

order. Many patterns, themes, and issues, link these essays, however. Lake, Tonn, and Killingsworth and Palmer explore how various strategies, tactics, and arguments function for protesters themselves; Burgess, Andrews, and Browne observe how they function for extrinsic target audiences. Burghardt, Railsback, and Darsey trace the evolution of protest rhetoric over time, identifying changes in tactics and arguments as they are shaped by historical, organizational, and oppositional pressures, opportunities, and constraints. Studies by Conrad and Stewart each focus on the role of rhetoric in a very specific moment of transformation in the history of a movement. Zarefsky and Murphy both address "establishment" influences on protest. Finally, some essays offer distinct vantage points on social movements. Browne locates significant protest work occurring in a single text; Campbell defines an entire movement by its distinctive style and argument; while Olson and Goodnight emphasize the space of social controversy.

These groupings are not exclusive—the essays fit easily into several critical categories—nor do they represent all the potential topoi, or critical topics, explored in the studies. For instance, Tonn and Stewart focus on rhetoric; Campbell and Browne explore style; Burghardt, Railsback, and Goodnight and Olson analyze argument; Andrews, Killingsworth and Palmer, and Zarefsky explicate rhetorical form; Burgess and Lake address audience; and Conrad, Darsey, and Murphy emphasize context. And there are many more valuable combinations. Collectively, however, the studies in this section exemplify and extend the theoretical issues and concepts explored in earlier sections of this collection. Ideally, these essays will lead us to further questions and research, and perhaps inspire theoretical and historical debates about how rhetoric has shaped efforts at social transformation.

The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?



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"Black Power" has displaced "Freedom Now" as the most significant symbol of the civil rights movement. "Freedom Now" was a challenge directed primarily at the South; "Black Power" challenges the culture at large, more particularly in the North. The rhetoric of Black Power is a response to a long history of communications between white and black in American culture—finally putting Negro citizens unmistakably on the offensive, stating their claims as citizens and human beings. This change of strategy, however, may be shocking to a large number of Americans accustomed to seeing the Negro on the defensive. The nonviolent rhetoric of Freedom Now continued this trend, while the rhetoric of Black Power clearly reverses it. Thus, many if not most Americans find this new rhetoric abhorrent. They do not like being told, especially by Negroes, that their culture is wrong. As the current retort has it: "This time, they've gone too far!"

Neither the culture at large nor its leadership takes pains to distinguish sharply between the violence of deeds and the violence of words. If the one is threatening and therefore to be discredited and ultimately suppressed, then so is the other. The growing tendency of the culture to respond in this way to the rhetoric of Black

Power could spell tragedy for Negro and culture alike. For both now seem bent upon a collision course. If the collision course is to be altered or reversed, then the civic culture may have to alter its strategy so that both parties to the conflict may undertake a different level of talk and action. Essential to such a change, however, is an alternative interpretation of the rhetoric of Black Power.

The apparent necessity for the culture at large and its leadership to answer this rhetoric threat for threat and rejection for rejection, whether in word or deed, hardens responses to the rhetoric of Black Power. This necessity may, however, be only apparent. Perhaps Black Power advocates actually do intend to "burn the culture down," to employ the idiom of H. Rap Brown, or to persuade others to do so. The leadership of the culture need not respond in kind, when to do so serves to assign this extreme meaning to the rhetoric of Black Power. By the same token, the President of the United States need not have labelled extreme Black Power advocates "poisonous propagandists."¹ Norman Cousins need not have responded in kind with a harsh editorial entitled "Black Racism" in *Saturday Review* later in the same month; he took pains to call Black Power advocates "violence-prone extremists" and "dangerous fools."² If the culture and its leadership choose to respond as if illegitimately attacked, they thereby solidify this particular interpretation of the rhetoric of Black Power as the ground for a battle on the public stage.

The rhetoric of Black Power may be interpreted in another way, however. Perhaps these militant Negro advocates utter not a call to arms but a call for justice, a call uttered outside law and order because they see no recourse within the institutions that prescribe what law and order actually mean for many Negro citizens. The rhetoric of Black Power may be the only strategic choice they have. Nevertheless, behind all the sound and fury of this rhetoric may lie the intention merely to force upon the culture a moral decision.

When the culture does decide to respond one way rather than the other, it will choose the strategy most suitable to its character as a democratic culture. No one, least of all the opponents, will consider an alternative interpretation, however, until convinced that an undesirable collision is all but inevitable without a change of course. Nor will anyone be convinced of this grave risk unless he first understands the major forces comprising the cultural situation from which the conflict emerges, nor until he also understands how the rhetoric of Black Power necessarily causes the conflict to reach crisis proportions the moment it enters upon the public stage. Without the Black Power advocate the clear and present danger would not exist, yet the central issue of the crisis exists whether he proclaims it or not. Examination of the trends of the conflict will reveal why he apparently *must* proclaim it; this is the first task. Examination of the crisis will reveal what happens when he *does* proclaim it; this is the second task. The final task is to offer a reinterpretation of the rhetoric of Black Power as the basis for a solution that may reverse the collision course and allow the democratic culture to be true to itself.

