolute poverty in the Mississippi Delta. The community centers provided the services associated with the welfare state—public education, job training, childcare, and healthcare services—that were not

available in Mississippi.<sup>33</sup> COFO volunteers researched ideas such as school lunch programs in Greenwood, and public health programs in Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that federal nutrition programs, such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), did not start until 1972, and the first “Head Start” programs, publicly funded pre-school, not until 1965.

Improving the physical health of bodies brought rural blacks to a point where they might be able to embody good black citizenship. Good black citizens have healthy bodies that are fit and clean rather than dirty and fat. COFO centered on the problem of eating: what rural blacks ate and how much food was available to eat. The black southerner’s diet, “even when people get enough feed . . . is largely starches and fats. There is great reliance on corn, bread, sweet potatoes, rice and fat or side pork.”<sup>35</sup> COFO reported southern blacks faced a nutritional crisis and food shortage. “An adequate diet for the Mississippi Negro is available for brief periods only when they are recipients of government commodities and when the tenant farmer sells his cotton . . . Even when food is available it is in the form of most poverty diets, high in starch and low in protein.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the problem of eating for black Mississippians meant “surviving off one meal a day, adults going without so that children may eat—in short, it meant starving.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, COFO drew from medical and nutritional expertise to define what constituted a proper diet: “Dietary levels are measured by two criteria: calorie intake (quantity) and nutritional content (quality).”<sup>38</sup> They concluded,

The poor in Mississippi do not get enough protein, calcium, essential vitamins and minerals for proper nutrition. Our goal, of course, is to see that these people are ultimately paid a living wage—but malnutrition can be cut down by distribution of a few food commodities and massive distribution of inexpensive vitamins.<sup>39</sup>

COFO placed the responsibility of improving the amount of food and its nutritional content on individuals and government. Community centers provide the former. They instructed what constituted a good diet by defining appropriate levels of protein, fat and carbohydrates, as well as how to obtain public food assistance. Political organizing could pressure governments into expanding this service and providing basic social rights to blacks. It was a call for more governmental intervention than just economic and voting rights.

The community centers used good black citizenship to tie the healthy body and public health with the black family. The community centers focused on the cleanliness of the rural black appearance, including the importance of clean clothes to overcome black stereotypes:

Mothers do not go around the house in dirty robes or ragged dresses or even their slippers because they are basically unclean, but because they

have nothing to change into. Fathers don't lounge around on the filthy smelly overalls they work in during the day because they are too lazy to change their clothes, but because they have nothing else to put on.<sup>40</sup>

COFO suggested organizing a clothing program to provide rural black Mississippians with clean clothes, and clothes for different places, such as church clothes, work clothes, clothes to wear around the house, and clothes to wear while shopping. It was one thing to get dirty from a hard day's work, but to come home and remain in the clothes signified dirty and unkempt bad citizens. We can see from the above quote that COFO was aware of the need to convince volunteers and civil rights workers that these stereotypes were unwarranted. Since virtually all civil rights activists, black or white, came from urban areas, they had to be prepared for the 'extremes' of rural black poverty. The community centers' use of good black citizenship allowed them to penetrate home life and further clean the black body by providing a range of family services, such as "instruction in pre-natal care, infant care, and general hygiene"<sup>41</sup> and workshops focused on "family relations, federal service programs, home improvements",<sup>42</sup> all designed to clean and improve the black body.

At the end of Freedom Summer, COFO held the Mississippi Freedom School Convention with representatives from all the Freedom Schools in Mississippi. One measureable outcome of Freedom Summer was how the goals moved away from voting rights and emphasized local issues such as public sanitation, improved housing conditions, changing the educational practices, and providing healthcare services. The Mississippi Freedom School Convention called for city financing of "paving and widening the streets and installing drainage systems in them" and a "better system of garbage disposal, including more frequent pickups".<sup>43</sup> They wanted a "building code for home construction" that ensured all homes in the black community would have a complete bathroom kit, kitchen sink, central heating systems, insulated walls and ceiling, and at least three electrical outlets in the living room".<sup>44</sup> They demanded "zoning regulations be enacted and enforced to keep undesirable and unsightly industries and commercial operations away from residential neighborhoods".<sup>45</sup> They asked "slums be cleared, and a low cost federal housing project be established to help house these people".<sup>46</sup> They demanded the elimination of teacher brutality.<sup>47</sup> The state should change the educational content to prepare blacks and poor whites for a post-industrial global economy: "In an age where machines are rapidly replacing manual labor, job opportunities and economic security increasingly require higher levels of education".<sup>48</sup> Conference attendees were aware of the decline of the agricultural sector in the South and realized that blacks and poor whites would fall further behind wealthy whites if school curriculum did not change.

All of these services tied back into the anxieties over black family—a safe home, a clean environment, educated children, and healthy bodies—shared

by the liberal and black nationalist project. However, the focus was on how good black families had the right to a healthy life and deserved to live in clean environments. For instance, the Mississippi Freedom School Convention emphasized how “the home, being the center of a child’s life as well as the center of a family’s must have certain facilities in order for it to be a home and not just a building in which one eats, sleeps, and prepares to leave for the rest of the day”.<sup>49</sup> Good citizens cannot raise good children in bad and dirty environments. Familial relationships exist within the cultural and physical environment. Families invest emotional attachment to physical space to make it a home. Demanding standards for housing construction meant blacks had the right to live in single-unit houses rather than shacks. Echoing the community center’s emphasis on the healthy body, the convention argued that it is the equal responsibility of government and citizens to ensure the body’s health and well-being. Preventive medical treatment could improve the quality of life in parts of rural black Mississippi that did not have healthcare, and where rural blacks may have never seen a doctor. On the other hand, it meant making medicine more “mobile” through “mobile units, chest x-rays, semi-annually . . . [A] check up at least once a year by licensed doctors, the local health department, or a clinic should be provided by the local or state government”.<sup>50</sup> It also meant more black physicians and nurses, but also the elimination of medical-political bodily punishments: “We actually seek the abolition of any sterilization act which serves as punishment, voluntary or involuntary, for any offenses”.<sup>51</sup> While they viewed the care of the body as the responsibility of citizens and government, they also sought to impose limits on the state’s monopoly of violence over the body. Good citizens owned their body and governed their families. Medical-political punishments violated this right.

Another outcome of Freedom Summer was the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) that challenged the Democratic Party’s control of politics in Mississippi and continued support for the political disenfranchisement of blacks. The MFDP was organized as a statewide political party with a focus on local political struggles. Indeed, the MFDP explicitly noted that it was “not a civil rights organization. It represents the organized political efforts of local people”.<sup>52</sup> The party was built from the ground up, starting at the precinct level and ending at the state level. Ideally, this allowed the MFDP to do two things: to challenge local congressional, state senate, and state assembly seat holders, and to make an interracial organization. Regarding the latter, organizing across precincts overcame the problem of segregated neighborhoods as long as blacks and whites practiced good social ethics. The structure alone would not be enough because the threat of white involvement in civil rights issues was whites assuming all the leadership positions. Social ethics would guide a start of a new culture.

The MFDP attempted to sit and speak at the national 1964 Democratic Convention, but was blocked by national party leaders, including President Lyndon Johnson. The Democrats’ refusal to allow the MFDP to vote or

speak at the convention reassured the doubts local blacks had about receiving help from the federal government.

In contrast to the MFDP approach to organize an independent political party based on economic issues that cut across racial groups, others in SNCC advocated that blacks should become part of the Democratic Party in order to alter national distribution of power. The passage of the Voting Rights Act increased the importance SNCC placed on local political struggles to alter the distribution of national power. In contrast to the formation of the MFDP as an independent party, in a research memo on how to take advantage of the Voting Rights Act, SNCC argued that, "A large segment of the national power lies in the Congressional seats from states and districts that have from one fourth to one half of their voters negro".<sup>53</sup> SNCC listed powerful congressional leaders whose district had a large black population, including Medall Rivers, chair of the House Armed Forces Committee, whose district was 44% black. This approach also dealt with the problem of the one-party system in the South, where the 'real' election was held in the primaries: "One must remember that the only real opportunities to an incumbent senator or congressman may well come in the primary . . . moreover, perhaps only a prompt massive voter registration can encourage serious candidates to oppose many entrenched senators and congressmen, such as Senator James Eastland of Mississippi".<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the MFDP focus on local problems, other members of SNCC began to address the issue of achieving political power. The introduction of the question of how to achieve political power now that the right to vote was secured was an important turning point for SNCC. Although the question of how to achieve political power foreshadowed some of the issues that led SNCC to make the black nationalist turn, in 1965 SNCC was still organizing their political struggles around good black citizenship. The existence of multiple approaches on how to use the vote, not to mention Bayard Rustin's approach to building a leftist political alliance around identity and class groups, became a problem that the liberal project never solved.

Despite white involvement in Mississippi, SNCC was quickly losing faith that local southern whites would be willing to support the civil rights movement. But, the events surrounding the MFDP were made possible by SNCC's initial switch from making claims for general rights to focusing on improving local areas. SNCC's failure to organize an interracial political movement around shared poverty led to the formation of boundaries between local/national and rural/urban struggles. It was this point of boundary formation that opened up space for SNCC to begin drawing from discourses of black authenticity.

### PHASE 3: BLACK AUTHENTICITY AND LOCAL ACTIVISM

SNCC was unsatisfied not only with the pace of social change stemming from the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, but also with

how national change was not translating into local improvements. In fact, an argument could be made that things were getting worse for urban blacks as the communal ghetto began to break down in the late 1960s.<sup>55</sup> SNCC's focus on local problems combined with their identified limits of good black citizenship opened up space for SNCC to draw from discourses of black authenticity. As I noted in the last chapter, the emergence of black authenticity in SNCC led to the formation of the Atlanta Project, an attempt to organize an all-black urban contingent to pressure the city to do something about urban blight and problems disproportionate to local blacks. Here, I want to focus on why SNCC broke from the liberal project and drew from black authenticity, and how that break changed local black activism. The emergence of black authenticity within SNCC changed local action because local black activism became racially exclusive and emphasized the importance of the racial group over national citizenship.

