

THE BLACK MANIFESTO AND THE CHURCHES: THE STRUGGLE FOR  
BLACK POWER AND REPARATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

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A Thesis  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

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May 2013

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## ABSTRACT

James Forman's Black Manifesto demanded \$500 million in reparations from the nation's white churches and synagogues for their financial, moral, and spiritual complicity in the centuries of injustice carried out upon African Americans. Many African-American ministers in the North embraced the Black Power ideology and supported Forman's call for financial redress. These Northern clergymen had become exasperated with an interracial civil rights movement that neglected to confront the systemic racism that permeated the nation's culture. Black Manifesto activists attempted to compel the white churches into paying reparations by interrupting worship services and occupying church buildings throughout the urban North. While the vast majority of the American public believed that the Black Manifesto was simply an attempt to extort money from the white churches, there was a racially diverse contingent of clergymen who wholeheartedly supported the call for reparations.

The primary reason that Philadelphia became one of the key arenas in the struggle for reparations was the presence of Muhammad Kenyatta, the local Black Economic Development Conference leader. Kenyatta implemented myriad confrontational tactics in an attempt to cajole the Philadelphia-area denominations into responding affirmatively to the Black Manifesto's demands. The young activist was able to form an alliance with influential leaders within the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. Paul Washington, an African-American minister, and Bishop Robert DeWitt, a white clergyman, supported the Black Manifesto and encouraged their fellow Episcopalians to do likewise. The duo's support for the Black Manifesto encouraged the Episcopalians to become the first predominantly white denomination to pay reparations to the Black Economic

Development Conference. Although the payment was just \$200,000, the concept of supporting a militant African-American organization was more than many conservative Episcopalians could tolerate. The debate over the Black Manifesto at the denomination's 1969 Special General Convention also enabled many African-American ministers to express long-held grievances regarding racism in the Church.

A detailed examination of the rancorous debate over the Black Manifesto in Philadelphia complicates any simplistic narrative of the struggle for racial justice in the North. While many historians have blamed Black Power activists for derailing the civil rights movement, this study reveals that the fight against structural racism in the North generated political unity among African Americans that has lasted to the present day. The conflict among Philadelphians over the Black Manifesto was in no way split along racial lines. Many of document's most vehement supporters were white while many of its greatest detractors were conservative African Americans. The dispute over the Black Manifesto in Philadelphia illuminates the intellectual diversity present within the African-American population as well as the Black Power movement itself.

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This paper is dedicated to my father, Elias George,  
who is by far the best historian in the family.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Wilbert Jenkins for his patience and support over the duration of this project. I would also like to thank my father, Elias George, and my brother, David George, for taking the time to proofread my paper. David, an excellent writer himself, made many suggestions that improved the paper immensely. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Nora George, for her encouragement and moral support.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

BEDC	Black Economic Development Conference
BMCP	Baptist Ministers' Conference of Philadelphia
BPU	Black Presbyterians United
BPUM	Black People's Unity Movement
CBC	Council of Black Clergy
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CSRC	Christian Social Relations Committee
CWBCC	Citywide Black Community Council
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GCSP	General Convention Special Program
IFCO	Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBEDC	National Black Economic Development Conference
NCBC	National Committee of Black Churchmen
NCC	National Council of Churches
OIC	Opportunities Industrialization Center
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
UBCL	Union of Black Clergy and Laity

## INTRODUCTION

While the vast majority of civil rights movement historiography focuses on nonviolent protest in the Jim Crow South, scholars should not overlook or diminish the contributions of Northern civil rights activists who fought for racial justice on their own terrain. African Americans in the urban North faced less overt racism than their Southern counterparts, but they still encountered racial discrimination that was deeply ingrained into the very fabric of society. De facto segregation forced millions of African Americans into impoverished ghettos in cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Labor unions dominated by ethnic and familial ties fought desperately to keep African Americans from joining their ranks. White flight to the suburbs left dwindling urban tax bases to oversee crumbling infrastructure and failing school systems. In the face of these overwhelming challenges, Northern civil rights activists attempted to formulate a coherent and effective response to the unique obstacles that they confronted.<sup>1</sup>

The Black Power ideology emerged as a potent weapon against systemic racism in the North. A growing number of activists eschewed integration as the paramount goal of the civil rights movement and attempted to claim control over their own communities. Rather than assimilate themselves into a capitalist society they perceived to be inherently racist, Black Power advocates strove to unify African Americans outside the purview of white oversight or involvement. While nonviolent protesters appealed to the federal

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<sup>1</sup> There are several important books that focus on the fight for racial equality in the North. See Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds., *African American Urban History Since World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008); Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

government for protection, Black Power adherents refused to petition the white power structure for their civil rights. Instead of integrating into a society that operated on the basis of white power, they implemented myriad strategies and tactics to forge an identity separate from their oppressors.

One unique manifestation of the Black Power movement was the call for white churches and synagogues to pay reparations for their financial, moral, and spiritual complicity in the centuries of injustice carried out upon African Americans. This campaign for reparations was launched when James Forman, one-time executive director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), issued the Black Manifesto at the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC) in Detroit on April 26, 1969. The activist demanded \$500 million from the country's white churches and synagogues and presented a scathing critique of American society. Forman called the United States "the most vicious, racist system in the world" and brashly demanded "15 dollars per nigger" as reparations. He encouraged African Americans to use "whatever means necessary" when "confronting our white oppressors." Forman also militantly asserted that in order "to win our demands we will have to declare war on the White Christian churches and synagogues and this means we may have to fight the total government structure of this country."<sup>2</sup> The activist directed African Americans to disrupt church services and occupy church-related offices and agencies until the Black Manifesto's demands were met. Not surprisingly, Forman's extreme rhetoric led many to label the document as Marxist, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and seditious.

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<sup>2</sup> James Forman, "The Black Manifesto," in *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*, ed. Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), 114-126.

The Black Manifesto's threatening rhetoric overshadowed what many reparations advocates considered to be overly modest demands. Forman called for the creation of a Southern land bank, African-American-owned publishing companies and television stations, a research skills center, and an African-American university in the South. He also wanted to establish a National Welfare Rights Organization, a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund, and an International Black Appeal.<sup>3</sup> These programmatic demands were applauded by most reparation advocates, but many activists were disappointed with what they considered to be the paltry figure of \$500 million, (although Forman eventually raised his reparations demand to \$3 billion) while others were upset that the Black Manifesto did not call for the creation of a separate African-American nation.

James Forman's initial presentation of the Black Manifesto on April 26 at the NBEDC received very little coverage from the national press. In fact, it was not until a week after the conference in Detroit that Forman's document ignited a national firestorm of controversy. On May 4, the brash activist interrupted the Sunday morning service of New York City's prestigious Riverside Church and presented the Black Manifesto to the stunned congregation. The Riverside Church, an affluent congregation renowned for its civil rights advocacy and liberal theology, became the venue from which Forman catapulted himself and the reparations movement into the national spotlight. The congregation's minister, the Reverend Dr. Ernest Campbell, had earlier denied Forman's request to present the Black Manifesto during the church service. Undeterred, the activist and six others strode down the aisle and proclaimed their reparation demands from the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

pulpit as many of the 1,500 worshippers filed out in disgust.<sup>4</sup> The disruption of Riverside's worship service was hailed by most Americans as blackmail and extortion. However, some religious leaders supported Forman's call for reparations and viewed the Black Manifesto as prophetic. They perceived the document's explosive rhetoric as descriptive of what would happen if the call for reparations was ignored, not prescriptive of what Forman hoped would occur.

In order to better understand the conflict engendered by the Black Manifesto, it is necessary to examine how the reparations debate played out on a local level. Black Manifesto supporters interrupted church services and occupied church buildings throughout the urban North. The level of activism in a given city was often the direct result of the brashness and charisma of the movement's leaders there. While cities across the nation experienced turmoil and conflict over the Black Manifesto, few urban centers could match the intensity and sustained level of protest as Philadelphia. The primary reason for this was the presence of Muhammad Kenyatta, the local Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) leader and the organization's national administrative vice chairman, who implemented many confrontational tactics that drew much attention to the fledgling movement.<sup>5</sup> His blistering critique of the Philadelphia-area churches and remarkable persistence and intellect earned him respect from his friends and foes alike.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Emanuel Perlmutter, "Black Militant Halts Service at Riverside Church," *New York Times*, May 5, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 202. After the NBEDC gathering in Detroit, the group demanding reparations formally named their organization "BEDC," which was familiarly called "bed-cee."

<sup>6</sup> There is a paucity of scholarly articles regarding the Black Manifesto in terms of specific cities or targeted religious groups. See Jerry K. Frye, "The 'Black Manifesto' and the Tactic of Objectification," *Journal of Black Studies* 1 (September 1974): 65-76; Keith Dye, "The Black Manifesto for Reparations in Detroit: Challenge and Response, 1969," *Michigan Historical Review* 35 (Fall 2009): 53-83; Keith Dye, "Lessons in Hearing Human and Divine Discontent: The Black Manifesto and Episcopal Leaders and

An integral reason for Muhammad Kenyatta's success was his alliance with two liberal leaders within the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. Father Paul Washington, the African-American rector of the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia, and Bishop Robert DeWitt, a white clergyman, were strong supporters of the Black Manifesto and provided a source of moral and spiritual legitimacy for Kenyatta and BEDC. Washington played a critical role in communicating the concepts of Black Power and racial reparations to suburban white Episcopalians and also became an important leader in Philadelphia's Black People's Unity Movement (BPUM). Despite belonging to a predominantly white denomination, Washington's Church of the Advocate became a center for Black Power activism in the city. Stokely Carmichael, the SNCC activist who popularized the term "Black Power," was just one of many notable Black Power advocates who made appearances at the Church of the Advocate. Washington also hosted the 1968 Black Power Conference in which over 8,000 activists from across the nation gathered in Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup>

Paul Washington also helped Muhammad Kenyatta to commandeer the platform of the 1969 Episcopal Special General Convention held at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. The takeover of this national church gathering led to the first payment made to BEDC by a predominantly white denomination. Although the Episcopalian Church denied that the \$200,000 payment was reparations, the argument

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Congregations in the Detroit Area," *The Journal of African American History* 97:1-2 (Winter-Spring 2012): 72-91; Elaine Allen Lehtreck, "'We are Demanding \$500 Million for Reparations': The Black Manifesto, Mainline Religious Denominations, and Black Economic Development," *The Journal of African American History* 97:1-2 (Winter-Spring 2012): 39-71.