The three forces most directly responsible for the civil rights crisis are: the issue at the heart of the crisis, the traditional strategy of the culture as applied to this particular crisis, and the strategy of the Negro advocate. All of these forces emanate from the political context which accords each its respective nature and power. Riots, demonstrations, and volatile talk occur in all countries. In the United States, however, these indicators of crisis have a special meaning because of the democratic culture. The three major forces shaping the crisis can be understood only after a brief digression into the fundamental nature of the democratic civic culture, its

traditional profession of faith, its institutional commitments, and its understandable preference for consensus rather than conflict.

In a brilliant study of comparative democratic politics, Almond and Verba point out that a democratic civic culture functions efficiently only when relatively free from divisive conflict and strife.³ Intense and persisting dissension over substantive issues on a culture-wide scale can be mortal. Consequently, citizens of the democratic culture tend to remain uninvolved in the decision-making process during stable periods, and, although always potentially active, they tend to become actively involved only when their interests are threatened. The tension between involvement and non-involvement underlying normal operations of the civic culture allows its institutions to work with relative efficiency in practice, while restrained from excesses by an ideal of potential activism and involvement.

When a crisis such as the present one arises, however, the balance of tension between activity and passivity is affected. Activism heightens the conflict and a breakdown of efficient operations may threaten the normal functioning of the civic culture. Under such circumstances, the leadership and the culture at large will seek to redress the balance as quickly as possible and at minimal cost to the healthy functioning of the culture. The normal balance will be restored by satisfying the demands of those most active or by compromise. When compromise is impossible, however, and demands are not satisfied, activity may become so intense and widespread that virtually no one remains passive. In this extreme, the crisis can provoke violence, even civil war, not an unknown occurrence in American experience.

While over-activity is a sign of crisis in a democratic culture, an abundant source of crisis is the necessary tension between freedom and order. The democratic civic culture professes a fundamental moral commitment to the freedom of self-determination (liberty, equality before the law, equality of opportunity) without which it is not democratic. Yet the culture is also committed to the processes, procedures, and institutions that protect this ideal and actually permit its realization in everyday life; it is committed to "business as usual." The civic culture must maintain a balance between these two commitments—freedom and order—since a marked imbalance toward one would threaten the other, as occurs in anarchy (freedom without order) and tyranny (order without freedom). Therefore, a threat to either commitment can induce a crisis, as an attempt to restore the customary balance.

A peculiar tendency apparent in American political tradition poses dangers when crises occur; for the culture may then pay a price for its enthusiasm for consensus and tranquility. The critical balance between freedom and order, between activity and passivity appears weighted clearly in the direction of order and passivity even in normal, stable times. The basic freedoms at the moral foundation of the culture are themselves actually realized for most citizens within the institutions and processes by which "business as usual" is conducted; they become submerged there, and they are unconsciously identified with the system itself. As Louis Hartz indicates, a nation "born free" has little need to make an issue of freedom;⁴ consequently, citizens can afford to forget about freedom during daily operations of the culture. This imbalance of tensions is preferred also because most citizens have benefited greatly from "business as usual": "They never had it so good!" As a result, they have an understandable commitment to order over freedom, and they may easily lose sight of the dependence of the system of order itself upon the democratic commitment to freedom as well as to order.

In normal times, any threat to individual freedom and activity is usually removed by traditional processes and procedures, and no crisis arises. Even in times of war, the external threat to the civic culture as a whole is believed to be so great that only extreme libertarians worry about the limits placed upon freedom, and again crises are normally avoided. "Business as usual" functions efficiently throughout the culture when the threat to freedom is relatively localized or when it is aimed at the survival of the culture itself. However, when the threat is no longer localized and does not yet endanger the survival of the culture as a whole, the potential for internal crisis arises. The civil rights conflict is a classic, if not historic, case. A minority suffers restriction of freedom and becomes excessively active in order to counteract the complacency, or even the aggressive opposition, of those citizens who may feel that the freedom of other citizens is expendable. A crisis may be about to be born.