The rise of black authenticity in SNCC and its subsequent association with urban blacks were two different but interrelated processes. Black authenticity emerged within SNCC as early as 1964 when whites, who were not formally excluded until 1966, were still members of the organization and when SNCC organized exclusively in the rural South. On the one hand, the black and white SNCC field workers were swayed by Malcolm X's increasing popularity and influence. Before his death, Malcolm briefly interacted with current and future SNCC members. SNCC leaders, including Carmichael, were part of the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) that sponsored a debate between Malcolm and Bayard Rustin in 1962. In 1964, John Lewis had a chance encounter with Malcolm in Nairobi, Kenya, which led to SNCC bringing Malcolm to Selma, Alabama to speak at a 1965 voting rights rally.<sup>56</sup> Although SNCC slowly began to incorporate discourses of black authenticity into their mobilization strategies, the publication of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in 1965 was a key moment of change. Ironically, it was the insistence of a white civil rights activist by the name of Jack Minnis, who published a periodical in 1965 and 1966 titled "Life with Lyndon in the Great Society" as a critique of 1960s liberalism, that accelerated the shift.<sup>57</sup> Before the publication of Malcolm's autobiography, the periodical reported on issues pertaining to the relations between civil rights struggles and southern governments, and the expanding southern military-industrial economy. This included topics on local white supremacist groups' influence over the local legislatures, the Southern State Industrial Council's (SSCI) lobbying efforts and connection to northern industry, and corporations like General Electric that were manufacturing and supplying weapons in Vietnam. Starting in the November 1965 issue (vol. 1 no. 41), the tone and focus of the periodical changed from Selma and Vietnam to the question of power. Minnis urged,

All civil rights workers and all black Americans who are interested in what we call 'freedom' should read this book . . . One of the reasons

the book is important, is that when Malcolm X spoke, he leveled right down on his point, and he talked in the language of the people of the streets of the ghetto.<sup>58</sup>

The reception of Malcolm's text within SNCC made room for a growing voice within SNCC to concentrate on 'real' black issues and eventually ended SNCC's focus on commonalities between marginalized blacks and whites. This left white field workers like Minnis and Bob Zellner on the outside, but paradoxically, the rise of black authenticity marginalized activists like Fannie Lou Hamer and James Forman who opposed the expulsion of whites.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the language of the streets and the ghetto, black authenticity did not originate in SNCC's urban projects. The initial rise of black authenticity in SNCC happened in the rural areas of Lowndes County, Alabama, Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and to some extent in rural Mississippi because that was where SNCC was organizing. Forman noted this shift in black authenticity in an organizers' meeting on how to train new activists:

One of the tragedies of some middle class people working in the south is that it takes them a long time to get accustomed to the ways of the people and by the time they do they are ready to return home, sometimes full of romantic notions about the purity of the local folks and their beauty in the midst of poverty, disease, degradation and death.<sup>60</sup>

The rural black farmer was the initial representation of black authenticity within SNCC. SNCC workers dressed in blue-jean overalls, what farmers wore in the fields, to signify their identification with rural black culture. However, this representation was paradoxically erected on the condition of rural poverty that SNCC wanted to destroy. SNCC's authenticating of southern black culture of the Mississippi Delta, through blues music, a southern 'soul food' diet,<sup>61</sup> and agricultural labor, represented the antithesis of the Nation of Islam's authentic black subject. However, the authenticating of the black farmer introduced one modification to good black citizenship, in that SNCC workers began to carry guns because the black farmers armed themselves and carried guns in the field, to protect their crops, family, and SNCC workers living at their houses. Indeed, in 1964 Carmichael argued that it was not ethical to tell farmers to stop carrying weapons to protect themselves, noting that SCLC does not mobilize in the same areas or work with the same people that SNCC does.<sup>62</sup>

What it meant to be black and authentic changed as SNCC began to organize urban projects in Atlanta and Chicago. As SNCC focused more on the cities, they began to emphasize purity of ghetto life: "The black man in the ghetto['s] advantage . . . [is that] he is already living outside of the value system white society imposes on all black Americans".<sup>63</sup> The *a priori* physical and cultural distance in segregation created an idea of urban black purity that was not rooted in a history of repression or rural poverty, but



in “his” outsider status. The ghetto residents’ paradoxical denial of an education and job ensured that he never internalized white American history and white values. Therefore, the embodied practice and mindsets of SNCC workers changed as the representation of black authenticity changed.

### **Creating (More) Distance from Whites**

The first modification that resulted from the introduction of black authenticity was removing whites from SNCC, which transformed SNCC into an all-black and all-local group. The question of whether whites should be involved in the movement in general was not new. Indeed, SNCC consistently struggled with questions of the ratio of whites to blacks, how to use white skills for mobilization, and sexual tensions between black men and white women. As SNCC grew from a student group conducting sit-ins to organizing Freedom Summer, they increasingly drew from a pool of white and black student volunteers. This was different from the virtually all-black-run NAACP and SCLC. The interracial composition meant that more opportunities existed in SNCC for both interracial tensions and possibilities. An early-1963 memo from Julian Bond represented how he was concerned about the ratio of whites to blacks. However, Bond did not argue for fewer whites. He was concerned with not having enough good blacks:

We are attracting large numbers of northern and western whites, but do not seem to gather sizeable numbers of young Negroes . . . I emphasize college age, because I think we have a need for people with skills we commonly associate with young persons in college. By skills I mean typing, writing ability, speaking ability, organizing ability and thinking ability.<sup>64</sup>

In 1963, SNCC still held on to ideas that it was important for rural blacks to get used to whites, and vice versa. Thus, the framework of good black citizenship was inclusive rather than exclusive. It sought black political power through addition rather than subtraction. For Bond, SNCC could simply overcome the problem of too many whites by adding more good black students to the mix.

Unfortunately for Bond, SNCC’s white problem was not solved by adding more good blacks. By 1964, SNCC members compiled a list of problems stemming from white-black interactions. Notes gathered from a SNCC meeting labeled “Some Aspects of Black-White Problems as Seen by Field Staff” indicated the following problems:

- 1) Fears that Negroes have of being associated with an interracial group in Mississippi (this varies per area and depends upon the sex of the whites)
- 2) Insecurities (whites’ superior education)

- 3) Deep feelings (past racial incidents that are still bugging people, not solved by talking—white staff members to understand these feelings)
- 4) Growing up hating whites
- 5) Role of whites in movement—do you want whites visible in places where people have not learned to trust Negro leadership? Question of where you want white people in leadership Missionary attitudes are really resented
- 7) Obsession of Negroes with whites
- 8) Sexual problems that racism produces<sup>65</sup>

This meeting defined the white problem as the unfamiliarity and subsequent fascination of white students with black culture, as well as the educational and intellectual gap between the white volunteers and rural blacks. White field workers did not always realize they contributed to the problems they wanted to solve. Whites took for granted that their increased levels of education and prior leadership positions were not equally available to blacks. “Sexual problems that racism produces” referred to tensions between white and black women over black males approaching white women, and white women feeling that if they did not accept the advances of black males then they would appear racist. At this time, SNCC was still trying to solve inter-racial problems through a discourse of good black citizenship. There was an idea that if whites could become more familiar and achieve a better understanding of southern black culture, the tensions between whites and blacks would decrease. However, Freedom Summer made these differences more visible.

The emergence of black authenticity created a new way for black SNCC leaders to talk about the white problem. Rather than identify any cultural or educational differences between whites and blacks as the problem, the problem became the physical presence of whites. For instance, by 1965 even seasoned SNCC activists, like John Lewis, who did not support the black nationalist project began looking for new solutions:

Is it possible for negroes and whites in this country to engage in a certain political experiment such as the world has never yet witnessed and in which the first condition would be that whites consented to let negroes run their own revolution, giving them the necessary support, and being alarmed at some of the sacrifices and difficulties this would involve? . . . Much as it may anger some die hard white, the fact that a negro sits down next to a white woman at a lunch counter and orders a coke and hamburger is still short of revolution.<sup>66</sup>

Lewis used a discourse of black authenticity to naturalize cultural differences between whites and blacks. Racial differences precluded whites from understanding what blacks ‘really wanted’. Whites believed integration counted as progress, whereas blacks wanted political power. Thus, some

SNCC members began using a discourse of black authenticity to argue for the merits of racial exclusion without ever embracing a black nationalist project. Therefore, discourses of black authenticity shaped the changes in how SNCC organized to eventually become a black nationalist group.

In 1966, SNCC held a meeting where members could outline their position on working with whites. Carson noted that initially the majority of the 100 attendees rejected dismissing whites, but black nationalist members swayed them through debate to agree to expel whites.<sup>67</sup> For our purposes here, this meeting is when black authenticity emerged as the dominant position within SNCC. At the meeting, the black nationalist faction of the SNCC, which included representatives of the Atlanta Project, argued that SNCC had to remove whites from the group if blacks ever wanted to achieve power. In a position paper, Bill Ware argued that whites

can participate on an intellectual level. They cannot participate on an emotional level . . . By this I mean they cannot participate where arms are necessary. They cannot participate where violence is necessary. They cannot participate where anger is necessary. They cannot participate where revenge is necessary. They cannot participate where hate is necessary.<sup>68</sup>

The final move was not naturalizing cultural differences as racial differences, but authenticating emotions—emotions of outrage, hate, and anger—that blacks embodied from generations of discrimination and exploitation. Whites lacked the necessary affective responses to understand what blacks experienced and wanted. Because whites did not endure racial discrimination, they would never be angry enough to engage in a ‘real’ revolution, nor were they capable of exerting violence on other whites. At the close of the meeting, SNCC officially voted to expel all whites from the organization.

### **Authentic Black Knowledge**

The authentication of urban blacks not only shifted SNCC’s focus to local black problems, it also allowed SNCC to organize itself in opposition to and as a political rival of the black church. Bill Ware likened the black church to whites in that both viewed themselves as external to the urban black community. “Charlie’s perspective is not relevant, no churches. I’m talking community people”.<sup>69</sup> Ware’s secular stance had more to do with his rejection of the old guard in Atlanta, the black political elites who predated the liberal project and whose political power came from the pulpit, and continued to exert influence over Atlanta’s black citizens. Nevertheless, the rejection of the church and liberal project created an opportunity for SNCC to rethink a new summer program. Although Freedom Summer provided the model, SNCC reprogrammed all the pedagogy to focus on local urban black issues. Rather than teach good handwriting and good listening

lessons as a way to embed good black citizenship into the bodies of black students, the school's focus was on solving problems common to urban blacks such as obtaining "legal services with a consulting lawyer to aid in common neighborhood problems, such as police searches, evictions, rents, traffic violations".<sup>70</sup> While SNCC wanted to distance itself from the liberal project, this is a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. SNCC inexplicably stopped the innovative lesson on active learning through the writing and listening lessons aimed to empower locals and replaced it with a passive and dependent strategy of seeking help.

SNCC viewed "education" through learning about a history lesson as something that could empower blacks in its own right. In their 1966 pamphlet titled "The Story of SNCC", SNCC argued that "in the schoolroom and in all aspects of daily life, black people are denied access to their own culture; they are taught that white is right, white is beautiful. A reawakening of cultural identity—the rebirth of what might be called psychological equality—is essential".<sup>71</sup> They recommended that subsequent summer programs concentrate on black history and literature, especially on authors like Baldwin, Ellison, Wright, Dubois, and Van Woodward.<sup>72</sup> This was much different from the Freedom Summer lists that included King, Cash, Harrington, and Smith. Dubois was the only holdover. This followed the assumptions found in Malcolm's articulation of black authenticity, that once a cultural or psychological equality is achieved, political power will somehow follow.

We can see how SNCC changed its pedagogy once it adopted the black nationalist political project. Despite never organizing an equivalent to Freedom Summer, SNCC published new materials for black children and engagement calendars for black adults that highlighted important black leaders and pictures of rural black poverty.<sup>73</sup> In 1965, SNCC published a 51-page booklet titled "Negroes in American History: A Freedom Primer" developed by Bobbi Cieciorcka and Frank Cieciorcka. Unlike good black citizenship pedagogy, where students developed civic vocabularies and learned the history and ideas of the movement by practicing their handwriting and constructing sentences and narratives, *Negroes in American History* supplied a history of black struggles through coloring pictures. While I would be remiss by ignoring the obvious symbolic reference of 'coloring' history as opposed to writing history, the pictures and images that children engaged with mattered.