<sup>7</sup> Paul M. Washington and David Mcl. Gracie, *"Other Sheep I Have": The Autobiography of Paul M. Washington* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). Washington's autobiography provides excellent insight into the connection between his Christian faith and Black Power activism. It also illuminates the political polarization within the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

was basically semantics in order to placate the denomination's conservative members. Despite the African-American Episcopalians' success in procuring funds for BEDC, they were deeply hurt and frustrated that their denomination refused to pay the organization directly. Instead, they used the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) as middlemen to funnel the payment to BEDC.

Bishop DeWitt's liberal theology and political views had rankled conservatives within the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania since his arrival in 1964. The bishop's unwavering support for Washington's Black Power activism and his recruitment of two radical priests, urban missionaries David Gracie and James Woodruff, helped to set the stage for the conflict over the Black Manifesto within the diocese. DeWitt refused to censor Washington or fire the controversial duo despite heavy pressure to do so from conservative Episcopalians. After much consternation and debate over the Black Manifesto, the diocese initiated a \$500,000 restitution fund that was to be distributed by African-American Episcopalians. However, the restitution fund commission was highly ineffective due to internecine conflicts over which type of community groups to support. The conservative members of the commission favored contributions to well-respected organizations run by upper-class and well-educated African Americans, while the commission's liberal faction encouraged support of grassroots organizations centered in African-American neighborhoods. Ironically, BEDC did not receive any financial support through the restitution fund even though it was the impetus behind the group's creation. Despite Bishop DeWitt's progressive leadership, the conservative whites and their African-American allies within the diocese successfully limited the financial resources allocated to African-American grassroots organizations.

While BEDC received minimal direct funding from the nation's churches, most denominations were pressured from within and without to commit greater financial resources towards African-American economic development. Furthermore, dialogue and conflict spurred on by the Black Manifesto brought many African-American ministers to the forefront of their primarily white mainline denominations. However, in the end, conservative backlash within individual church bodies stopped them from honestly addressing their past and present complicity in creating and sustaining racist economic, political, and social structures within American society. Ironically, the very same revolutionary rhetoric and confrontational tactics that initially drew attention to the Black Manifesto also provided an avenue for reactionary elements within the Church to dismiss the legitimacy of the call for reparations.

This study will build upon recent scholarship that expands the geographical parameters of civil rights movement historiography northward and also challenges the notion that Black Power had a degenerative effect on the fight for racial justice in the North. In *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, Matthew J. Countryman depicts Black Power as a constructive and galvanizing force that enabled the city's African Americans to consolidate tangible political power that has lasted to the present day. Countryman's portrayal of Paul Washington's transition from integrationist to Black Power advocate provides an excellent case study of how many African Americans became disillusioned by an interracial civil rights movement that failed to address structural racism in American society. He also deftly describes Kenyatta's confrontational tactics and masculine bravado within the context of the era's gender politics.

Thomas J. Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* also provides a geographical shift to the study of race in America. The author cautions scholars to avoid the pitfalls of "simple dichotomies between integrationism and black power" that neglect to take into account the complex and dynamic nature of individuals and their beliefs. Sugrue argues that many activists held "seemingly contradictory ideas simultaneously" and that "many blacks fashioned a politics not easily defined as nonviolent or violent, integrationist or separationist."<sup>8</sup> The author accentuates the wide-ranging intellectual diversity among African-American activists in the North, a topic that is sorely missing from mainstream historical narratives of the civil rights movement.

In the light of Sugrue's observations concerning the complex and dynamic nature of Northern activists, *"Other Sheep I Have": The Autobiography of Paul Washington* is an indispensable source that shatters many common misperceptions regarding Black Power. Washington describes his involvement in the Black Power movement and his role in calling upon the Episcopal denomination to pay reparations. The minister lived with the inherent tension of being an African-American within an overwhelmingly white denomination. Ironically, Washington espoused Black Power beliefs even though he ministered within the integrationist framework of the Episcopalian Church. Furthermore, Washington's alliance with Bishop DeWitt illuminates an interracial aspect of Black Power that is for the most part neglected by historians. There were many white activists who intellectually grasped the meaning of Black Power and were able to support the movement without seeking to appropriate it. The significant presence of white support for

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<sup>8</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xxv.

Black Power further complicates any simplistic narrative of African-American history in the North.

## CHAPTER 1

### BLACK POWER AND THE BLACK MANIFESTO

The advent of the Black Manifesto and the reparations movement must be observed within the context of the growing influence of the Black Power ideology among African-American clergy in the North during the 1960s. One important milestone of the Black Power movement within the Church was the formation of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) in July 1966. The NCBC was comprised of ministers within predominantly African-American churches as well as primarily white denominations. One of the NCBC's first actions was to issue a statement on Black Power in the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*. The four-column statement, signed by forty-eight clergy, provided a Christian interpretation of Black Power and sought to dispel the popular notion that the nascent ideology was the cause of racial unrest in urban America. While much of the nation viewed urban riots as a problem for the government to suppress with more "law and order," the NCBC believed that the upheaval in America's cities was merely symptomatic of the systemic racism that permeated society.<sup>9</sup>

Benjamin Payton, a Baptist minister and the primary author of the NCBC's Black Power statement, believed that the misunderstanding and controversy over Black Power was caused by a warped sense of who was allowed to wield influence and authority in the United States. Payton wrote, "The fundamental distortion facing us in the controversy about 'black power' is rooted in a gross imbalance of power and conscience between Negroes and white Americans." He decried the notion "that white people are justified in

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<sup>9</sup> Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, 183.

getting what they want through power, but that Negro Americans must, either by nature or circumstance, make their appeal only through conscience.” The minister believed this dichotomy “corrupted” both whites and African Americans and stated, “We are now faced with a situation where conscience-less power meets powerless conscience, threatening the very foundations of our nation.”<sup>10</sup>

While the vast majority of white Americans blamed the Black Power movement for increasing racial tensions, Payton pointed out that Black Power would not be needed if the racist structures in American society were eliminated. He blamed systemic racism for the violence erupting in the Northern cities. The minister believed that the “basic causes” of the urban unrest “lie in the silent and covert violence which white middle-class America inflicts upon the victims of the inner city” and pointed to “the hidden, smooth and often smiling decisions of American leaders which tie a white noose of suburbia around the necks, and which pin the backs of the masses of Negroes against the steaming ghetto walls.” To Payton, the great disparity in wealth between the white suburbs and the African-American ghettos illustrated “the failure of American leaders...to create equal opportunity in life as well as in law.”<sup>11</sup> In the minister’s opinion, the only way that “law and order” could be achieved in America’s cities was to eradicate the racist policies that created poverty and hopelessness in African-American communities.

Some African-American leaders feared that white backlash against Black Power activism would negate the progress made by the civil rights movement. However, Payton deemed it essential that African Americans attain tangible corporate power in order to

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Payton, “Position Statement on Black Power,” July 22, 1966, 1-2, Box 19, Folder 2. Father Paul M. Washington Papers, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Washington Papers).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

both protect and expand upon the achievements of the civil rights movement. He believed that racial integration was a mockery if African Americans were unable to interact with whites on an equal power basis. The minister thought that without the ability “to participate with power...integration is not meaningful.” Payton found the visceral condemnation of Black Power by white Christians to be extremely ironic given that the African-American Church was formed as a result of white racism. He contended that African-American Christians were forced to separate from the white Church because of this “false kind of ‘integration’ in which all power was in the hands of white people.”<sup>12</sup> The minister was adamant that any interracial cooperation had to be in the context of mutual power sharing.

Payton urged all African Americans to unite and act as one single ethnic group much like the Irish, Italians, and Jews had in order to gain real power in American society. He challenged the popular American mythology of individualism and noted that each ethnic group had worked together to consolidate as much corporate power as possible. Payton pointed out “the irony involved in American pride in their ability to act as individuals on the one hand, and their tendency to act as members of ethnic groups on the other hand.” While white ethnic groups had successfully attained corporate power, the minister argued that “America has asked its Negro citizens to fight for opportunity as individuals whereas...what we have needed most has been opportunity for the whole group, not just for selected and approved Negroes.”<sup>13</sup> Payton strongly believed that the consolidation of corporate Black Power was the key ingredient to a more just American society.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

As the interracialism of the civil rights movement waned and the Black Power movement gathered momentum, Northern activists increasingly stressed the ideals of self-determination and community organization. African-American groups attempted to take control of their communities and solve problems in the way they saw fit. They rejected the notion that whites, be they government bureaucrats or sympathetic activists, knew how to solve problems in African-American neighborhoods better than the people who lived there. However, the daunting economic and social challenges that most African-American communities faced demanded financial capital that was not available to them. It was within this context that the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) was established in May 1967. The ecumenical organization consisted of twenty-five Christian and Jewish groups that generated funding for minority community development and self-determination. The IFCO was created at a time when the alliance of liberal whites and African Americans was coming apart at the seams. As James Findlay Jr. astutely points out in *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement*, the IFCO was basically a “broker between whites and blacks who less and less were able to speak and act directly together.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the IFCO became an avenue for African Americans to solicit funding from whites without appearing to relinquish their self-determination.