The movement of the culture in relation to such crisis should be clear and understandable. The strategy that is natural and traditional to the democratic civic culture emerges, by extension, when a widespread and intense crisis threatens to upset the preferred balance of tensions. The culture at large and its leadership, in particular, tend to insist upon an increased emphasis on order and passivity so as to restrict freedom and activity and consequently to return to the required state of equilibrium and tranquility. Having no other option in the face of what may be or may become a threat to its existence, the civic culture necessarily utilizes its traditional strategy to suppress the threat. Yet it may be unable to exercise this option against such a threat without also threatening its character as a democratic culture.

From the point of view of many Negro citizens, the character of the civic culture may be precisely what is at stake in the civil rights crisis. These citizens appear to seek what they have not been given, what they cannot actually take, and yet what the democratic culture, being democratic, cannot in good faith deny them: self-determination as citizens and human beings. Negroes do not ask that the basic system be altered or that something new be added to it; they cannot be identified, on this issue, with the far left or the far right. Negro citizens are in dead-center. Thus, the substantive issue dividing them from the culture at large is its denial of their right to self-determination. To resolve the issue, the culture need only reverse its denial. The issue remains unresolved, however, and worse, the crisis appears to intensify despite recent progress in civil rights reform.

How can this be? There is no controversy about the inconsistency in affirming the democratic commitment while denying its full application to Negroes, nor about the necessity to reverse this denial if the culture is to be true to itself. Why, then, does the culture not do in its many public acts what it has recently and repeatedly admitted in its public rhetoric that it must do? This is a question that long perplexed traditional civil rights advocates and framed the rationale for the rhetoric of Freedom Now, with its moral and legal emphasis upon the democratic commitment.

The inescapable conclusion is that the issue actually does not lie in the *fact* of the denial but in the *reason* for the denial. Since nearly everyone admits that the denial is morally illegitimate, then the continued denial appears to suggest that the culture does not wish to be true to itself. Yet, since the denial is not generally and systematically applied to any other group as it is to Negroes, then it is not a widespread denial of the democratic commitment itself, but only a denial of its application to Negro citizens.

Why the special treatment? The reason for the denial is revealed to be racist, and the true issue of the crisis becomes the racist moral issue. Both appear to posit the uniqueness of the Negro citizen as justification for deny him the right to self-determination. Is this justification legitimate? It is sometimes legitimate for the democratic culture to affirm its commitment to freedom and yet to deny freedom to individuals when the denial is justified, for example with regard to aliens and some criminals; such individuals are not "citizens." However, since Negroes must certainly be considered "citizens," then the only ground on which the denial could be based is that these "citizens" are Negroes. The denial is racist and its justification is therefore illegitimate.

The core of the moral issue, then, is not the substantive and legalistic issue of self-determination for Negro citizens, nor even the moral fact of the culture's denial, but rather the racist issue that divides the culture at large from its Negro citizens. The expression of the issue in terms of self-determination and civil rights correctly denotes its substantive content in relation to the democratic tradition of the civic culture, and thereby suggests steps to be taken to correct the denial once the culture decides to move fully in that direction. To express the issue in racist moral terms, however, denotes that the culture may not yet have decided to move fully in that direction, on racist grounds.

No other explanation of the conflict appears to reveal why the civic culture has moved so slowly to reverse its denial to Negro citizens, nor why the crisis harbors such intensity of feeling and divisiveness of purpose. Thus, the moral issue of race may be considered the engine that drives culture and Negro advocate alike to a choice of strategy that is likely to result in collision course.

During the earlier, civil rights stage of the conflict, the dominant leadership of the culture showed an awareness, as it still does, of the substantive moral contradiction and of the necessity to remove it. The leadership and many citizens consequently realized their responsibility to redress the imbalance of tension between order and freedom and to move in the direction of greater freedom and equality for Negroes. Seen as a civil rights crisis of relatively limited proportions, a proportionately limited application of traditional strategy appeared effectively to maintain the normal balance of tensions. It did so, however, at cost to some citizens and institutions (primarily in the South) and at the cost of limited gains for Negro citizens. These limited gains were consistent with the limited strategy and aims of traditional civil rights advocates and the limited willingness of citizens and institutions to respond to their strategy and to the strategy of the culture. One cannot deny, however, that the strategies of the Negro advocate and the civic culture worked more or less in harmony to achieve gains, however limited, under the aegis of the civil rights movement.

A shift in the issue can bring only a shift in the use and effectiveness of traditional strategy. Once Negro advocates move from the courts, the city halls, and other sanctioned centers of decision into the streets, or, with fiery words, upon the public platform, the response of the culture at large and of its leadership also shifts. The threat posed is perceived by the culture to be out of all proportion to the issue of the crisis, when the culture and its leadership are either unable or unwilling to recognize that the issue has shifted from civil rights to race. Thus, the culture may fail to realize that its traditional strategy, so recently effective, now becomes paradoxically ineffective.

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