Rather than represent an idealized history of the current civil rights struggles, the booklet sought to represent an idealized history of black resistance. The Cieciorckas noted the book was a "history about us" and as black students read the book, "ask why haven't I learned about Cherokee Bill, Nat Turner, Pete Sulam, Sojourner Truth and many others in this book who fought against being slaves, and fought for freedom in this country and weren't happy and satisfied".<sup>74</sup> The Cieciorckas had asked this rhetorical question in response to general public education and the liberal project's citizenship schools. Regarding the former, public schools did not teach black history, nor did they refer

to the presence of blacks in history. As for the citizenship schools, they concentrated on the history of the civil rights movement under King's leadership and the importance of good black citizenship.

Second, the Cieciorikas replaced handwriting with coloring. *Negroes in American History* featured pictures for the students to color to learn that blacks have always resisted white domination. One image represented a heroic and hypermasculine black man posed like a comic book superhero. He stands tall, somewhat muscular, with his shoulders back, his eyebrows slightly frowned, and nostrils slightly flared, which signified a look of conviction. The man is holding a flaming torch, and the flames trace back to a large, four pillared house in the style of a southern plantation owner's house. Another image represented a child, with a grown-out 'afro', reading in the bushes out of sight from surveillance of the slave master. The child looks stoic, eyes fixated on the book with a slight smile over his face. Other images dealt with contemporary figures and events in the civil rights movement, including a black farmer who, while plowing his fields, is pushing the plow with his left hand and carrying a single-shot rifle with his right. He is looking over his shoulder, where the farmer's eyes direct us to his 'shack'—a log cabin without any windows or a door. Another image is of a white southern sheriff, with piercing eyes and a look of indifference, holding a gun in his left hand while he leans on a box marked 'ballot box'. A third image depicts a police officer in riot gear hitting black protesters with his baton. The protesters were 'covering up' just as SNCC had instructed. One protester had his arms folded over his head to protect his ears and back of his head. The other protester is crouched over, using his back to absorb the blows.

Taken in its entirety, we can see how the book uses black authenticity to fixate a new interpretation of racial struggles. The characters' bodies provided alternatives to the racially non-threatening bodies of good black citizens. The common theme of violence runs throughout the book. There is the figurative violence of black bodies as strong, hypermasculine, menacing, and threatening to project an aura of power. The rural black farmer survived in a violent southern culture by carrying arms. The southern sheriff used violence to reproduce an idea of white power. The police attacked and beat non-violent protesters attempting to create social change the 'right way'. However, black resistance also meant that there was value in learning and working outside the system, and emphasized being sly and cunning, rather than having 'book smarts'. The general idea was that blacks had to first live and struggle for racial equality in the 'real' world, a world organized by violence and racial differences, before they could entertain ideas of a deracialized nation of good citizens.

### **Purifying the Racial Body**

In addition to the removal of whites and emphasis on a 'real' black history, SNCC also sought to remove boundaries between blacks. One legacy of

Malcolm's black authenticity was dismissing bodily modifications because it represented shame. In 1967, SNCC took this logic of embodied racial purity to its logical conclusion and began to question the social privileges associated with light skin tone. SNCC published a booklet that criticized black colleges, specifically Howard, for training and educating blacks to value light skin:

During its early days, Howard University required you to submit a picture of yourself before you were admitted. Of course, the pictures established your color credentials. If white all right, if black get back; along with the 'palm test'—the palm of your hand had to come damn close to the color of your face in order for you to get in.<sup>75</sup>

The body provides material limits to good black citizenship because the body's surface is still marked by race. Having light skin advances the liberal project only when placed within a discursive framework of good citizenship because light skin tone accompanied by the correct postures, mannerisms, and phonology made light-skinned blacks even more racially non-threatening. The debate over skin tone indicated how meanings of race could be destabilized, and thus changed, depending on the ways blacks controlled and presented their bodies. Creating a common identity around the notion of black authenticity meant eliminating intra-group classifications based on the lightness/darkness of skin tone.

SNCC also authenticated the display of emotions by positing that blacks could only be 'real' in all-black settings. It was whites' physical presence that made blacks act artificial. For SNCC, this was evident in how the "Fisk Jubilee Singers" were "acclaimed gret [sic] because they sang by white standards (four part harmonies, rounded tones, and proper diction) and didn't pat their feet, shout, and get happy—ya'll know, embarrass the race".<sup>76</sup> Music, including its temporal structure and the style in which it was performed, was racially coded as either white or black. Embodied displays of rhythm and emotion communicated to other blacks one's authenticity. Abstaining from emotion and rhythm gave some blacks entrance to white society, but at the expense of the majority of blacks left behind. The limited black entrance into white society hardened boundaries between blacks. This line of thought was extended in SNCC's criticism of Howard for instructing their incoming freshman students on the "dangers" of the black neighborhood, specifically how "'block boys' beat up Howard. If they have to go out at night (to be avoided if possible) try not to go out alone. Avoid community Parities. Always, the posture of the university is how to defend yourself from that savage, wild, uncivilized community".<sup>77</sup>

The focus inward on intra-black boundaries ended up reproducing gender differences within the black community. Carmichael contrasted authentic black women to black women who learned that they should be ashamed of being black from their mothers: "Be sure to pick a nice-looking fellow with

curly hair when you get married dear. Or if your lips are too thick, bite them in. Hold your nose; don't drink coffee because you are black".<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Carmichael continued to called out black women as being the biggest culprits of mutilating their bodies in order to be more like white women. He suggested that if black women wanted to started being authentically black women, then they should stop being "ashamed of your hair and you don't cut it to the scalp so that naps won't show". He urged black women to stop using Nadinola cream to lighten and smooth out the skin because it mimicked the images of beauty associated with white women, and stated that black college campuses "are becoming infested with wigs and Mustangs and you are to blame for it".<sup>79</sup> Carmichael linked this process of bodily mutilation to black women with their choice of careers that hurt the black community. Specifically, Carmichael argued that black women should no longer pursue careers as teachers in segregated schools and social workers because it helped the state repress some blacks in exchange for the benefit of a few blacks. He sarcastically asked if the reason why black women went to college was "so that you can keep the kid in the ghetto school, so that you can ride up in a big Bonneville with [an] AKA sign stuck on the back?"<sup>80</sup> In part, the critique of the black social worker represented the black nationalist rejection of how social workers had 'destroyed' black communities by breaking up black families. However, it also represented a critique of how black women had been too 'close' to whites through their professions and had to create more distance to purify the black community. An authentic black woman was concerned with the well-being of the black family and black community before whites and the state.

In sum, once black authenticity emerged as the dominant framework within SNCC, local activism became associated with black problems. Whites were excluded from the organization, summer programs and pedagogy were modified to emphasize black history, and SNCC accelerated the process of purifying what it meant to be black. The consequences were isolating local black activism from the liberal project and from white support. By authenticating skin tone and the display of emotions, SNCC moved beyond naturalizing differences between whites and blacks and began excluding blacks who did not conform to a narrow reflection of black authenticity. Local problems of poverty became black problems, and the white power structure turned their back on them. Without a national movement willing to speak about local black issues and local projects stressing their autonomy, there was no real pressure for either federal or municipal intervention into the urban black community.

#### **PHASE 4: BLACK NOMADS AND THE DECLINE OF SNCC**

The final phase of SNCC's transformation was how they ceased to be involved in local action and began defining blacks as nomads, people without a home, nation, and as a people who had more in common with

colonial subjects than they did with white American citizens. They no longer organized movement programs around idealized black rural or urban subjects. Instead, the black colonial subject, organized around a white/non-white global racial binary, became the new authentic black political agent. Because SNCC no longer defined blacks as citizens, it began to argue that blacks should no longer be constrained by the legal or normative constraints of good citizenship. In a symbolic move, SNCC became sanctioned as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) rather than a civil rights organization, changed their name to the Student National Coordinating Committee in 1969, and declared that they would practice as a human rights organization in opposition to the Vietnam War and planned to aid in the industrial development of Africa.<sup>81</sup> Thus, it was SNCC's flight to the global level that caused their decline, not the other way around. And in the process of their flight, they abandoned local activism, and left local blacks in the expanding urban ghettos polarized by the tension between good black citizenship and black authenticity.

SNCC authenticated the colonial subject and subsequently began to define American blacks as colonial subjects. Rather than authenticating local urban blacks based on their outsider status, SNCC authenticated historical figures like Marcus Garvey and Delany, the original champions of Back to Africa movements. While claims of authenticity are made by emphasizing distance, this is a case where emphasizing too much distance made black authenticity unattainable for anyone. Instead of making claims for citizenship or even demand that cities improve urban areas, SNCC flirted with the question of the 'migration back to Africa' argument, which has been a foundational idea in black nationalist thought since Delany and Garvey, and as late as Malcolm X's OAAU.<sup>82</sup> In 1967, Carmichael met with African Algerian and Guinean leaders and questioned why blacks were not migrating back to Africa.<sup>83</sup> James Forman circulated to SNCC members a letter regarding the Back to Africa question, suggesting, "We should return to Africa. We should use our skills where they are wanted."<sup>84</sup> The important point here is not whether SNCC should have seriously pursued a 'Back to Africa Movement' or even the merits of such a movement, but how the subject represented a major change of focus. SNCC no longer focused on local problems or the lived experience of blacks. In turn, SNCC began to identify with other nationalist struggles for independence, such as the Puerto Rican Movimiento Pro Independencia (MPI) while downplaying alliances with other black nationalist groups in the US.<sup>85</sup> The Oakland-based Black Panther Party sought a relationship with SNCC. But the relationship hit an impasse as SNCC wanted the Panthers to serve as the military wing, and SNCC as the political wing, modeled after the Chinese revolution, while the Panthers wanted to have a combined military and political operation, modeled after the Cuban revolution.<sup>86</sup>

SNCC's identification as a global group engaged in a colonial struggle also changed how the SNCC viewed poverty. Poverty was no longer a local



black problem that could be solved by obtaining political power to oppose whites. SNCC began to use a language of Marxism to define the capitalist structure as inherently racist and something that could only be addressed by acquiring economic power. Rather than identify specific local whites who controlled the economy, H. Rap Brown associated all of capitalism with whiteness:

It's unreal to talk about black people controlling their communities unless they control the whole country. As long as the man controls the water or electricity coming into your community in a capitalist way, like the man, is not desirable. I think the real issue goes way beyond this idea of geographical control.<sup>87</sup>

Rather than a summer program that focused on education, SNCC planned a "People's Sewing Center" to "to stimulate, politicize, and channel all lasting energies of welfare mothers, black workers, [into a] viable revolutionary-conscious cadre".<sup>88</sup> They also suggested an "Agrarian Reform Program" to unite black sharecroppers and tenant farmers in order to establish a common means of production, land purchases, and political education classes.<sup>89</sup> Finally, they proposed a "People's Medical Center" to provide free healthcare to poor black people, and an all-black political party to protect blacks from political oppression by providing 'survival practices' like "political education, the marital arts, food, clothing, shelter and ultimately revolution."<sup>90</sup> Despite the Marxist language, the body and its relationship to the black family, violence, and politics remained the sites of struggle.