During the weekend of April 25-27, 1969, the IFCO hosted the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC) on the Wayne State University campus in Detroit. Over six hundred delegates gathered to discuss strategies of economic development and community organization within African-American communities. The

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<sup>14</sup> Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, 188.

remarkably diverse contingent of attendees ranged from conservative African-American businessmen to black separatists. James Forman was originally just one of many presenters at the NBEDC. However, he quickly commandeered the Saturday night proceedings and demanded that the conference immediately endorse the Black Manifesto. Even though more than half of the conference delegates were missing, the IFCO leadership still allowed those present to vote on and approve the Black Manifesto as the official statement of the NBEDC. The dubious circumstances under which Forman's document was adopted as the conference's platform left many of the attendees in utter shock and disbelief.<sup>15</sup>

The Black Manifesto and James Forman's uninvited foray into New York City's Riverside Church on May 4, 1969 generated conflict among African-American religious leaders across the nation. Dr. J.H. Jackson, president of the National Baptist Convention, excoriated the Black Manifesto and claimed that activists like Forman were "teaching the same gospel as the Ku Klux Klan." The highly-influential minister also stated that "Negro slaves 'forgave' their masters for injustices generations ago and those injustices should not be resurrected for political purposes today."<sup>16</sup> Dr. Jackson claimed that the interruption of Riverside Church "was more dangerous than organized crime and more grave than an invading army with guns, tanks and poisonous gas."<sup>17</sup> Bishop Steven J. Spottswood, board chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), believed that the concept of reparations was "emotionally appealing"

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<sup>15</sup> Arnold Schuchter, *Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 2-4. The Black Manifesto passed by the tally of 187 to 63 with many delegates abstaining.

<sup>16</sup> "Dr. J.H. Jackson Raps 'Separatists,'" *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 1, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> "Reparation Seekers Worse than Mafia, Says Dr. Jackson," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 21, 1969.

to African Americans, but was “not the fairest way for this white generation to redress the wrongs visited on this black generation and its children.”<sup>18</sup>

However, many African-American clergymen disagreed with conservatives like Jackson and Spottswood and vociferously supported the Black Manifesto. In *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, Dr. Gayraud Wilmore, Jr. made a compelling historical and theological argument in support of the document. Wilmore, the chairman of the Presbyterian Division of Church and Race and an influential NCBC leader, believed that James Forman had simply illuminated the tensions already present within the Church over the concept of Black Power. Wilmore thought that the Black Manifesto was a necessary and positive step towards confronting liberal whites who supported the civil rights movement in the South, but refused to share real power and resources with African Americans in the North. The NCBC leader felt that Forman had “merely opened the gate behind which a flood of resentment, guilt, fear, and confusion had been building up...within the various religious communions and in the white liberal community as a whole.” He was grateful to Forman for issuing the Black Manifesto and stated, “That gate had to be opened sooner or later for the good of the church and the nation.”<sup>19</sup>

Northern clergymen expressing Black Power sentiments believed that the white churches would remain spiritually and morally impotent unless they learned to genuinely listen to African Americans. Wilmore highlighted the reality that African Americans were “formed in the matrix of psychological and physical suffering, segregation, discrimination and the ever-present remembrance of a previous condition of involuntary servitude.” He believed that this experience gave them “a certain depth and richness, a

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Boyce, “N.A.A.C.P. Head Rips Black Extremists,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 1969.

<sup>19</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, June 23, 1969, 2, Box 19, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

certain passion for justice that can discern in the truth about Jesus Christ that which modern white Christians have both forgotten and ignored.”<sup>20</sup> Wilmore asserted that the majority of African Americans embraced Black Power while liberal whites still longed for the days of racial integration based on their own terms and timetable. However, he believed that even though the white liberal church establishment glorified their own efforts at racial integration, they had not truly embraced that movement, either.<sup>21</sup>

Wilmore contended that the white churches bore a “special burden of guilt” for racism against African-Americans and emphasized that they owed reparations not simply for their past involvement in slavery, but also for their current acts of racial discrimination:

Certainly it is no secret that the white church has been and is today deeply entrenched in the system of white oppression. Many of the laymen who sit on the governing boards of wealthy white congregations are the absentee owners and managers of the corporate and political structures which have kept black people in deprivation and powerlessness. Many of the homeowners who refuse to sell to black buyers and effectively keep them from moving into white neighborhoods are members of fine suburban congregations...Many white churches own thousands of acres in the South where black sharecroppers, desperately in need of land, are being forced off into the already crowded urban ghettos. White churches make purchases of thousands of dollars and contract for the building of million dollar sanctuaries from discriminatory businesses and contractors and yet refuse to join Project Equality which uses church purchasing power to open up jobs for black folk.<sup>22</sup>

Wilmore accused the Church of not living up to its own lofty statements and rhetoric regarding its guilt for the past and present discrimination against African Americans. He lamented that while “no institution in American society has made more confessions of guilt for involvement in the sin of slavery and in segregation and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 5.

discrimination against black people,” the Church still refused to take any concrete actions to exhibit their repentance. The minister attributed the Church’s inaction to its reticence to sacrifice any part of its massive wealth for those outside of its walls. He described the Church’s affluence as a “spiritual liability” and commented that “rather than help men and women to destroy the dehumanizing, demonic structures which cripple them, most church funds have been used simply to enhance the welfare of churches and their members.”<sup>23</sup> Wilmore believed the Black Manifesto provided an avenue for the Church to exhibit its repentance by following through on its own grand pronouncements concerning racial justice in America.

The Reverend Robert C. Chapman, Director for Racial Justice for the National Council of Churches (NCC), also was a staunch supporter of the Black Manifesto. In an article entitled *The Black Manifesto: It’s Black and White*, Chapman cited great disparities in poverty, life expectancy, and unemployment rates between African Americans and whites as the impetus behind the controversial document. The minister emphasized that “these hideous imbalances are father to the Black Manifesto” and dispelled the notion that Black Power was to blame for the widening gulf between the races in the United States. He noted that, “When we look closely at American society, only wishful thinking, naiveté, or perversity can cause us to draw any conclusion other than we already are two separate and unequal societies, one black, one white.” Chapman lamented that while African-American ministers within predominantly white denominations supported the Black Manifesto, their white coreligionists refused to even contemplate interacting with James Forman and BEDC. The minister pointed out that

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

while whites attempted to debunk the Black Manifesto's legitimate arguments "by excoriating its rhetoric," African Americans "made it clear that the rhetoric could not concern them less because the principles and demands speak to a just reordering of priorities and power."<sup>24</sup>

Chapman explained that African Americans who had experienced daily violence and discrimination at the hands of whites could hardly "get terribly excited about the threatened 'disruption' of a worship service in a white church." Chapman, like many other African-American ministers, was more concerned with the Church's repentance than the reparations themselves. Reparations were simply a concrete sign of the repentance that he sought. Chapman wanted the white churches to value African-American lives more than they valued their own financial well-being and the comfort of the status quo. The minister wrote that "white brethren must understand...that every drop of black blood extracted by the slave master's whip outweighs the present corporate wealth of America." To Chapman, reparations were a way for the Church to acknowledge that "those myriad drops, those cascading rivers of blood, have saturated our culture; and the 'damned spots' won't 'out' until repentance brings reparation, and reparation works full restitution."<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Charles Willie, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Syracuse University and a member of the Episcopalian denomination's Executive Council, was less enthusiastic about the Black Manifesto than Wilmore and Chapman. Willie attempted to find a middle ground between Black Power advocates and conservative

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<sup>24</sup> Robert C. Chapman, "The Black Manifesto: It's Black and White," *Church in Metropolis* (Summer 1969), Box 19, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

white reactionaries.<sup>26</sup> In an article entitled *The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church*, Willie denounced Forman's violent rhetoric and deemed many of his proclamations to be unrealistic. However, he still validated many aspects of the Black Manifesto and cautioned the Episcopalian Executive Council to neither reject nor accept the document as a whole. Willie supported Forman's claims that racism and racial exploitation permeated American society and agreed that white churches and synagogues were to blame for racism in the United States. The sociology professor stated that "the churches and synagogues of America are integral parts of the American social system and therefore must assume responsibility for how the whole system operates." He also blamed white racism for teaching African Americans racial separatism and commented that "black people who have been rejected in the past now are learning the fine art of rejecting today." However, he diverged from Forman and other Black Power advocates because he believed there was no room for any type of separatism within the body of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Despite Willie's harsh criticism of the white churches, he was opposed to the concept of religious groups paying reparations. He believed that if reparations were deemed appropriate, then the United States government was the responsible party. Willie asserted, "The consideration of reparations is an issue for governmental action, because the laws and the law-enforcement agencies of the land sanctioned the exploitation of black people." He rejected the notion that reparations were a panacea for the ills of African-American communities and wrote, "The implication that black people in

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<sup>26</sup> Gardiner Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 191.

<sup>27</sup> Charles V. Willie, *The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church*, August 11, 1969, Episcopal Press and News, Digital Archives of the Episcopal Church, [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress\\_release.pl?pr\\_number=78-10](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=78-10).