SNCC's transformation into a global 'revolutionary group' also meant that blacks should use both figurative and operational violence to secure freedom. For instance, at a Washington DC airport in July 1967, minutes before he was arrested for his part in a violent protest in Cambridge, Brown declared,

We stand on the eve of a black revolution. Masses of our people are on the move, fighting the enemy tit-for-tat, responding to the counter-revolutionary violence with revolutionary violence, and eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life. These rebellions are but a dress rehearsal for real revolution.<sup>91</sup>

In part, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam previously articulated the difference between global and national struggles, noting that global struggles like the Mau Mau are defined by race and violence. However, this was all just rhetoric that was part of the practices of figurative violence. Although SNCC argued for the use of revolutionary violence, they never maintained enough members committed to practices of violent revolution to mobilize in a meaningful way. However, the suggested use of violent revolutionary practices did lead to increased FBI surveillance under the federal COINTELPRO program that spied on American dissident groups.

SNCC never again managed to organize or implement any political program into practice after the dissolution of the Atlanta Project. Designing programs to provide free healthcare and survival practices in relation to military-political repression did not resonate with American black audiences. While American blacks were aware and supportive of the plight of Africans, and vice versa, American blacks were still American citizens, with new political rights and immediate concerns about economic discrimination, voter oppression, and urban decay/revitalization projects. Furthermore, within a global framework and world capitalist system, SNCC could not bypass the nation-state to appeal to other supranational organizations like the UN. The power of the UN to intervene rests on the shoulders of its most powerful nation-state members—especially the US. Although SNCC, just like Malcolm, appealed to African nations for international support, African nations were still learning how to govern their own populations and how to negotiate their position in the Cold War. Thus, SNCC became a global nomad, a western project that identified with the east, but lacked a territorial base and international support.

## CONCLUSION

The transformation of SNCC and local activism resulted from the interaction of three variables—the type of discourse the movement organized around, the geographical location of the struggles, and portraying the movement as a national, local/regional, or global struggle. It was SNCC's entrance into the rural South that began the process of isolating local problems as something that was qualitatively different than national problems. Federal laws that outlawed job discrimination did not trickle down to the Delta. Consequently, SNCC zeroed in on local problems like the lack of healthcare services and the Jim Crow style of Mississippi racism which mandated that field workers learn how to listen to what was not said. The emphasis on local action inadvertently opened up space for tensions between good black citizenship and black authenticity to increase because of the difficulties of organizing blacks and whites together.

SNCC viewed the rural black farmer as representative of black authenticity for his perseverance that allowed him to survive in the white-dominated world of the rural South. However, the realities of the dangers the black farmer faced meant that, among other things, he would not put down his gun and forego what little protection he could offer himself and his family. The white field workers' somewhat elitist response to the rural farmers and the rural farmers' lukewarm reception to the white field workers only managed to heighten these tensions. The problems in the field combined with SNCC's existing rural and urban black nationalist projects only strengthened the appeal of black authenticity, which transformed local poverty into black problems, and local activism became racially exclusive in its

performers and its audience. By the time SNCC dissolved after an ill-fated attempt at global activism, local black activism was left isolated and independent from national civil rights struggles.

The transformation of local activism highlights an important problem concerning the use of authenticity in politics. Unlike Malcolm whose personal ethics of black authenticity were a method to rediscover what it meant to be black prior to colonialism and slavery, SNCC authenticated existing black subjects whose authenticity was certified by their outsider status. SNCC did not embody an identity that was an alternative to the negative meanings of 'outsider'. This was paradoxical because the local activism sought to change the very conditions that made the outsider—the black farmer, the black slum/ghetto dweller, the black colonial subject—authentic to begin with. Therefore, not only is any given claim to authenticity historically contingent, it is also inherently unstable unless there is no political action exerting force to change the conditions that support one's authenticity. In the absence of a civil rights movement targeting local problems and problems disproportionate to poor blacks like police brutality, racial profiling, absentee and irresponsible individual and corporate landlords, black authenticity has remained relatively stable around the various images of the urban black subject.

The relational nature of good black citizenship and black authenticity ensures that the process of authenticating existing black outsiders anchors black authenticity with bad black citizenship. Unlike the rise of good black citizenship that connoted an abstract bad black citizen and bad white citizen as its opposite, black authenticity concretizes bad black citizenship through bodies and location. The tensions between black authenticity and good black citizenship overshadowed the problem of black poverty, especially the concentration of black poverty in urban areas. Essentially, this tension springs a trap and prohibits racial struggles from ever going anywhere. Blacks have to navigate between white and black and local and national audiences. Go too far in one direction and you risk alienating the others. Regarding local black activism, the question remains on how to bridge a national and local audience while bringing whites and other groups into the equation. Is it possible to organize a political struggle on the local level somewhere between phase 2 and phase 3 of SNCC's transformation? As I reflect on the question of white citizenship in the conclusion, it may be that the moment has passed at the same time commonalties of poverty and bad health have increasingly engulfed the vaunted white middle class.

# Conclusion

## Good White Citizenship and the White Response to the Movement

The black civil rights movement was over by the end of the 1960s. Voting rights were secured, King was dead, and blacks looked ahead to better times amidst new struggles over housing and the quality of public education. Yet, as I have argued throughout this book, the civil rights movement left the US with two competing forms of black political representation that continues to shape struggles for racial equality and constrain black political action. The liberal project encountered a new type of white opposition, one that learned to mask their racism in tax revolts and abstract debates over the 'size' of government. The oil crisis of the early 1970s followed by the period of economic stagflation and deindustrialization placed enormous pressures on the welfare state. The rise of the women's and gay and lesbian movements crowded the social movement field. However, the crowded social movement field created an easy contrast between 'groups of struggle' and whites who 'made it'. What it meant to be white was changing in response to the civil rights and identity movements of the 1960s and 70s. However, what it meant to be black was stuck between the two oppositional poles of good black citizenship and black authenticity. Although blacks attempted to close the gap between black and white citizenship, whites were equally up to the task of maintaining white privilege. Good black citizenship created an opening for some blacks to succeed, but the white response used black authenticity as a representation of bad black citizens dependent on government and an economic burden on good whites to justify rolling back welfare state services and rationalize the state's withdrawal from the business of eliminating poverty. Rather than summarize the book, I want to end on how the white response to the civil rights movement 1) helped accentuate the distinction between good black citizenship and black authenticity, and 2) defined good white citizenship in relation to an ethics of moderation and symbolic distance from groups of struggle.

Black citizenship is organized around the tension between good black citizenship and black authenticity and arises in virtually every instance in which race plays even a minor role. It is important to note that this tension arises within the broader black community and how the white community attempts to define blacks as bad citizens. As I noted in Chapter 2, this

tension appeared over the debates surrounding the relationship between poverty and family structure. Black leaders like Bill Cosby faced criticism for stating that young black men in particular needed to speak 'better English' and stop dressing in a manner that reflected bad black stereotypes. This tension can also modify an individual's prior association with good black citizenship. Take the example of a brief spat between Barack Obama and Jesse Jackson. During the 2008 Democratic primary, Jesse Jackson said he wanted to "cut his [Obama's] balls off" over Obama's support of expanding faith-based initiatives. Jackson felt Obama was "talking down to black people" and that Obama should have attended a rally to support six black teenagers in Jena, Louisiana who were arrested for beating up a white schoolmate. Jackson apologized for the remark, but countered with "black America and urban America also need a structure, and beyond a faith-based policy, which is important, a government-based policy."<sup>1</sup> Jackson was a participant in the liberal project, but in relation to Obama, his mannerisms, choice of words, and argument for more structural change at the local level reflect black authenticity. There is a shared understanding within the black community on the challenges faced by contemporary black Americans. However, the tension arises over the solution to the problem. And the debate over the solution ends up reproducing debates over black citizenship and whether the solution lies on the local or national level.

While the tensions between good black citizenship and black authenticity within the black community maintain the boundaries between local and national struggles, whites, especially white conservatives, use black authenticity to keep marginalized blacks on the margins. The most famous example was Ronald Reagan's story of the 'black welfare queen' during his 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns. Reagan told the story of a black woman in Chicago on welfare who was collecting \$150,000 a year in public benefits. His story was not just a tale of welfare fraud, but also a strategic articulation of the link between black authenticity and bad black citizenship. The story was less about hardening boundaries between whites and blacks as it was delegitimizing the marginalized blacks' claims for social rights in relation to a myth of good white citizens as having 'made it' without the help from the state.

White conservative attempts to define Obama as a representative of black authenticity were a continuous storyline during his 2008 presidential campaign. Obama represents an interesting case on his own simply because different factions within the black community have isolated him as a representative of good black citizenship unresponsive to the local black community while conservative whites have pinned him as a representative of bad black citizenship hell-bent on ruining white America. White conservatives used two claims to link Obama with black authenticity. The first was his relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Obama was a member of the Trinity United Church of Christ, a black church located in

Chicago, Illinois led by Wright. Wright has often used his position in the black church to criticize the relationship between white racism and state policy, and wraps his style, phonology, and style of dress in a manner that reflects black authenticity. The often-reproduced quote that conservative whites use to attack Wright on is:

The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law, and then wants us to sing “God Bless America”? No, No, No! Not God bless America, God damn America!

In a political campaign where every choice of word, dress, and backdrop are carefully scripted, Wright gave John McCain, the Republican nominee for president, rare political ammunition. Wright represented black authenticity, and his connection, his proximity, his closeness to Obama was enough of a link for the McCain campaign to make the argument that Obama was a bad citizen—dangerous, deceptive, and untrustworthy.

Related to his relationship with Wright is the second claim used by conservatives, that Obama was a “community organizer” rather than a leader. The normative representation of a community organizer is someone on the margins seeking to make radical change. This is in stark contrast to the normative image of a good leader, someone who is rational, smart, charismatic, strong. Winston Churchill and Dwight Eisenhower represent the embodiment of good leaders. In contrast, Eugene Debs and Saul Alinsky would be more characteristic of figures who reflect the idealized community organizer. Obama spent time working in the Altgeld Gardens public housing project in the mid-1980s conducting job training seminars and anti-poverty programs—programs that shared the same principles of the liberal project’s citizenship schools and community centers. During this period, Obama’s activities overlapped with William Ayers, a former member of the Weather Underground, a social movement that advocated violence, who was working as a college professor in Chicago, where Obama and Ayers both served on various educational boards in Chicago. McCain’s vice presidential running mate, Sarah Palin, then a governor from Alaska, famously accused Obama of “palling around with terrorists” at a campaign stop in Colorado, and described Ayers as:

Turns out one of Barack’s earliest supporters is a man who, according to the New York Times, and they are hardly ever wrong, was a domestic terrorist and part of a group that quote launched a campaign of bombings that would target the Pentagon and US Capitol . . . This is not a man who sees America as you see it and how I see America . . . Our opponent though, is someone who sees America it seems as being so imperfect that he’s palling around with terrorists who would target their own country?<sup>2</sup>

The rhetorical genius of this passage is the ambiguity of whom she meant by “this is not a man”—is it Ayers or is it Obama? While it could be chalked up to a bad use of a pronoun, the effect was to situate Obama with the South Side of Chicago—a poor black urban area filled with ‘radicals’ like Ayers and Wright. It was a tactic to link Obama with black authenticity to distance him from whites.