America can be bought for money is foolish and preposterous.” Willie described the demand of “\$15 per nigger” as “insulting to black people” and was also annoyed that Forman and BEDC claimed to be the spokesmen and leader for all African Americans. He commented, “We do a disservice to the intelligence of black people to suggest that the Black Economic Development Conference must explain why they must rebel.” The sociology professor’s final and most vociferous denunciation of the Black Manifesto was that of its violent rhetoric. He found this aspect of the document to be fundamentally anti-Christian and blatantly inappropriate. Willie stated:

The most foolish aspect about the Manifesto is that it flirts with the idea of violence. The language of violence was deliberately used, of course, to scare the hell out of white people. Fear has never been an appropriate foundation for creative change.<sup>28</sup>

Willie concluded that the Black Manifesto was actually “a demand for a political rather than a religious response” and a call for the Church “to repent for its contemporary sins of omission rather than for an historical sin of complicity.” He believed that the eradication of segregation within the Church itself would alleviate many of society’s ills and asserted that when all American Christians worshipped together in diverse congregations, it would be impossible for church members to ignore the poverty in their midst. Willie wrote, “It will be infinitely more expensive for the Church and society at large when black and white people, poor and affluent...are members of the same church congregations. For the Church then cannot turn its back on poverty.” He believed the Black Manifesto was “an awkward cry from blacks to be included rather than excluded from the mainstream of American life.” Willie concluded, “If the Manifesto produced no more than one prophetic idea, it alone ought to be enough to get the Church moving. And

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

so the question devolves on us. Not how should the Church respond? But how must the Church respond?" To Willie, the Church needed to analyze the Black Manifesto with humility and a willingness to address its legitimate arguments.<sup>29</sup>

The mere fact that ministers like Wilmore and Chapman had to interpret the meaning of the Black Manifesto for the general public speaks to the document's lack of clarity. Because the rhetorical element of Forman's document was so open to interpretation, both its critics and supporters transposed their own views upon it. Those who were sympathetic to the call for reparations could easily dismiss the Black Manifesto's threatening language as ancillary to its primary message. However, people threatened by the Black Power movement pointed to the document's violent rhetoric as proof that the reparation advocates were intent on harming all white people. In the end, the African-American clergymen who sought to defend the Black Manifesto gradually appropriated the reparations movement out of necessity because the white churches refused to deal with brash activists like James Forman.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**THE BLACK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA**

While James Forman received much of the national attention, Muhammad Kenyatta deserved the bulk of the credit for turning Philadelphia into a “hotbed of Manifesto activity.”<sup>30</sup> Kenyatta employed various confrontational tactics as he called upon the Philadelphia-area churches to pay reparations. Born as Donald Brooks Jackson in Chester, Pennsylvania, he attended the Calvary Baptist Church and began preaching there as a fourteen-year-old. After graduating from Thomas Edison High School in North Philadelphia, Kenyatta attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania for one year before leaving school due to financial difficulty. He then spent a year in the Air Force, but left after encountering racism at the academy. After studying for two years at Williams College in Massachusetts, Kenyatta moved his young family to Mississippi in 1965 to assist the Freedom Democratic Party’s voter registration drives.<sup>31</sup> He also helped to organize agricultural cooperatives that focused on empowering poor African Americans. Despite Mississippi’s virulent racism, Kenyatta found the transition back to the North to be difficult. He often remarked that he worked harder in Philadelphia than he ever had to in the South.<sup>32</sup>

Muhammad Kenyatta was a thorn in the side of the white church establishment because they could not quite understand what to make of him. He was an ordained

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<sup>30</sup> Randy Dixon, “Black Manifesto,” *Philly Talk*, December 1969, 37.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Peyton Gray, “Open Up: A Monthly P.T. Interview, This Month-Kenyatta,” *Philly Talk*, February 1970, 58.

<sup>32</sup> Gray, “Kenyatta,” 58.

Baptist pastor who claimed to be Muslim and changed his name in order to identify more with his African heritage. The BEDC leader compared himself to Robin Hood in the sense that he was striving to take money from the rich and give it to the poor.<sup>33</sup>

Kenyatta's Black Power activism and support for the Black Manifesto led many to call him a racial separatist. However, he found this assertion to be comical and remarked that BEDC was "too busy with the liberation of its people to be concerned about separatism." However, Kenyatta did accuse whites of racial separatism through the creation of black ghettos and rampant police violence. He commented that "all these things are separatism, but nothing is done about it," but when African Americans "start talking about self-determination we are accused of being separatists."<sup>34</sup> Kenyatta's ability to point out flaws in his critics' arguments endeared him to his loyal supporters. This skill would serve him well as he challenged and cajoled the churches in Philadelphia to meet the Black Manifesto's demands.

The Black Manifesto was extremely controversial among African Americans in Philadelphia. Critics of the document emerged from both the political left and right. The Republic of New Africa, a black separatist organization, condemned the Black Manifesto because they believed that reparations should be paid by the United States government and not by religious institutions. The group's Philadelphia spokesman called Forman's document "ill-timed, counter-revolutionary, and idiotic."<sup>35</sup> At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the more conservative African Americans were equally incensed at the concepts James Forman promulgated. Thomas Burrell, a Philadelphia businessman who attended the NBEDC in Detroit, called the Black Manifesto "criminal" and a "hairbrained

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>34</sup> Dixon, "Black Manifesto," 37, 39.

<sup>35</sup> "Republic of New Africa Condemns Black Manifesto," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 31, 1969.

scheme” and charged that it was rejected by a majority of the conference’s attendees. Burress, who led a workshop on entrepreneurship at the gathering, felt badly for those who were there to learn about business and lamented, “They wanted to learn the whys and hows of operating a business. Instead, they were subjected to an ideological harangue which completely confused them.”<sup>36</sup> To conservative businessmen like Burress, Forman’s reparations’ diatribe was a distraction from the task of creating more jobs for African Americans.

The Black Manifesto also received substantial support from African Americans in Philadelphia. The Council of Black Clergy (CBC) and the Citywide Black Community Council (CWBCC) both whole-heartedly endorsed the Black Manifesto. In a statement echoing Forman’s claims, The CWBCC declared that “white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues are not merely religious movements but also giant financial institutions wed to racism and the profit motive.” The CBC endorsed the Black Manifesto and donated \$1,000 to BEDC. The Reverend Vaughn Eason said the monetary gift was meant to “give concrete expression” to their endorsement and was also encouragement “to white churches and individuals who flounder in doubt and uncertainty” in regards to BEDC.<sup>37</sup> Although the Baptist Ministers’ Conference of Philadelphia (BMCP) formally rejected the Black Manifesto due to its violent rhetoric and philosophy, the group was very supportive of the document’s programmatic demands.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Pamala Haynes, “\$500 Million Reparations Plan Called ‘Criminal’ by Burress: Local Businessmen Says Blacks Rejected James Forman’s Scheme at Detroit Meeting,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 31, 1969.

<sup>37</sup> Pamala Haynes, “2 Powerful Local Groups Back Demands for Church Reparations,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 28, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> “Baptist Minister’s Reject the Black Manifesto’s Philosophy, But Support Thrust of Program,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 12, 1969.

In addition to their call for reparations, Philadelphia's Black Manifesto advocates attempted to establish community control over the city's African-American neighborhoods. Kenyatta and BEDC made several attempts to appropriate white-owned church property in the city. The week-long occupation of North Philadelphia's Cookman United Methodist Church in July 1969 garnered national media attention and helped to raise BEDC's profile in the city. Like many of Philadelphia's churches, Cookman was once a vibrant congregation before the majority of its white members fled the city for the suburbs. BEDC asserted that Cookman, a struggling church with just thirty-five regular attendees in 1969, was unresponsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. The activists wanted to convert the church building into a community center that would provide the neighborhood children a safe place to learn and play and also be utilized as a meeting place for adults.<sup>39</sup>

Although Kenyatta acknowledged that the Cookman congregation had made several attempts to reach out to the surrounding neighborhood, he believed these efforts had "failed because they were led by an insensitive, paternalistic, racist administrator." The activist accused the Reverend Frank Kensil, the director of Cookman's parish, of having "considerable difficulty with the idea of black control and self-determination" and believed his community outreach efforts were "constantly clouded by his racist perspective and his myopic understanding of Black people."<sup>40</sup> Kenyatta and BEDC argued that if the Methodists genuinely wanted to make a positive impact in their community, they would immediately turn over the building to BEDC. In turn, Kenyatta

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<sup>39</sup> Clay Dillon and Tommy Cross, "Fear Seizure of More White Churches in Black Areas," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 8, 1969.

<sup>40</sup> Muhammad Kenyatta, "Why the Cookman Methodist Church was Occupied," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 19, 1969.

believed his organization would reach out to the community in a much more effective manner and better relate to the needs and desires of the people living there.

On Thursday, July 3, 1969, BEDC pressed the limits of legality as they wrested control of the church building from the Cookman congregation. Two men knocked on the church door and encountered an elderly church sexton. They claimed to have a box of clothing to donate and asked to use the restroom. When the sexton left the door open for the men, twenty-five people filed in behind them and began the occupation.<sup>41</sup> Then, as the seventy-two-year-old sexton later testified in court, some of the activists physically intimidated him into giving them the church keys.<sup>42</sup> During the week-long occupation, BEDC activists took full advantage of Cookman's gymnasium, skating rink, swimming pool, and classrooms.<sup>43</sup> Over 400 children from the surrounding neighborhood took classes like arts and crafts, human relations, and black culture.<sup>44</sup>

The neighborhood's African Americans were overwhelmingly supportive of the Cookman Church takeover. One resident pointed out that "there is no available playground in the immediate neighborhood" and said "it is a good gesture that they submit the facilities of the church to all the children of the neighborhood."<sup>45</sup> Kenyatta commented that "the mothers and fathers of this community like what we are doing, like that its being done for black people, by black people."<sup>46</sup> However, many white residents believed that BEDC had stepped over the line and did not have the right to occupy the

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<sup>41</sup> Dillon and Cross, "Fear Seizure," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 8, 1969.

<sup>42</sup> Clay Dillon, "Judge Nix's Injunction Restrains 8 Ministers," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 19, 1969.

<sup>43</sup> Dillon and Cross, "Fear Seizure," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 8, 1969.

<sup>44</sup> John Rhodes, "Photo Standalone 16," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 15, 1969; Tommy Cross, Clay Dillon, and Jack Franklin, "Racial Integration, Cookman Methodist Church Style," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 12, 1969.

<sup>45</sup> Dillon and Cross, "Fear Seizure," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 8, 1969.

<sup>46</sup> Kenyatta, "Cookman Methodist Church," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 19, 1969.

church. One man remarked, “People shouldn’t go into anyone’s house or into anyone’s place where they own property and do this kind of thing...I don’t think this is legal in my opinion.”<sup>47</sup>

The Cookman congregation did not hold their Sunday, July 6 morning service despite assurances from BEDC that it would not be interrupted. The Reverend Ralph Haines, a divinity student serving as the church’s pastor, encouraged the congregation to visit other churches instead of risking a confrontation with the occupiers. The occupiers held their own “non-racist” worship service in which they sang, preached, read the Bible as well as the writings of Malcolm X.<sup>48</sup> The only Cookman member to attend BEDC’s service was Ethel Coy, the lone African-American in the entire parish. Twenty-five representatives of the People for Human Rights, a white radical group, also attended the service in support of the BEDC occupiers.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time as the week-long Cookman Church occupation, racial tensions were further heightened in North Philadelphia when fifty white store owners in African-American neighborhoods received letters asking for \$100 contributions to a “summer project” operated by the Philadelphia chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Many of the merchants felt threatened by the letter and one store owner called it “a shakedown.” The white businessmen were informed that “it would...be an extraordinary display of shortsightedness for any merchant to offer excuses and evasions” and CORE gave them an option of paying “in a lump sum or up to 10 weekly payments.” While the

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<sup>47</sup> Dillon, “Judge Nix’s Injunction,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 19, 1969.

<sup>48</sup> “White Church Members Asked to Stay Away,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 8, 1969

<sup>49</sup> “White Members Absent at Black-Occupied Church,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1969.

police judged that the letter was “short of criminal intimidation,” no one could blame the store owners for feeling blackmailed or threatened.<sup>50</sup>

On Friday, July 11, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo led 150 policemen into North Philadelphia to expel the BEDC activists from the Cookman Church. Just hours before the police arrived, the occupiers were replaced by eight local ministers sympathetic to their cause. As policemen used bolt cutters to remove the chains around the church door, the clergymen bowed in prayer as they anticipated their arrest. When Rizzo ordered them to leave the church, the Reverend James Woodruff emphatically exclaimed, “This is a House of God and for all people! We are human beings and therefore we have a right to be here!” The ministers were then arrested and ushered out of the church. As the clergymen were escorted to the police vans, hundreds of onlookers surrounding the church clapped and shouted in support of the ministers. Muhammad Kenyatta was incensed at the Methodists’ use of police force against the occupation and stated, “By calling upon the police...to deprive little Black boys and girls of a place to play, laugh and learn, Philadelphia Methodists have not attacked Jim Forman or Muhammad Kenyatta...but they have attacked the Black community.”<sup>51</sup>

Four days later on Tuesday, July 15, Judge Robert N.C. Nix, Jr. issued a permanent injunction against the eight ministers from interfering with the operations of Cookman United Methodist Church. Despite the protestations of the ministers’ defense lawyer that “the court had no jurisdiction over ecclesiastical matters,” Nix ruled squarely against the clergymen. The African-American judge lectured the ministers that people

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Janson, “2 Letters Press Negro Requests: White Merchants Asked for Funds in Philadelphia,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1969.

<sup>51</sup> Clay Dillon and John Rhodes, “8 Ministers Jailed as Church Seizure Ends at Cookman,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 12, 1969.

who “assume the role of a martyr must be willing to accept the punishment.” Nix said there were “overtones of criminal conduct” and could justify charges of forced entry, robbery, and extortion. However, the only reason he elected not to charge the ministers was that he believed they “were doing what they considered to be morally correct.”<sup>52</sup> Wycliffe Jangdharrie, one of the arrested clergymen, shot back at Judge Nix and other African-American leaders who refused to support him and the other ministers. He accused them of selling “their souls to the white man” and asked, “What is going to happen to the black people of Philadelphia when the majority of our leaders seem to personify Uncle Tom?”<sup>53</sup>

BEDC’s occupation of Cookman United Methodist Church became a lightning rod of controversy. Philadelphia City Council President, Paul D’Ortona, stated that the occupation was “the worst thing that ever happened in Philadelphia” and remarked that “the ministers were treated much too gently by the police” and “should have been thrown down on the ground and stepped on.” D’Ortona’s inflammatory rhetoric generated an immediate backlash from the city’s African-American community. Jangdharrie described the City Council President as “an outright fascist” who “acts in an uneducated manner, talks like an idiot and displays all the fine, sensitive qualities of an ass.” He further warned that “when a man in his position advocates the destruction of ministers using the strong-arms and jackboots of the police, by throwing them into the street and stomping

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<sup>52</sup> Dillon, “Judge Nix’s Injunction,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 19, 1969.

<sup>53</sup> “‘Black Man in a Hell of a Spot,’ Says Minister Arrested in Church,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 29, 1969.

them, the Fourth Reich has truly arrived.” Paul Washington remarked that it shows what D’Ortona “might do if he had power” and exemplifies “what kind of man he is.”<sup>54</sup>

One short-lived BEDC victory for community control was the occupation of the Quaker-owned Robert Wade neighborhood house in Chester. After a two-month occupation, the Friends handed over the building to the activists for a one-year term. BEDC then renamed the building the Darnley Belgrave Community Center after a local musician and Garveyite. Kenyatta called the transfer of the property “a national milestone for the entire reparations movement” and hoped that it would encourage others around the country to take similar actions.<sup>55</sup> However, less than three months after the property deed was transferred, a Delaware County judge ordered that the Belgrave Center be turned back over to the Robert Wade House Board. Furthermore, the judge barred the Quakers from leasing the building to any group until the lease of the Wade Board expired in October 1970.<sup>56</sup>

A more successful undertaking was BEDC’s 22-day occupation of the Wellsprings Center in Germantown, an ecumenical organization that attempted to foster interracial interaction and dialogue. BEDC initiated the occupation after Wellsprings voided a \$2,000 check from the United Church of Christ intended as reparation payment to BEDC.<sup>57</sup> Four activists occupied the building without resistance because the Reverend Robert Raines, the organization’s chairman, refused to involve the police in the conflict. In an effort to soften their public image, the BEDC occupiers handed out children’s toys

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<sup>54</sup> Pamala Haynes and Len Lear, “Citizens Rap D’Ortona’s Statement Blasting Seizure of Cookman Church,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 15, 1969.

<sup>55</sup> “Chester Black National Group Celebrating What They Call Big Victory,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 19, 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Pamala Haynes, “Chester’s Militants Stand Pat.” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 28, 1969.

<sup>57</sup> “Black Economic Group Leaves Church Center,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 10, 1970.

in the days leading up to Christmas. Irvin Wardlaw, one of the occupiers, remarked, “We want the people to see that we are not militants. We are nice guys.”<sup>58</sup> BEDC ended the occupation after Wellsprings wrote them a \$2,000 check and made several major changes to the organization’s structure. Sister Lillian Miller, a BEDC member, was named Wellsprings’ co-director and the African-American board members formed a caucus supporting BEDC.<sup>59</sup> The final demand that the organization acceded to was that African-American community groups would be able to “use the center without control by the predominantly white board.” While Wellsprings stopped short of granting African-American board members total control of the facility, it did give them “special credence” on these decisions.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to struggling for community control, BEDC also advocated for African-American employees within primarily white denominations. The activists successfully pressured the Lutherans into reinstating two African-American church workers who were fired from their jobs at Christ Lutheran Church in North Philadelphia. On November 30, 1969, the Reverend Dwight Campbell of BEDC and twenty-five activists interrupted Christ Lutheran’s worship service to protest the firings of Robert Cobbs and Frederick Darby. BEDC was protesting the Lutherans’ practice of making all personnel decisions from the denomination’s central office and not allowing individual congregations to hire and fire whom they saw fit. Campbell commented, “We came to this church because it is 99 percent black. We are letting the Lutherans know that they can’t ignore Christ Church because it is black. We are not here to fight with the black

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<sup>58</sup> “Gtn. Center Occupiers Give Toys to Children,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 20, 1969.

<sup>59</sup> “BEDC Awaits OK of Last Demand from Wellsprings Center,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 3, 1970.

<sup>60</sup> “Black Economic Group Leaves Church Center,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 10, 1970.

people of this congregation.”<sup>61</sup> However, many of the church’s congregants were insulted that BEDC involved itself in an intra-denominational matter. One longtime member of Christ Lutheran Church believed most of the members did not appreciate BEDC’s visit and felt they “had no business in our church.” She recalled:

The congregation walked out when this fellow got up and started talking. Then some of the church members came back and asked him to go downstairs. We had our service and communion and then went to the basement and had a meeting with those people until about 2 o’clock.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of the hurt feelings, BEDC persuaded the congregation to write a letter to the Lutheran central office in support of Cobbs and Darby. After the denominational leadership received their letter, the two workers were rehired shortly thereafter. In this sense, BEDC’s brash activism encouraged other African Americans to stand up for themselves when they otherwise may not have.

Muhammad Kenyatta’s interactions with the Philadelphia-area Presbyterians proved to be the most tempestuous and confrontational of all the local denominations. On June 4, 1969, Kenyatta and Sonni Aliko, a fellow BEDC activist, entered the Presbyterians’ downtown headquarters in the Witherspoon Building and demanded \$80 million in reparations. They also insisted on an additional \$20 million from the Westminster Press, the denomination’s publishing company, in order to “print 5 million copies of the Black Manifesto.”<sup>63</sup> Lastly, they ordered the Presbyterians to relinquish a substantial amount of their rural land holdings in the South to poor African-American

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<sup>61</sup> Pamala Haynes, “Black Economic Development Group Protests Firing of Church Aides,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 2, 1969.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, “Christ Lutheran Church Reinstates Fired Aides,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 9, 1969.

<sup>63</sup> “Typewriter ‘Borrowed’ By Militant,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 7, 1969.

farmers. Then, to top it all off, Kenyatta walked out of the building with one of the Presbyterians' typewriters in full view of television cameras and the press.<sup>64</sup>

On Sunday, July 13, 1969, just a few days after the conclusion of BEDC's week-long occupation of Cookman United Methodist Church, Kenyatta presented the Black Manifesto to the Abington Presbyterian Church, an affluent white congregation in Philadelphia's northern suburbs. The church's pastor, the Reverend William J. Evans, allowed Kenyatta to speak to the 800 attendees after receiving permission to do so from denominational officials. After being escorted by the minister to the pulpit following the worship service, the BEDC activist threatened to occupy the church if it did not adhere to the Black Manifesto's demands. He also blasted the entire Presbyterian denomination for not responding to the \$80 million demand BEDC had placed on it. Furthermore, he excoriated one of the congregation's most prominent members, the Reverend Dr. William Morrison, who was the general secretary of the United Presbyterian Church. Kenyatta accused Morrison of backing out "on a promise to negotiate" with BEDC. While most of the congregants remained and listened to Kenyatta, several church members walked out in disgust. Evans was "proud" of his congregation for the way they handled Kenyatta's visit and, although he did not support the Black Manifesto, was "grateful" that the BEDC activist was allowed to express his opinions.<sup>65</sup> A few weeks after the Kenyatta's visit, the church sent him a letter formally rejecting the Black Manifesto.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Richard James and Dee R. Holman, "Pay \$150 Million in Damages," *Local Clergy Told: Payment is Due for 400 Years of Racism and Slavery, Kenyatta Says*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 17, 1969. Kenyatta returned the typewriter a week later.