White conservative attempts to define Obama as a bad black citizen have been remarkably stable and consistent. Four years after the attempted link to define Obama as a bad black citizen because of his relationship with Wright, *The Sean Hannity Show*, a conservative talk show on Fox News, revisited the Obama-Wright story in an otherwise continuous effort to link Obama with black authenticity. After playing a clip of a 2012 Wright speech that discusses the racial gap over income and power, Hannity and guest Dick Morris chime in:

*Hannity*: “Well, you know, this goes to the heart of the honesty of the President . . . Where did these ideas come from? What motivated him?”

*Dick Morris*: “Does he [Wright] realize that the person that holds the most powerful, focused, important position on the planet is black? I mean, he could have given me the exact same sermon five years ago. And it shows the concept that electing Obama would promote racial healing is really the opposite of what has happened.”<sup>3</sup>

Here, the symbiotic link between Obama and Wright, while obvious to the viewer, is nevertheless stated by Hannity as a reminder to the audience that Obama is bad and cannot be trusted. Hannity and Morris are making a typical post-racial American claim that racism cannot possibly exist because the president is black. The presence of a singular black success story is presented as evidence that racism does not exist, and to say otherwise makes one a bad citizen for stirring up the pot. More importantly, though, is the claim that Obama and Wright are bad blacks who have made racism worse by speaking its name. This echoes the White Citizens’ Council’s and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce’s attempts to blame King for provoking violence in whites.

Despite white conservative attempts to define Obama as a bad citizen, it has not stuck. Nor will it. One of the limits of analyzing how people, struggles, or claims are ‘framed’ is that there is no explanation on why some frames work while others do not. Text alone cannot define someone or make ideas appealing. The continued attempts to define Obama in terms of black authenticity do not stick because he does not look like, act like, sound like, or think like a representation of black authenticity. Obama embodies good black citizenship, from his absence of emotions, to his good posture, neat style of dress, and reflection of the caring patriarch. Trying to convince anyone outside the margins of the Republican Party does not

work. The body provides limits to how society can define, describe, and classify someone, and this case, Obama's body provides protection from the conservative's rhetorical violence.

Despite Obama's embodiment of good black citizenship that protects him from claims that he is a bad citizen, the same cannot be said of blacks closer to or on the margins. Reagan's story of the 'black welfare queen' worked because she embodied the combination of black poverty, an urban location, and bad citizenship. When Clinton ended welfare as we know it with the 1996 Personal Responsibility Act, it was the same subject, black women, who, while not singled out as welfare queens, were still portrayed as bad black citizens who could work, but refused. When radio talk show host Don Imus described the Rutgers women's basketball team as a bunch of 'nappy-headed hoes', it was a shorthand way of conveying every negative black stereotype about a black woman in relation to heteronormative femininity, location, and family life associated with black authenticity and bad citizens into a single phrase. One of the interesting things about the murder of Trayvon Martin, the teenage boy from Florida who was followed and then shot by a so-called neighborhood watchman by the name of George Zimmerman, was how a black hooded sweatshirt became authenticated as a representation of bad black citizenship. I, for one, was taken back because I have been wearing hooded sweatshirts of all colors, but especially black, since the late 1980s and never once viewed it as an article of clothing reserved for blacks. Following the story of Martin's killing, all over the news were embodied performances of blacks and whites in black hooded sweatshirts protesting the criminalization of young black men. All of these examples accompanied outraged black and some white citizens. Yet, as the 'coming out' of the black hoodie shows us, the outrage further cemented the association between local black stereotypes and bad citizenship.

## WHITE CITIZENSHIP AND NEOLIBERALISM

Although it is obvious that the emergence of good black citizenship had an enormous impact on black citizenship, what is less obvious is its impact on white citizenship. By situating good black citizenship in relation to bad white citizenship, the liberal project severed the connection between 'white' and 'good citizenship'. Whites could no longer draw from an existing culture of American liberalism accented by a Protestant work ethic to fashion whites as good citizens. The underlying assumption that whites were good citizens helped to reconcile the racial contradictions of American democracy and hide white poverty. The more progress the liberal project made through desegregating public spaces and securing legislative gains, the more of what it meant to be white became unsettled. The historical importance of white ethnicity—Irish, Italian, Polish identities—that defined neighborhood boundaries declined and 'white ethnicity' became a symbolic rather than a



legal identity for whites.<sup>4</sup> The stability of the post-war white racial frame weakened, which prompted multiple strategies from white elites to reproduce white privilege through a declaration of a southern manifesto that declared a massive resistance against desegregation, recycled myths of the happy and ‘complacent Negro’, and increasingly blamed blacks as the cause of their own economic, educational, and political problems.<sup>5</sup> Yet, rather than end white privilege, the liberal project inadvertently helped usher in a new form of white privilege embedded in good white citizenship.

Unlike black political representation, white citizenship is not organized around two easily recognized and competing poles. In fact, good white citizenship, while it still symbolically reflects the idealized American citizen, is not as definitively defined at all. Bad white citizenship is easy to identify. Bad white bodies, such as the dirty and bad-mannered whites who attacked the SNCC activists, or the racially threatening police, make for an easily visual and non-discursive distinction. Add to that overt racial slurs and what you end up with is a marginalized form of bad white citizenship that rarely emerges. Bad white citizenship still exists, but it works as a form of “rhizome racism”. It works just beneath the surface of society as a consistent undercurrent that occasionally reaches the surface and becomes public. It is not the dominant form of racism, like a color-blind/institutional racism, but it does provoke a strong renouncement from good whites whose renouncement of racial slurs functions as a way to mask their own white privilege. The difference between rhizome racism and institutional racism would be how a gang of whites throws a brick through the window of a home owned by a black family versus tax cuts for a housing development in the far corners of a suburban community that encourages white flight and urban sprawl. The former is an example of rhizome racism that confirms that bad white citizenship still exists and how good whites publicly condemn bad whites as an exhibition in good white citizenship. The latter is an example of institutional racism that shows how racism works in everyday life and is completely ignored by the media and policy makers. It does not get the media attention despite its role in reproducing white privilege in everyday life through school inequality. Because institutional racism captures the dominant workings of race in society, I think it is important to connect the normative idea of good white citizenship with the development of political and economic policy since the civil rights movement. Therefore, I will turn my attention to good white citizenship.

Unlike bad white citizenship, good white citizenship is open and flexible in its adaption of normative values. In some respect, this is the logical conclusion of white privilege. Power does not have to justify its own existence if it can maintain its privilege through repetition. Repetition of various practices, including how we talk, dress, what we spend our money on, and how we emote in public, are associated with historical understandings of goodness. Repetition links the present to the past, which disproportionately benefits good whites who cite precedent and past success to

justify their lofty status in society. But there is more. Good white citizenship is embodied differently than bad white citizenship, good black citizenship, and black authenticity. What it means to be a good white citizen was achieved through a joint process of distance and moderation.

### Good White Citizenship and Moderation

Moderation emerged as a feature of good white citizenship during the white response to the liberal project and good black citizenship. During the civil rights movement, local whites stressed the need for patience, that moving too fast was a bad idea because southern whites were not ready. King expressed his disappointment in who he referred to as “white moderates” because they responded to black claims for rights “paternalistically” and “believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a more ‘convenient season’”.<sup>6</sup> This was the case in the white southern response to desegregating schools, where schools districts stalled or ignored the *Brown* ruling on the grounds that white parents were not ready. In other words, it is not that good whites were racist, it was just other whites, bad whites, were not ready for racial inequality and blacks should slow down, not quit, but not demand too much.

Despite their best efforts, whites could not stop the civil rights movement. In the process, though, whites turned this discourse of moderation inward. Moderation was the main theme in Pritchett’s approach to policing black protests. Continue to arrest and deny blacks the right to protest, but do it in a way that does not make whites look bad. After the Voting Rights Act, moderation became a general practice of good white citizenship. Moderation organized a process of how whites reflected idealized citizenship by bracketing out extremes of bad white practices associated with rural poverty and the excesses associated with the wealthy northeastern industrialists. It structured the mindset that one was ‘middle class’ despite and in spite of actual levels of income and wealth. A middle class mindset was reinforced by an emphasis on meritocracy and personal responsibility rather than biological superiority to explain success.<sup>7</sup> In turn, good white citizenship is equally open to cashier, factory worker, and secretary as it is to physician, lawyer, or college professor. This is made possible because each extreme provided a limit that let one know that they went too far. In the process, the emphasis on moderation in organizing a middle class mindset helped make a southern culture of populism coincide with a new South economy that shifted political power out of the black belt and into the larger southern metropolitan areas.

Moderation also stabilizes a mindset rooted in the overemphasis of ‘personal responsibility’ that explains all successes and avoidance of poverty as the result of individual good behavior. Economically, good behavior is defined as the avoidance of debt and paying one’s bills on time. Good

whites avoid debt by ‘living within their means’ through buying a moderately priced home, a nice car but not an expensive car, by saving their money, and spending wisely. Of course, much of the good white lifestyle is made possible by generous tax deductions, such as the interest on mortgage and individual retirement account (IRA) contributions, federal infrastructure spending and tax credits that relocate businesses away from urban black areas, not to mention the long-term advantages of higher pay and lower periods of unemployment relative to blacks. An ethic of moderation ties personal responsibility with the ideal of independence. I can manage myself. I can manage my finances, my household, and I don’t need ‘help’ from the state. In essence, the decline of “states’ rights” as a serious political discourse was replaced by the rise of personal responsibility to rationalize the gutting of the American welfare state that started in the 1980s.

The emphasis on moderation and good white citizenship was remarkably different from good black citizenship despite a strong ethics of caution embedded in both. Good black citizenship emphasized optimizing good citizenship based on becoming closer to the idealized American citizenship. In some cases, this led to the exaggeration of good citizenship to take advantage of the limited opportunities available to good blacks. The difference between moderation and optimization is the result of the ‘continuing significance of race’ regarding citizenship. Race matters because good white citizenship develops in relation to both idealized citizenship and good black citizenship. Similar to King’s insistence that blacks should never imitate whites because it would reaffirm associations between whites and good citizenship, whites optimizing idealized citizenship would be akin to relinquishing white privilege. In this regard, good white citizenship is achieved when moderation is linked with distance.

In sum, one unmistakable feature of good white citizenship is how it draws from moderation to reconcile dueling processes of repetition and flexibility. Whereas good black citizenship and black authenticity have become somewhat fixed, despite the ever increasing expansion of what can be authenticated as a representation of bad black citizenship, good white citizenship is constantly being tweaked by various forces and events. The emphasis on moderation transformed a normative ideal of hard work and its accompanying embodied image of the good factory worker into an ideal of personal responsibility and its embodied image of the good service sector worker as the underwriter of good white citizenship.