<sup>65</sup> "Suburban Church Told to Pay Up or Risk Sit-in," *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 26, 1969.

<sup>66</sup> "Suburban Church Rejects Black Manifesto Demands," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 2, 1969.

One of Muhammad Kenyatta's most controversial and scandalous actions was his interruption of a communion service at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church on Sunday, January 4, 1970. Kenyatta and other BEDC members commandeered the church service in order to draw attention to the Philadelphia-area Presbyterians' refusal to accept the terms of the Black Manifesto. Before purposely spilling the communion elements, Kenyatta dramatically proclaimed, "This is the blood and body of my people!"<sup>67</sup> As the bread and wine lay scattered on the floor, the church's pastor, the Reverend Dr. Bertram Atwood, ordered the activists to leave "or risk losing what case they made."<sup>68</sup> After cleaning the elements off the floor, Atwood encouraged his congregation to keep an open mind and remarked, "If I were young and black, I don't know where I'd be this morning."<sup>69</sup>

Many African Americans in Philadelphia abhorred Kenyatta's violation of the communion service and wanted to make sure that the public understood that he did not act on their behalf. One Nazarene Baptist pastor pointed to New Testament scriptures that those who "eat and drink of the Communion table in an unworthy manner...will suffer the penalty." The minister wrote, "Surely Muhammad Kenyatta has signed his own death warrant by throwing communion bread and wine on the floor of the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church." He further exclaimed:

I am sure that all Bible believers who are black will agree that Kenyatta does not speak for us. We view his action as nothing less than desecration. In demonstrating what he termed 'the extent of black anger,' he has

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<sup>67</sup> "Kenyatta Hurls Communion Wine to Floor," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 10, 1970.

<sup>68</sup> "BEDC Members Deliberately Spill Communion Bread and Wine," *Episcopal Press and News*, January 23, 1970, Digital Archives of the Episcopal Church, [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress\\_release.pl?pr\\_number=83-3](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=83-3).

<sup>69</sup> "Kenyatta Hurls Communion," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 10, 1970.

incurred upon himself the wrath of God, an anger before which no man shall stand—even if he is black!<sup>70</sup>

Kenyatta responded to his many critics by asserting that he had spilled the communion elements out of concern for the white Church's salvation. He believed that the Presbyterians' refusal to accept the terms of the Black Manifesto was sinful in of itself. Kenyatta remarked that when someone participates in communion, "he asserts that he repents of wrong-doing and is reconciled to the Holy Spirit with a conscience clear of debts. The believer taking communion in bad faith faces even greater damnation." Equating the "broken bodies of black people" to the "blood and body of Christ in our own time," Kenyatta claimed that "white American Christians have spilled the blood and harmed the body of the living Christ in their midst for over 400 years. This continuing carnage has made a hoax of communion in most white congregations."<sup>71</sup> To Kenyatta, communion was sacrilegious if it was not accompanied by true humility and repentance.

Over the course of the next year, the Philadelphia Presbytery continued to stifle BEDC's advances. They also held a hard line against Black Presbyterians United (BPU), the denomination's African-American caucus that had previously endorsed the Black Manifesto. The BPU urged the Presbytery's General Council to support the controversial document, but was rebuffed on every level by the white majority. This led to a BPU boycott of all Presbytery activities during the spring of 1970. The debate over reparations within the Presbytery came to an abrupt end in July 1970 when the General Council formally rejected the Black Manifesto and "each and every demand" of BEDC. After an intense and emotional meeting, the General Council also decided that it would no longer

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<sup>70</sup> "Letter to the Editor," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 13, 1970.

<sup>71</sup> "Letter to the Editor," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 24, 1970.

discuss or consider any issue or concern related to the Black Manifesto. The Presbytery then approved a plan to have the BPU disburse \$60,000 to needs within Philadelphia's African-American community, but only if the African-American caucus promised not to give any financial support to BEDC. Predictably, the BPU refused to accept this paternalistic offer because it "implied a lack of trust in their ability" and did not honor the concept of black self-determination.<sup>72</sup>

The Presbyterians' inability to consider the genuine hopes and desires of the denomination's black caucus led a white minister, the Reverend Hal Lloyd of Germantown Community Presbyterian Church, to issue a damning 12-page report accusing the General Council of racism. Lloyd charged the General Council of failing "to deal honestly with the demands of the black ministers in the Presbytery." Furthermore, Lloyd castigated the General Council for issuing

another report...which harshly says no to everything the black men have suggested, arrogantly substitutes some white suggestions in the place of black suggestions, refuses even to discuss white racism, and then hypocritically says that we repent of our racism and are deeply concerned about our black brethren.<sup>73</sup>

Lloyd lamented that although most of the white councilmen tried to be decent human beings, "underneath that nice exterior most of these men are also prejudiced and insensitive and politely cruel in their relations to black people."<sup>74</sup>

Lloyd believed that most men on the General Council lacked empathy with the African-American experience in the United States. The minister wrote that most council members had a "profound inability to feel what black people feel," operated "in a different world" from their black brethren, and did "not really know any black people."

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<sup>72</sup> "Presbytery Rejects Black Manifesto Aim," *The Washington Post*, July 11, 1970.

<sup>73</sup> "White Minister Lashes 'Racist' Phila. Presbytery," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 9, 1970.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Because of their willful ignorance of American history and their inability to see outside of themselves, the councilmen had “a great indifference to the suffering and pleading of black men and an insulting and degrading dismissal of their requests as if there were no real substance to them.” Lloyd also pointed out that the General Council “have shown no understanding of white oppression in America and no sense of humility or guilt about it.” He accused the council of caring more about their white suburban constituencies than genuinely confronting the challenges faced by inner-city African Americans. Lloyd was particularly angered by the council’s rhetoric of Christian brotherhood and understanding and pointed out that, “There is something odd in the white psychology which seems to make it necessary for white men to increase the piosity of their words as they increase their rejection of their black brethren.”<sup>75</sup>

The tempestuous relationship between Kenyatta and the Presbyterians reached its climax when the Presbytery pressed charges against the activist for breaking into the denomination’s downtown headquarters during the summer of 1970. The debate over whether to press charges against Kenyatta divided the Presbytery’s African-American clergy. The Reverend Herbert MacClain felt strongly that the BEDC leader should be prosecuted for the break-in and warned his fellow clergymen not to accede to blackmail. The minister stated that anyone who “breaks into a white church or a black church...should receive the proper penalty.” However, the Reverend Benjamin Anderson felt that charging Kenyatta would be an embarrassment to the Presbytery’s ministry. He believed that those in favor of charging Kenyatta were “putting legalism ahead of the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Gospel” and stressed that secular laws should be superseded by “the love of the kingdom.”<sup>76</sup>

Kenyatta’s relationship with the Philadelphia Society of Friends was more cordial than that of the Presbyterians, but in the end his confrontation with the Quakers yielded similar results. Kenyatta demanded \$5 million over 2-3 years and an immediate payment of \$500,000 from the pacifist sect known for its social justice advocacy. When internal discord and arduous debate prevented the Quakers from responding promptly to his demands, Kenyatta went on a hunger strike that lasted over two weeks. The BEDC leader said:

I am speaking to the Friends in the language they should understand. The Friends as a religious organization are committed to a non-violent and peaceful means of social change. Since they play by those rules, we are approaching them with a respect for those rules.<sup>77</sup>

However, Kenyatta lost his patience when the Quakers still had not responded to his demands by the fall of 1969. He called the Philadelphia-area Friends “a cardinal case” as to why “white Christianity is deaf with self-righteousness.” Kenyatta was mystified that many Quakers refused to aid BEDC because of the Black Manifesto’s violent rhetoric, but neglected to speak out against violence perpetrated by their own nation around the world. He said the Quakers were

draped in the rhetoric of pacifism, yet unwilling to collectively confront the most militaristic government in the world today, the Yearly Meeting instead feigns concern for the alleged ‘violence’ of BEDC—which has no guns, no armies nor any investments in the military-industrial complex.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Presbytery to Press Case Against Muhammad Kenyatta,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 3, 1970.

<sup>77</sup> “Kenyatta in 12<sup>th</sup> Day of \$5 Million Fast,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 21, 1969.

<sup>78</sup> Muhammad Kenyatta, “Kenyatta Tacks ‘Condemned’ Sign on White Church,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 8, 1969.

Furthermore, Kenyatta accused the Friends of harboring paternalistic attitudes towards African Americans and as being “dishonest about their history of racism and cowed by black men who break the mold of that history and refuse to come to the Quakers as hat-in-hand supplicants.”<sup>79</sup> When the Quakers continued to debate the Black Manifesto well into the spring of 1970, one hundred individual Friends sympathetic to BEDC eschewed the endless dialogue and donated \$5,000 to the organization.<sup>80</sup>

Philadelphia-area churches were not the only entities concerned about the actions of Muhammad Kenyatta and BEDC. Monitoring the activist and his organization was a top priority for the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). On March 8, 1971, a group calling themselves the “Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI” broke into the FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania and stole files that showed the agency had been closely monitoring BEDC’s bank accounts and telephone calls. Kenyatta was out of the country when the break-in occurred, but was given copies of the files by the “Citizens Commission.”<sup>81</sup> The “liberation” of the documents revealed significant infiltration of BEDC by paid FBI informants. One of the informants was Stanley Branche, a former Chester mayoral candidate and civil rights activist. Kenyatta remarked that Branche was “an FBI agent when it suited him, a militant when that suited him, and a politician when that suited him.” He believed Branche was “the kind of unprincipled opportunist that FBI and police forces are happy to use against the black movement.”<sup>82</sup> When Kenyatta heard that the United States Attorney General John Mitchell was worried that the compromised

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> “100 Quakers Donate \$5,000 for Economic Development,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 25, 1970.