### **Good White Citizenship and Distance**

The second process that defines good white citizenship is distance. What it means to be a good white citizen is more than coding and masking racism. Good whites sought to physically and symbolically distance themselves from bad whites, good blacks, and bad blacks. However, the process of distance that pertains to good white citizenship is different than how

the black nationalists used distance. The black nationalist used distance to claim that what it meant to be black was irreducible to being white and was part of their claims to govern all-black communities. The black nationalists used distance to authenticate bodies and empower urban black political culture. In contrast, good white citizenship uses distance to reproduce and protect good white citizenship from being polluted by the physical and symbolic presence of undesirables. This is made possible by the expansive nature of good white citizenship that is organized by a shared emphasis on moderation to create a culture of middle class that is not achievable by bad whites or bad blacks, but is theoretically open to good blacks. Furthermore, the physical and cultural distance that organized good white citizenship coincided with the new post-war economy based on science and new technology, and allowed good whites to benefit economically during a time of national deindustrialization. Looking at the post-war era, three inter-related developments stand out as indications of the importance of distance and good white citizenship: 1) the relationship between desegregation and suburbanization during the civil rights movement, 2) the post-*Brown* resistance to school integration anti-busing campaigns, and 3) the move from the ‘Rustbelt’ to the ‘Sunbelt’.

### Segregation and Suburban Sprawl

Good white citizenship has a geographical location—the American suburbs. Lassiter argued that the southern white suburbs, especially on the outer southern rim, organized politics around ‘middle class entitlement’ and solidified a middle class identity. Thus, suburbanization was in reality the “long-term convergence of southern national politics around the suburban ethos of middle-class entitlement”.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, by the 1970s many suburbs were called “sundown towns” because they were 100% white and it was physically unsafe for blacks to go there ‘after the sun went down’.<sup>9</sup> This was not just an instance of rich and wealthy whites moving to the suburbs, but how suburban communities are racially homogenous and feature a diversity of classes.

The emergence of good white citizenship during the process of suburbanization operated in a manner that minimized class differences between whites. For example, Kruse showed that whites left neighborhoods and abandoned integrated public spaces prior to suburbanization.<sup>10</sup> Basically, as blacks moved in, whites moved out. What was more important than whites leaving was how whites began to use a language of rights—their right to select their neighbors, employees, and the right to be free of the federal government—combined with what he calls a politics of respectability. Kruse argued that the leaders of the homeowners associations that sprung up in Atlanta in the late 1950s presented themselves as “hardworking, honest homeowners, concerned about their families, their homes, their neighborhoods, and their schools”.<sup>11</sup> In essence, the white

homeowners associations made claims for rights based on a notion that they were good white citizens just as the liberal project did with symbolic black citizenship claims. Not only did the image of good white citizenship accompany whites as they moved away from blacks and whites who could not afford to move out of the city, but good white citizenship was embodied by various family relations (the family of four), creation of leisure time (sports and vacations), youth cultures (pop and rock music), employments (office versus factory), and the abandonment of the voluntary sector that organized white suburban life.

The growth of the white suburbs between 1940 and 1970 also served as an incubator for the new right and the rise of neoliberalism. As good white citizens began to physically distance themselves from blacks, they simultaneously were symbolically distancing themselves from all groups of struggle. Good white citizenship did not renew white southern claims for states' rights, but it did reconcile the contradiction between benefiting from an active and involved government while demanding that it cease interfering with one's life. Good suburban whites disproportionately benefited from government policy, such as jobs from defense contracts, FHA loans, and federal spending on road construction. McGirr found a similar process in Orange County, California, far away from the civil rights battles.<sup>12</sup> She documented how a conservative coalition formed in suburban southern California around coffee gatherings and at the kitchen table of "white-collared, educated, and often highly skilled men and women".<sup>13</sup> The conservative coalition took shape in silent opposition to groups of struggle—blacks, women's liberation, gays, and secular humanists. Whereas the Atlanta homeowners associations emphasized the honest and hardworking qualities of Weber's Protestant work ethic, the 'suburban warriors' of southern California emphasized their own individual entrepreneurial successes to symbolically distance themselves from groups of struggle.

Thus, the good white response to desegregation was to create physical and symbolic distance from groups of struggle. Good white citizenship was embedded in the cinder-block foundations of suburban ranch homes. The process of creating distance allowed good white citizenship to have an expansive feature. In theory, hard work is the main feature of 'blue collar' whites while entrepreneurialship and risk-taking is the feature of 'white collar' whites.<sup>14</sup> Good white citizenship eliminated this distinction. Consequently, class differences between whites were minimized. An ethic of moderation will guide one to success, not pre-existing levels of familial wealth, favorable tax policy, or income levels. This minimization of class differences allowed good white citizenship to be expansive and incorporate all the normative meanings attributed to instrumental success. In contrast, good black citizenship was very narrow and required a detailed attention to one's embodied self. Bad black citizenship was expansive and grew as urban segregation and poverty grew. Bad white citizenship, though, functions as

a mausoleum for old racism and bad behaviors defined by excess and irresponsibility. In a sense, the emergence and subsequent reproduction of good white citizenship minimized the perception that race and class matter and replaced it with the mythical-normative belief in the relationship between personal responsibility and economic success.

### Segregation Academies and the Anti-busing Movement

Related to the rise of the white suburbs was the white response to racially integrated schools. However, good whites not only moved to the suburbs to avoid sending their children to school with black children, they also changed the normative meaning of “private” to connote a sense that all things private were superior to all things public. Southern segregationists began to formulate their response to federally mandated school integration in anticipation to the *Brown* decision. Segregationists and state senators in Alabama originally prepared various plans that gave parents the right to send their children to either a racially integrated or segregated school. However, these plans could not overcome the federal mandate that all publicly funded schools would have to be integrated. Therefore, under the leadership of the senator from Jefferson County, Albert Boutwell, who would replace Bull Connor as mayor of Birmingham in 1963 during the midst of the Birmingham Movement, proposed that schools should be privatized. Boutwell’s Pupil Placement Act, passed in 1955, gave the state of Alabama the right to abolish public schools, allowed the state to give financial aid to private schools, allowed school boards to ‘gift’ public facilities to private owners, gave parents the choice to send their kids to segregated or desegregated schools, removed the word ‘public’ and ‘school’ from the state constitution, and authorized the city to privatize any public-owned property that was subject to integration.<sup>15</sup>

The debates over privatization helped fuse good white citizenship with a normative understanding of ‘the taxpayer’. Ironically, the emphasis on taxpayers emerged in relation to whites’ inability to keep public spaces segregated. When his plan to abolish public schools in Alabama did not get through the state legislature, the White Citizens’ Council leader and State Senator Sam Engelhardt explained that integrated schools were a waste of white taxpayer money. He told audiences that “in my county [Macon, County] we are spending \$696,000.00 in 1953 on negro education. We are spending \$85,000.00 on the white school system in 1953”.<sup>16</sup> Because of the failure of Atlanta’s white neighborhood associations to keep blacks out of white urban neighborhoods, segregationists switched their attention back to schools. Segregationist Governor Herman Tallmadge stood behind Georgia’s private school plan that gave tax credits to families to send their kids to private schools instead of using state revenue to pay for public schools. The Tuition Grant Law gave every child in Georgia a guaranteed private education, and by 1962, over 1,000 grants were given to upper class whites

who already had their children in private schools.<sup>17</sup> Working class whites began to reject this policy because they resented subsidizing the education of rich white children. However, they also resented their tax money paying for public services they no longer used. Whites unable to move and whites who moved away from blacks harbored this resentment and began to allude to themselves as *the* taxpayers to justify why they should have control over *the* community, not just the white community.

Whites could not leave their white fears of integrated schools as easily as they left blacks behind in the city. In the South, the issue of school segregation expanded from the city to the metropolitan level. The Unified Concerned Citizens of America (UCCA) were an anti-school integration group made up of white middle class professionals that demanded a return to neighborhood schools and claimed reverse discrimination in response to court-ordered busing between urban and suburban school districts. According to Lassiter, the UCCA brought together homeowners, taxpayers, and parents into a single issue of busing.<sup>18</sup> However, the UCCA had mixed results. They were successful at keeping Fulton County (Atlanta) schools divided by urban and suburban municipalities, but unsuccessful in Charlotte which annexed suburban school districts. The anti-busing movements were more violent and a juridical mess in the North, especially in Boston, Massachusetts. Unlike Charlotte, where they bused black students outward, Boston was required to bus white students from white neighborhoods into black neighborhoods. In Boston, the group Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR) organized the anti-busing protests, including non-violent protests, and was supported by local elites.<sup>19</sup> The end result in Boston was similar to the southern cities. White families moved out or sent their children to private schools rather than bus their children into the black ghettos. Whites who could not afford to move responded with physical assaults on blacks, who fought back with violence. By the mid-1990s, only 17% of Boston's public schools were white.<sup>20</sup>

The post-*Brown* white resistance to school integration had an enormous impact on good white citizenship. Once the liberal project severed the relationship between white and good citizenship and split white citizenship into good and bad, good white citizens modified their tactics to keep their children in all-white schools. A commonality between the privatization efforts and the busing efforts was an elevation of good white citizens as "taxpayers" and the elevation of the notions of "private" over "public". Good white citizenship reconciled this difference—the simultaneous elevation of taxpayer (a public identity and civic duty) and private (the negation of a public identity) by emphasizing control—control over budgets, control over communities, and the control over groups of struggle. Although everyone pays taxes, in the form of income taxes, sales taxes, property taxes, and payroll taxes, good whites rallied around the idea that they were the only ones who paid taxes.

## Government Policy and the Rustbelt/Sunbelt

The federal government was a willing ally in distancing good whites from groups of struggle. Federal spending on defense that awarded generous contracts to engineers continued spending on roads and infrastructure in suburban areas, housing policy that facilitated suburban expansion, and a system of southern tax credits and incentives to lure industrial manufacturing to the South, which all helped create the metropolitan Sunbelt as the political impetus for American politics. Indeed, the state's role in urban development has been well documented by urban sociologists since the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Before neoliberal economic globalization shifted the US manufacturing sector to Asia, it shifted it from the northeast to the southern rim, Texas, and the Southwest. The embodiment of good white citizenship became the normative image standing behind federal policy that ended up gutting what was left of the political power and regional economy of the Northeast, leaving in its wake concentrations of black urban poverty and rural white poverty.

The southern liberal business groups embodied the modern southern businessman—an idealized businessman who practiced moderation in his economic affairs, styles of consumption, and led the southern drive to eliminate racial violence because it was bad for business.<sup>22</sup> They distanced themselves from the old South associated with the dying planters and dwindling industrialists by creating their own political networks. They created a political climate that was safe for northern expansion by backing Pritchett's police style. They were also rewarded by the Johnson administration for their efforts to quell the black civil rights movement with a disproportionate amount of federal funding to support the oil, leisure, and technology sectors. The association of the modern southern businessman was extended to all southern workers. Cobb documented how industrial surveys used phrases like 'native-born' to indicate a surplus of white workers, which were combined with other buzz words like 'labor climate', 'availability', 'productivity', 'attitudes', 'favorable political climate', to define areas that were insulated from civil rights struggles.<sup>23</sup> In other words, northern industries sought out good white areas and the federal government used economic policy that made it possible for the companies to relocate there.

Federal policy was not favorable to all whites, just good white citizens. The jobs created by these federal programs disproportionately helped good whites who understood their 'middle class' lifestyles as the result of personal responsibility. They did not need help from unions or special rights from government. The 'unskilled' manufacturing and textile jobs that paid a decent wage in the North because they were unionized relocated to 'right to work' states and paid workers less. These programs disproportionately hurt whites and blacks on the margins because the tax credits used to attract business did not produce any additional revenue. Indeed, they actually had



the opposite effect of costing the state money, and states were forced to cut spending on education and social services.<sup>24</sup> But the success of good white citizens contributed to the illusion of wasteful social service spending and the success of tax credits to create jobs. Studies on welfare states have noted that means-tested policies are the first to go during a budget crisis because the marginalized populations they serve have no political power.<sup>25</sup> Rather than just look at what is cut, I think it is vital that sociologists also consider upward redistribution policy, the transformations in welfare state policy that steer benefits and surplus to the top, specifically through favorable tax policies, state spending, or the reallocation of resources. Welfare states are reconfigured, not dismantled. And despite the hoopla of globalization ‘flattening the world’, support for neoliberal political and economic policy depends on the reproduction of good white citizenship to provide the normative and embodied image to attract broader white support for neoliberal welfare state reform.

In sum, good white citizenship was a significant factor that guided favorable economic policy into the southern rim and Sunbelt. The effects of this policy not only benefited white communities, but had a “double-conditioning” effect of reproducing the same normative image of good white citizenship that directed the federal and northern capital to the Sunbelt in the first place. The spatial and embodied component of good white citizenship is mutually reinforcing the same way black authenticity and urban slums/ghettos are mutually reinforcing. Good white citizenship initiated the move to all-white suburbs, which also came to define good white citizenship, and subsequently, used the normative idea of good whites to attract other good white citizens, some good black citizens, and excluded the rest. Bad black citizens were left in the urban areas and provide the normative images of ‘the poor’ that put means-tested programs on the chopping block in the 1980s in favor of tax cuts for the wealthy.

### **Good White Citizenship and Neoliberalism**

At this point I would have to ask if there is any doubt that an unspoken notion but shared understanding of what it means to be a good white citizen did not create the pretext for the neoliberal turn in American politics? Although a separate study is still needed that links good white citizenship with the full range of neoliberal policies—tax cuts, privatization, deregulation, and fiscal austerity—the two processes of moderation and distance that organized good white citizenship is a start. An idealized ethic of moderation guides the mythical success of the good white citizen who makes it on their own. It also reconciles the contradiction between ideological beliefs and the actual workings of the state. One of the most important political ideologies that emerged in the 1970s was the pitfall of ‘big government’. Good whites reject any notion that their successes are a result of government policy despite disproportionately benefiting from it.

Good white citizenship is also reproduced through its physical and symbolic distance from groups of struggle. The post-war development of suburbs ensured whites disproportionately benefited from government policy and embodied a culture that was quite different from the loathed urban black subject. The neoliberal turn has accompanied whites' return to cities, where states now subsidize the renovation of warehouses into lofts, the construction of new condominiums, and the revitalization of old brownstones, which has not only created gentrification, but has also renewed old anxieties over integrated schools. Whether they are called gifted and talented programs within public schools, charter schools, private schools, or school structures that create a handful of good schools at the expense of the rest of the school system, we find the same process of creating physical and symbolic distance. Thus, the emergence of the four forms of racial citizenship continues to serve as an iron anchor; while allowing for some individuals to float around and give the appearance of movement, it ensures that we cannot stray too far from its source.



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# Notes

## NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

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  5. Amy Kate Bailey, Stewart E. Tolnay, E.M. Beck, and Jennifer D. Laird, "Targeting Lynching Victims: Social Marginality of Status Regression?," *American Sociological Review* 76 (February 2011): 412–436.
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  7. Training SNCC Staff to Be Organizers, SAV Box 46, Folder SNCC Publications.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. Case study: Statement of discipline on non-violent movements, SAV Box 47, Folder 5.
  10. SCLC Citizenship Workbook, CC Box 3, Folder 2; WF Box 29, Folder 13.
  11. Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Polletta, *Democracy Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) have both noted how talking end ups stymieing social action.
  12. Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action*, forward by Bayard Rustin (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 64.
  13. Oppenheimer and Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action*, 67–72.
  14. Wacquant, *Body and Soul*.
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  32. Hendrick Smith, "Segregation Stronghold," *New York Times*, 16 August 1962.
  33. Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 361.
  34. James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 253.
  35. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Atlanta, GA field office. FBI files on Albany, GA, 1961–1965. Memorandum. Racial Situation, Albany, Georgia, Racial Matters. In Series Title Racial Matters, Georgia (Albany), Files 157–6–2–486 through 157–6–2–556.
  36. Hendrick Smith, "Dr. King Accused in Georgia Plea," *New York Times*, 1 August 1962.
  37. Raines, *My Soul Is Rested*, 361–362.
  38. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) has documented the importance of terror groups use buildings as backdrops for their actions in order to demonstrate the weakness of a dominant group. While the civil rights movement was far from a terror organization, they did stage their demonstrations at architecture and places.
  39. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Files 157–6–2–231 through 157–6–2–350.
  40. King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson (New York: Warner Books, 1998a), 159.
  41. Carl Grafton and Ann Permaloff, *Big Mules and Branchheads: James E. Folsom and Political Power in Alabama* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985).
  42. Clyde F. Snider, "County and Township Government in 1935–1936," *The American Political Science Review* 31, no. 5 (1937): 884–913; Snider, "County and Township Government in 1937," *The American Political Science Review* 32, no. 5 (1938): 936–956.
  43. Despite court challenges, the Alabama Supreme Court upheld the use of the patronage system in *Yelding v Alabama* 1936.
  44. Glenn T. Eskew, *But For Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); J. Mills Thornton, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home; Birmingham, Alabama: The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Touchtone, 2002).

45. SCLC Part 2, Reel 4, pamphlet: "The Day We Went to Jail in Birmingham."
46. Raines, *My Soul Is Rested*, 365.
47. The difficulty in recruiting local blacks coupled with Connor's predictable violent response prompted Wyatt Walker to recruit teenagers and young children for the marches (see Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 264).
48. Shuttlesworth was a long-time Birmingham black civil rights activist noted for his courage because he did not fear Connor or Birmingham's whites. For a biography on Shuttlesworth, see Andrew M. Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).
49. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 255; Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out*, 378–379.
50. Eskew, *But For Birmingham*, 275.
51. Quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 251.
52. Thorton, *Dividing Lines*, 391.
53. Special Report from Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, Selma, Alabama, 26 September 1962, RF Box 1, Folder 1.
54. Charles Fager, *Selma, 1965* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974).
55. SNCC Special Report: Mississippi Image and Reality, March 1965, SAV Box 47, Folder 5.
56. Flyer to Join Citizens Council—Dallas County from 1963, SAV Box 46, Folder 2.
57. See Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, for his first-person accounts, as well as the SNCC publication Special Report: Selma, Alabama, 26 September 1963, SAV Box 48 Folder 2.
58. The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin', distributed by the Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce, CC Box 1, Folder 8.
59. *Ibid.*
60. 90 Negroes Arrested in Selma, Alabama Protest Demonstration. Special White Posse Formed, SAV Box 48, Folder 2.
61. Henrik Smith, "Mayor of Albany, Ga., Accuses US Aide of Fomenting Unrest," *New York Times*, 15 July 1962.
62. Clark famously 'snapped' at Annie Lee Cooper, who publicly berated him for his prior racial violence, and proceeded to drag her down a block, marking a distinct and decisive return to violence.
63. *COFO News*—notes from Selma, SAV Box 48, Folder 13.
64. On how the different federal and national response to the Reeb and Liuzzo killings affected SNCC, see Carson, *In Struggle*, 161.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

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2. *Ibid.*
3. Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response*.
4. Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."
5. Indeed, the Nation of Islam viewed communism and socialism as 'white ideology' and Christianity as a white religion or slavery and death; see Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 18, 28, 119.
6. McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970*; Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*.
7. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream*.
8. William W. Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1994).

9. Louis E. Lomax, *To Kill a Black Man: The Shocking Parallel in the Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Los Angeles: Holloway House, 1987); James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991); Louis Decaro, *Malcolm and the Cross: The Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Christianity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
10. Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* was the other important text for the black nationalist groups of the 1960s. However, it appealed primarily to those attempting to organize around ideas of pan-Africanism, which competed with ideas of black capitalism for influence within the black nationalist project.
11. Also see Dean Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) on how black nationalism reproduced racial inequality.
12. Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From Its Origins to the Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1967).
13. William L. Van Deburg, ed, *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
14. Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants to Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 6 (May 1938): 894–907; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*; Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*.
15. E.U. Essien-Udon, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
16. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*; Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999); Essien-Udon, *Black Nationalism*.
17. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 199–203.
18. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 201.
19. Malcolm, "The Ballot or the Bullet," in *Chronicles of Black Protest*, edited by Bradford Chambers, 206–211 (New York: A Mentor Book, 1968), 208.
20. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 81.
21. Malcolm, "Black Man's History," in *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches by Malcolm X*, edited by Imam Benjamin Karim, 23–66 (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1971a), 57.
22. Malcolm, "Black Man's History," 49.
23. Malcolm, "Black Man's History," 43.
24. Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley*, 133–153.
25. Nation of Islam, quoted in Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 172–173.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Malcolm, "The Playboy Interview: Malcolm X Speaks with Alex Haley," in *Malcolm X: As They Knew Him*, edited by David Gallen, 109–143 (New York: Carrol & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1992a), 111.
28. Malcolm, "Interview with Kenneth Clark," in *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*, edited by John Henrik Clarke, 168–181 (Africa World Press, 1991b), 141.
29. Malcolm, "America's Gravest Crisis since the Civil War," in *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, edited by Bruce Perry, 59–79 (New York: Pathfinder, 1989a), 63–64.
30. For examples and discussion of how medical discourse has been fixated to specific groups to marginalize them, see Seidman, *Difference Troubles*; Peter Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders* (John Hopkins Press, 2007); Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself*; Susan E. Lederer, *Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).



31. Lederer, *Flesh and Blood*, 129–135.
32. Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley*, 56.
33. Malcolm, “James Farmer and Malcolm X: A Debate at Cornell University,” in *The Rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Haig A. Bosmajian and Hamida Bosmajian, 59–88 (New York: Random House, 1969), 74.
34. Malcolm, “God’s Judgment of White America,” in *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches by Malcolm X*, edited by Imam Benjamin Karim, 121–148 (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1971b), 126.
35. Malcolm, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* (New York: Pathfinder, 1990), 32.
36. Malcolm, “The Playboy Interview,” 153.
37. Typical of how the black nationalist political project used an idea of racial separation to shape an identity was the following utterance by Malcolm X: “I believe that a psychological, cultural, and philosophical migration back to Africa will solve our problems. Not a physical migration, but a cultural, psychological, philosophical migration back to Africa—which means restoring our common bond—will give us the spiritual strength and the incentive to strengthen our political and social and economic position right here in America” (Malcolm, “Final Views,” 152).
38. Malcolm, “America’s Gravest Crisis since the Civil War,” 67.
39. Malcolm, “Message to the Grass Roots,” in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle*, edited by Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, 248–261 (New York: Penguin Books, 1991a), 251.
40. Malcolm, “Not Just an American Problem, But a World Problem,” in *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, edited by Bruce Perry, 151–181 (New York: Pathfinder, 1989b), 160.
41. Malcolm, “The Playboy Interview,” 117.
42. Malcolm, “Black Man’s History,” 75.
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44. Malcolm, “Message to the Grass Roots,” 253.
45. Malcolm, “Malcolm X Proclaims Muhammad as the Man of the Hour,” in *Rhetoric of Racial Revolt*, edited by Roy Hill, 304–317 (Denver, Colorado: Golden Bell Press, 1964), 313; Malcolm, “A Partial Transcript of a Sermon by Malcolm X at Elder Solomon Lightfoot Michauxs New York Church of God,” in *Malcolm and the Cross: The Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Christianity*, edited by Louis A. Decaro Jr., 223–235 (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 225.
46. Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 77–128 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
47. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
48. Hohle, “Politics, Social Movements and the Body.”
49. Malcolm, *Malcolm X on Afro-American History*, 21–22.
50. SNCC—1966: Committee by Stokely Carmichael, Chairman Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, SAV Box 48, Folder 5.
51. Some Proposals for a Housing Campaign, Mendy Samstein Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI (hereafter cited as MS).
52. Untitled/no author—Atlanta Project draft for housing project, MS Box 1, Folder 1.
53. A Call for a Freedom NOW Day: An All Black Party for 1964, RF Box 1, Folder 2.