<sup>81</sup> “Kenyatta Shows Reporters Copies of Papers Stolen from FBI Files,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 3, 1971.

<sup>82</sup> Peyton Gray, “Open Up: Interview of the Month: Muhammad Kenyatta,” *Philly Talk*, July 1971.

files “could endanger the lives of federal agents and the security of the United States,” the activist glibly responded that “the Attorney General constitutes a danger to the national security.” The files also revealed that FBI agents were encouraged to increase the amount of interviews they conducted with “dissenters” in order to create a climate of “paranoia.” The FBI hoped that this would make activists feel as if “there is an FBI agent behind every mailbox.” Kenyatta responded to this revelation in his normal bombastic style and defiantly stated, “We want them to think there is a nigger at every door. Both sides can play the I-spy game.”<sup>83</sup>

Kenyatta also accused local law enforcement of harassment and intimidation. The activist sued the Chester police for arresting him after he and his three-year-old son were tear-gassed by a white street evangelist. Kenyatta was taken into custody on July 25, 1969 on charges of disorderly conduct and malicious mischief. Earlier in the day, Kenyatta had given a ride to a young man who he had dropped off on the street corner where the Reverend Olin Jones was preaching. The young man and the white preacher got into an argument and an altercation ensued. When the young man ran back to Kenyatta’s car, Jones chased him and shot tear gas into the vehicle. Kenyatta recalled, “Jones looked inside, recognized me and fired a number of pellets into the car, badly affecting my son Malcolm, who has had serious eye problems previously.”<sup>84</sup> Kenyatta was livid with the Chester police for arresting him despite the fact that he and his son were the ones who were assaulted by Jones. Furthermore, the Chester police did not even allow Kenyatta’s wife to make a counter complaint against Jones.

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<sup>83</sup> “Kenyatta Shows Reporters,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 3, 1971.

<sup>84</sup> Pamala Haynes, “Tear Gas Incident Leaves Kenyatta Choked with Rage,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 2, 1969.

In addition to their call for reparations and community control of institutions, BEDC spoke out against the Vietnam War and attempted to help young African-American men avoid the draft. The military draft counseling was held at the Che Payne Institute, a North Philadelphia community center named after a BEDC staff member killed in Maryland.<sup>85</sup> Calling the conflict in Vietnam an “unjust, unholy, white racist war,” a BEDC spokesman said he was “tired of seeing Black boys being used to fight and die for the white American power system which consistently exploits and brutalizes black people right here in the United States.” He asked, “Why should Black people go kill yellow people to help a few white men make a green dollar?”<sup>86</sup> BEDC involved people of all ages in their anti-war activities and recruited elementary school children to distribute leaflets in the neighborhood about the draft counseling.<sup>87</sup>

Muhammad Kenyatta and BEDC were very aggressive in their call for the Philadelphia-area churches to respond to the Black Manifesto’s demands. However, the attempt to extract funds from the white churches was not BEDC’s only goal. Black Manifesto activism included much more than simply demanding reparations. BEDC’s holistic critique of structural racism in American society led them to use myriad strategies to forge a new path separate from the white power structure. Kenyatta and his allies lived on the edge of legality as they worked towards their goals of African-American self-determination and community control in Philadelphia. BEDC justified its attempts to intimidate and frighten white Christians into responding to the Black Manifesto because they perceived that the much greater injustice was being perpetrated daily by the racist white churches.

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<sup>85</sup> “B.E.D.C. Says Two Aides Framed in Fatal Mugging,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 8, 1970.

<sup>86</sup> “BEDC Opens Draft Advice Office for Black Youths,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 25, 1970.

<sup>87</sup> “Young Pioneers’ Crusade for Youth in N. Phila.,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 9, 1971.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE BLACK MANIFESTO AND THE EPISCOPAL**  
**DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania was by far the most responsive of the Philadelphia-area churches to the demands of Muhammad Kenyatta and BEDC. The primary reason for the Episcopalians' positive response was the presence of two prominent Black Manifesto supporters, Bishop Robert DeWitt and Father Paul Washington of the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia. The duo's activism on behalf of the reparations movement generated great controversy within the diocese. In addition to Bishop DeWitt's support for the Black Manifesto, his recruitment of two controversial urban missionaries also drew the ire of conservative Episcopalians. The Reverend David Gracie, a white liberal, and the Reverend James Woodruff, an African-American minister, turned many conservatives against the bishop. Gracie and Woodruff's activism helped to set the stage for the debate over the Black Manifesto within the diocese.

Before moving to Philadelphia, the Reverend David Gracie was the rector of an African-American church in Detroit where he experienced first-hand the dramatic race riots in the summer of 1967. Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Gracie immediately moved his family into a racially diverse neighborhood in Germantown and embraced many liberal causes. He spoke out vehemently against the Vietnam War and joined the highly-controversial Germantown Council for Community Control of Police, a watchdog organization that monitored law enforcement for brutality against African Americans.

Gracie also pushed the state government for higher welfare benefits and spoke out against the construction of the Crosstown Expressway, a project that eventually displaced thousands of poor African Americans. The outspoken minister was arrested multiple times for his activism. He was taken into custody for protesting against the draft at a military induction center on Broad Street and was also detained by police after participating in a Welfare Rights Organization demonstration. Gracie's third and final arrest occurred in a West Philadelphia coffeehouse after he attempted to stop FBI agents from seizing a draft resister.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike Gracie's conservative brethren within the diocese who stressed personal piety and individual spiritual salvation, the young minister believed that the Church should also be at the forefront on matters of social and economic justice. Gracie enraged conservative Episcopalians after he attended an anti-war rally in front of Independence Hall where draft cards were burned. The minister, who previously served in the military, opposed the Vietnam War and remarked, "This unjust war presents a hell of a moral problem." When Gracie came under fire for what many considered his seditious and unpatriotic acts, he responded by stating, "Part of my ministry is loyalty to the country. But when the country is unjust, I have no choice but to follow my conscience, protest, stop cooperating."<sup>89</sup>

The Reverend James Woodruff came to Philadelphia in 1967 after working as a chaplain at Fisk University and Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee. While in Nashville, Woodruff organized "liberation schools" to teach African-American children about their culture and history. While the minister's efforts were greatly

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<sup>88</sup> Willard S. Randall, "A Church in Conflict: Gracie and Woodruff Shake Up Old Order," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 3, 1969.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

appreciated by African Americans, the city's white population viewed the liberation schools with great disdain and suspicion. The Nashville police referred to the programs as "hate whitey" schools and accused Woodruff of teaching "pure unadulterated hatred of the white man." The liberation schools were eventually closed after sustained pressure exerted from the white community led to the withdrawal of the program's federal funding. In addition to the closing of the liberation schools, Woodruff's reputation was also tarnished after the arrest of an African-American activist in his home. Despite eventually being cleared of any wrongdoing, conservative Episcopalians in Philadelphia were skeptical of Woodruff from the start.<sup>90</sup>

Bishop DeWitt utilized Woodruff as a conduit between wealthy white suburban Episcopalians and urban African-Americans in the diocese. The minister spoke regularly to suburban congregations about "black history and culture and their ancestors' roles in it." While liberal whites were receptive to his message, many conservatives were appalled at Woodruff's inflammatory rhetoric. He told his audiences that it was a "smokescreen" to believe that racism was purely a social problem. The minister focused on the structural and economic implications of racism rather than focusing solely on individual guilt. He believed racism was "essentially an economic and political problem" that involved much more than simply integrating African Americans into a capitalist white society. Woodruff stated, "You can only integrate equals with equals: you cannot integrate slaves with masters." He often discussed the issue of race with children and teenagers of suburban white congregations. Not surprisingly, this caused much consternation for those fearful of Woodruff's message. One conservative activist within

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

the diocese labeled Woodruff a “Red” and claimed the minister told white children “not to listen to their parents” and “if they wanted to know anything, come ask him.” The conservative activist complained that Woodruff was causing white youths “to hate their parents” and worried that “all they can see now is black.”<sup>91</sup>

The reactionary forces within the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania attempted numerous times to pressure Bishop DeWitt into firing the controversial urban missionaries. Despite the intense lobbying, DeWitt stood squarely behind the young ministers he had recruited to the diocese. In response to the consistent demands for their dismissal, the Diocesan Council issued a report supporting the work of Gracie and Woodruff in January 1969. Although many council members disagreed with the pair’s political views, the council vehemently supported Gracie and Woodruff’s right to minister within the diocese. The council’s report criticized “those churches and individuals that have withdrawn financial support of the Diocese because of these ministries” and called their actions “ecclesiastical anarchy worse than its practitioners accuse the urban missionaries of furthering.”<sup>92</sup>

Despite the Diocesan Council’s endorsement, conservative groups like the “Society for the Preservation of Episcopal Principles” continued to push for Gracie and Woodruff’s ouster. At the January 1969 Diocesan Convention, retired Norristown banker T. Allen Glenn Jr. issued a motion to have the urban missionaries removed from their positions. Glenn accused the pair of bringing “disgrace and discredit to the diocese” and remarked, “These men have the unhappy faculty of putting their feet in their mouths wherever they go.” This attack on Gracie and Woodruff generated a groundswell of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Diocesan Council Backs Controversial Priests,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 18, 1969.

support among the convention's progressive delegates on behalf of the embattled duo.