54. Report from Bill Hall, NY office: What's Happening in Harlem, 24 November 1965, based on visits with Harlem groups, e.g. HARYOU, SAV Box 47, Folder 1.
55. 1966 flyer titled: Slumlords Must Go, MS Box 1, Folder 1.
56. Untitled/no author—Atlanta Project draft for housing project, MS Box 1, Folder 1.
57. Some Proposals for a Housing Campaign, MS Box 1, Folder 1.
58. SNCC press release, 15 February 1966, SAV Box 48, Folder 1.
59. The Nation of Islam demanded land reparations, not financial ones, because the idea of owning land distinguished them as a sovereign entity. Although the broader black nationalist project backed away from demanding land claims, they continued to establish black business and housing ownership as a practice of controlling and managing black neighborhoods.
60. Memo to staff from S. Carmichael, Bob Mantis, Tina Harris, Alabama staff (1966), Re: Proposal for a 'poor people's land corporation, SAV Box 46; "Tent Cities," Friends of SNCC memo, SAV Box 47, Folder 46.
61. "Tent Cities," Friends of SNCC memo, SAV Box 47, Folder 6.
62. News of the Week #4, 16 March 1966, SAV Box 46.
63. News of the Field #5, 23 March 1966, SAV Box 46.
64. See Carson, *In Struggle*, 193, on how Ware attempted to distinguish himself and his pan-Africanism ideology from the rest of SNCC; Atlanta's Black Paper, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Atlanta, GA—Vine City Project Records, 1960, 1965–1967, Box 1, Folder 7, Publications and New Print Material, 1966–1967 (hereafter cited as SNCCATL).
65. The Nitty Gritty, September 1967, written by Gwendolan Robinson, SNCCATL.
66. Ibid. Atlanta's Black Paper, 25 August 1966, SAV Box 47, Folder 9.
67. Atlanta's Black Paper, SNCCATL, Box 1, Folder 7, Publications and New Print Material, 1966–1967.
68. Letter from Frank Robinson to Mayor Ivan Allen Jr, SNCCATL.
69. Atlanta's Black Paper, compiled by the Atlanta Project of SNCC, dated 25 August 1966, SNCCATL Box 1, Folder 7, Publications and New Print Material, 1966–1967.
70. The letters and telegram exchanges between the SNCC leaders are located in Roberta Yancy Papers, Folder Student Nonviolent Research Coordinating Committee Reports, Memos, Research Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York (hereafter cited as RY).
71. Bill Ware reply to James Forman, located in RY Box 1, Folder Student Nonviolent Research Coordinating Committee Reports, Memos, Research Papers.
72. Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-poverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Hohle, "The Color of Neoliberalism: The 'Modern Southern Businessman' and Post-war Alabama's Challenge to Racial Desegregation," *Sociological Forum* 27, no. 1 (March 2012): 142–162.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

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2. Letter from Ulysses Everett to Gwen Robinson, 23 May 1966, SNCCATL.
3. Church service pamphlet, CC Box 1, Folder 7.
4. "An Analysis of the Civil Rights Movement" by John Churchville, SNCCATL Box 1, Folder 11 (Black Power and SNCC 1966).

5. Lynn Owens, *Cracking under Pressure: Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
6. McAdam, "The Framing Function of Movement Tactics"; McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970*.
7. Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, 124–125.
8. Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 175–222.
9. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream*.
10. Polletta, *Democracy Is an Endless Meeting*.
11. Key theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century social theory is the problem of isolation and individualism as a condition of modernity. Marx called it alienation, Durkheim called it anomie, and Weber called it disenchantment.
12. Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Viking Press, 1965); Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*; Carson, *In Struggle*; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*; Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*; John R. Rachel, "We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer," *American Education Research Journal* 35, no. 2 (1998): 167–198; Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
13. Roberto M. Fernandez and Doug McAdam, "Social Networks and Social Movements: Multiorganizational Fields and Recruitment to Mississippi Freedom Summer," *Sociological Forum* 3, no. 3 (September 1998): 357–382; Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism," *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 3 (November 1993): 640–667.
14. What is COFO? Mississippi: The Structure of the Movement and Present Operations, COFO Publication #6, CC Box 1, Folder 1; RS Box 1, Folder 1.
15. Overview of the Political Program, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
16. Ibid.
17. Freedom School Data, published by Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), CC Box 1, Folder 2; RS Box 1, Folder 5.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Non-material Teaching Suggestions for Freedom Schools, CC Box 1, Folder 2.
21. Overview of the Political Program, page 11, published by COFO, CC Box 1, Folder 3.
22. Overview of the Freedom Schools II, CC Box 1, Folder 2.
23. Quoted in Carson, *In Struggle*, 111.
24. COFO letter to those accepted to teach at Freedom Schools, RS Box 1, Folder 1.
25. Ibid.
26. Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
27. Non-material Teaching Suggestions for Freedom Schools, CC Box 1, Folder 2.
28. Ibid.
29. Overview of the Political Program, page 5, published by COFO, CC Box 1, Folder 3.
30. "Mississippi Handbook for Political Programs" published by COFO, RS Box 1, Folder 3.
31. The General Condition of the Mississippi Negro" distributed by COFO, COFO publication #1, October 1963, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
32. Memorandum Overview of the Community Centers, CC Box 1, Folder 1.

33. Pamphlet titled "Mississippi Freedom Summer" published by COFO, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
34. Memorandum: Overview of the Community Centers," CC Box 1, Folder 1; RS Box A, Folder 3.
35. What is COFO? Mississippi: Structure of the Movement and Present Operations, COFO publication #6, CC Box 1, Folder 3; RS Box 1, Folder 3.
36. Special Report: Medical Committee for Human Rights, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
37. What is COFO? Mississippi: Structure of the Movement and Present Operations, COFO publication #6, CC Box 1, Folder 1; RS Box 1, Folder 3.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Some Proposals for a Mississippi Project: Summary of Freedom Schools for COFO project, SCLC Part 4, Reel 2.
42. Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer, CC Box 1, Folder 1.
43. 1964 Platform of the Mississippi Freedom School Convention, RS Box 1, Folder 4.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. United Freedom Democratic Party (n.d. 1966), MS Folder 1.
53. Draft memo on proposal: How to take advantage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, RY Box 1, Folder Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Reports, Memos, Research Papers 1965–1967.
54. Ibid.
55. Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).
56. No transcripts exist on what Malcolm said to SNCC or any of Malcolm's encounters and meetings with African leaders. For reference, see Carson, *In Struggle*, 135–136.
57. See RY Box 1, Folder Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Life with Lyndon in the Great Society.
58. Life with Lyndon in the Great Society vol. 1 no. 41 (11 November 1965), RY Box 1, Folder Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Life with Lyndon in the Great Society.
59. See Carson, *In Struggle*, 229–243.
60. On Political Organization, by Jim Forman (for the February 1967 SNCC Meetings), SAV Box 48, Folder 5.
61. 'Soul food' commonly refers to a group meal consisting of, but not limited to, a combination of collard greens, black-eyed peas, catfish, fried chicken, cornbread and others.
62. Carson, *In Struggle*, 164.
63. SAV 47–12 pamphlet "We Want Black Power" from the SNCC Chicago office, 1966, SAV Box 47, Folder 12.
64. Memo from Julian Bond to Executive Committee Secretary and Chairman. Re: Suggestions, EB Box 6, Folder 3.
65. Some aspects of black-white problems as seen by field staff, CC Box 1, Folder 1.

66. Statement by John Lewis (letter) at 1965 February staff meeting, CC Box 2, Folder 18.
67. Carson, *In Struggle*, 240.
68. Bill Ware memo on why whites should be expelled from SNCC, RY Box 1, Folder SNCC Reports, Memos, Research Papers 1965–1967.
69. Freedom Schools: The Reasons Why, Freedom School meeting, 25 April 1966, SNCCATL Box 1, Folder 12 (Freedom Schools).
70. The Battle against the New Welfare, Spring 1966, SNCC Cen Com Box 1, Folder 8.
71. Pamphlet: “The Story of SNCC” dated 1966, RS Box 1, Folder 10.
72. Proposed Education Program Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SAV Box 47, Folder 10.
73. For example, see the 1967 and 1968 SNCC Engagement Calendars, RY Folder SNCC—formation of.
74. Negroes in American History: A Freedom Primer, by Bobbi Cieciorca and Frank Cieciorca, published in 1965 by The Student Voice, 51 pages, RY Folder SNCC—formation of.
75. Black Body White Mind, published in 1967, 11 pages, published by the Student Voice, SAV Box 46.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Carmichael, “Speech at Morgan State College,” 121.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. SNCC’s International Affairs Program, SAV Box 48, Folder 1; May staff meeting, 1–12 May 1967, SAV Box 48, Folder 2; Untitled, by H. Rap Brown 1967, SAV Box 48, Folder 5.
82. James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935–1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
83. Carson, *In Struggle*, 276–277.
84. Letter from James Foreman, Re: Trip to Zambia for the United Nations International Seminar on Apartheid, July 1967, RY Box 1, Folder SNCC, Life with Lyndon and the Great Society.
85. Speech delivered by Stokely Carmichael, SNCC chairman, before the student body at the University of Puerto Rico, SAV Box 46; Joint statement of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Movement for Puerto Rico Independence (Movimiento Pro Independencia, MPI), SAV Box 46.
86. Julius Lester, *All Is Well* (New York: Morrow Books, 1976), 234.
87. Interview of Brown by Robert Allen of the Guardian, SAV Box 47, Folder 12.
88. SNCC Peoples Sewing Center, SAV Box 47, Folder 9.
89. SNCC’s Agrarian Reform June 17–19 68/69, SAV Box 47, Folder 12.
90. “SNCC Black Political Party” by H. Rap Brown, SAV 48–5, SNCC 1968—Flyer for James Forman 1968, SAV Box 48, Folder 1.
91. Statement made by H. Rap Brown minutes before he was arrested in the Washington DC airport 26 July 1967, CC Box 2, Folder 18.

## NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. *Washington Post*, “Rev. Jackson Apologizes to Obama; Crude Comment Disparaged Senator,” 10 July 2008, section A, page A4.
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