Paul Washington emphatically supported the urban missionaries and defiantly exclaimed to the convention:

If you want, you can remove these two men from the budget or banish them to another world. God does not need this body. He can raise up his own stones to carry on his work... These men do not need your sympathy. The convention needs what these men have to offer.<sup>93</sup>

Support for Gracie and Woodruff at the gathering was so strong that Glenn "regretfully withdrew" his motion after realizing it had no chance to pass.<sup>94</sup>

A few months later, another conservative group within the diocese pressured Bishop DeWitt to fire the urban missionaries. The vestry of the Church of St. Philip-in-the-Field, a church in suburban Oreland, wrote a strongly-worded letter to the bishop requesting the dismissal of Gracie and Woodruff. The concerned laymen called the urban missionaries' actions "contrary to Christian beliefs and national interests."<sup>95</sup> The group was concerned that the controversial duo was tarnishing the Episcopal Church's reputation and they were growing weary of defending a denomination that allowed Gracie and Woodruff to run amok. They wrote, "We have been faced with the problem of trying to convince...our fellow Christians that our Episcopal Church has not permitted these priests to inject thoughts and actions that are anti-American, unconstitutional and devoid of Christian tenets." In a last-ditch effort to better understand the urban missionaries' beliefs, the congregation invited both Gracie and Woodruff to speak at the Church of St. Philip-in-the-Field. The church's efforts at reaching out to the ministers only confirmed

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<sup>93</sup> Edward N. Eisen, "2 Missioners Beat Ouster at Episcopal Church Talks," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 19, 1969.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> "Bishop DeWitt Rejects Request to Dismiss Two Controversial Priests," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 17, 1969.

their belief that these men were unfit to be clergymen in the diocese. One church leader complained that “Mr. Woodruff left us in a state of disgust, anger and bewilderment” and “made statements bordering on sedition and anarchy.” Gracie did not fare much better in this man’s eyes because the controversial pastor “was not able to comprehend our feelings regarding patriotism and/or law and order.”<sup>96</sup> Despite the impassioned plea of the suburban congregation, Bishop DeWitt again supported his urban missionaries and guaranteed the concerned vestry “that there was ‘plenty of room’ both for them and the controversial priests” within the diocese.<sup>97</sup>

Debate over the Black Manifesto only increased the acrimony and strife already present within the highly-polarized Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. Bishop DeWitt’s advocacy for the Black Manifesto angered conservative Episcopalians who had supported his election in 1964 because they perceived him to be a safer choice than other more liberal candidates. While many in the diocese were incensed by the Black Manifesto’s violent rhetoric, DeWitt viewed the document as prophetic and stated, “It is not what they will do to us if we don’t make reparations, but what will happen if we don’t.” Furthermore, the bishop believed that the Black Manifesto’s programmatic demands were “very consistent with the program of the Episcopal Church.”<sup>98</sup> While many church leaders urged congregations to call the police if BEDC activists interrupted their worship services, DeWitt encouraged parishioners to “engage in creative dialogue” with the BEDC activists. In the bishop’s opinion, law enforcement was only to be called if “there is an absolutely clear and present danger to life or limb,” which, in his judgment, was “a

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<sup>96</sup> “Leaders Want Two Ministers Fired,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 24, 1969.

<sup>97</sup> “Bishop DeWitt Rejects Request,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 17, 1969.

<sup>98</sup> Willard S. Randall, “A Church in Conflict: Bishop DeWitt Awakens Diocese to Issues Long Kept Under Wraps,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 2, 1969.

circumstance extremely unlikely to occur.”<sup>99</sup> DeWitt’s controversial directives led to the creation of conservative groups like the “Voice of the Catacombs” and the “Episcopal Renaissance” that actively sought to stop the bishop from successfully implementing his liberal policies.<sup>100</sup>

The Reverend John Schultz, rector of the affluent Trinity Memorial Episcopalian Church in suburban Ambler, was one of Bishop DeWitt’s staunchest opponents. Schultz’s congregation became a magnet for other Episcopalians disenchanted by their bishop’s liberal theology and political views. The minister was so concerned about DeWitt’s beliefs that he started his own 25-cent magazine called “Church Panorama” in order to promote conservative policies within the diocese. Schultz also signed a petition along with ninety-nine other parish priests “objecting to the bishop’s open support of the Black Manifesto.” The conservative clergyman was in favor of helping the poor and needy, but not on the basis of race. He commented, “It seems incredible to me that segregation was evil one year ago and that separatism is now the goal.” Schultz believed that the Black Manifesto was “extortion” and was trying to prey upon the guilt of white churchmen. The minister remarked, “If I’m responsible for my brother, it’s because he’s in need. I’m responsible not by justice, but in charity.”<sup>101</sup>

Many conservatives within the diocese were encouraged by Schultz’s leadership and others who stood up to Bishop DeWitt. Anderson Meadows, a retired lawyer from suburban Bryn Mawr and a member of the “Committee for the Preservation of Episcopal Principles,” believed that Bishop DeWitt put too much time and effort into trying to

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<sup>99</sup> “Bishop Advises Clergy on ‘Black Manifesto’,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 28, 1969.

<sup>100</sup> Randall, “Bishop DeWitt Awakens Diocese,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>101</sup> Willard S. Randall, “A Church in Conflict: Dissident Priest Gains in Battle with DeWitt,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 5, 1969.

achieve social justice when he needed to place more emphasis on the individual spiritual growth of his parishioners. Meadows felt that DeWitt “overemphasize[d] some of his programs” and commented, “We would be very happy if we could get a new bishop.” With the realization that DeWitt’s ouster was unlikely, conservatives sought to garner as much influence as possible outside of the bishop’s office. Meadows emphasized that the purpose of the conservative movement within the diocese was “to impose some control” through the Diocesan Council and Convention, as well as through the budget. Robert Cox Allen, rector’s warden in Schultz’s parish and senior vice president of Girard Trust Bank, believed that reparations were not appropriate. He stated, “I think they’re asking for the wrong amount of money for the wrong purposes at the wrong time.” Despite his disagreement with DeWitt on policy matters, Allen did “admire” the bishop for his courage to tackle controversial issues. He called DeWitt “a man of action” and commented, “Before he came, a lot of people for a long time did nothing. They just went to meetings and did nothing...I just wish the bishop would do things more theologically.”<sup>102</sup>

Bishop DeWitt was introduced to Muhammad Kenyatta by Paul Washington during the summer of 1969. The rector of the Church of the Advocate had previously sought out a meeting with Kenyatta in an effort to better understand the Black Manifesto. Washington was immediately impressed with the twenty-five-year-old BEDC leader who the minister said “had a charm and a gift of persuasion the likes of which I had never experienced before.” Following his initial conversation with Kenyatta, Washington arranged for Bishop DeWitt to meet with the Black Manifesto advocate at the rectory of

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

his North Philadelphia church. The bishop's "prophetic imagination was immediately captured" by the Black Manifesto's call for the white Church's repentance and restitution.<sup>103</sup> DeWitt became a staunch supporter of the Black Manifesto both within the diocese and the national Episcopal Church. As a member of the denomination's Executive Council, DeWitt proposed that the Episcopalians take out a \$1 million mortgage on its "new debt-free" headquarters in New York City and donate the sum to BEDC. Despite the bishop's enthusiasm for the idea, the Executive Council soundly vetoed his suggestion and also rejected the Black Manifesto itself.<sup>104</sup>

Kenyatta, at the behest of Bishop DeWitt, presented the Black Manifesto to the Diocesan Council on July 10, 1969. The BEDC spokesman presented his demands to the skeptical council and promptly exited. Paul Washington, the lone African-American representative on the Diocesan Council, later wrote:

No sooner had the door closed behind him that the council erupted like a volcano. He was attacked as a person, and the call to us as representatives of the church was denounced as though he had called upon us to crucify Christ himself.<sup>105</sup>

Washington confronted the council about their attitudes and reactions to Kenyatta and pointed out that the young activist had approached the group "with respect and love," but they "were treating him as though he were an enemy."<sup>106</sup> Washington left the meeting in disgust and later wrote to the Diocesan Council:

This is to inform you that your message of rejection of my Brother, Muhammad Kenyatta and me, The Union of Black Clergy and Laymen of the Episcopal church, the National Committee of Black Churchmen, The City Wide Black Community Council of Philadelphia, has been received...Mr. Kenyatta appeared before us in person. In all of my years

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<sup>103</sup> Washington and Gracie, *Other Sheep I Have*, 87.

<sup>104</sup> Randall, "Bishop DeWitt Awakens Diocese," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>105</sup> Washington and Gracie, *Other Sheep I Have*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

on our council I have never seen a present[e]r nor heard a presentation which surpassed what we witnessed...And then it happened all over again for the twenty millionth time, the process of negation, dehumanization, invalidation, reduction and destruction. You did it again...Paul Washington has not resigned from the Council of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. He has simply finally accepted his rejection and the rejection of his brothers of which he has always been agonizingly aware.<sup>107</sup>

Several members of the Diocesan Council wrote to Washington following his abrupt exit. Some council members were combative and condescending towards him while others were more diplomatic. W. Hamilton Aulenbach, rector of Christ Church and St. Michael's in Germantown, thought Washington was acting like a petulant child. The white minister believed that he resigned simply out of frustration that the Diocesan Council did not support the Black Manifesto. Aulenbach wrote, "It is 'cry baby stuff,' political chicanery, racial exploitation, emotional instability, sheer dishonesty to publically state the 'black man' has been rejected because the Kenyatta demands have been rejected." Aulenbach then outlandishly commented:

You are beginning to remind me of Hitler. When he could not get his way he condemned the Jews. When you can't get your way you use the 'white man' in the same way. You give the impression you'd order the 'gas chamber' for anyone who differed with you!<sup>108</sup>

Washington responded to Aulenbach's inflammatory comments by asking, "Do I really remind you of Hitler? Do you really think I would order you to the 'gas chamber'?" The minister further remarked, "If this is the way you have heard me then I know that I am correct when I say that you have rejected me."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Paul Washington to the Diocesan Council, July 13, 1969, Box 19, Folder 3, Washington Papers.

<sup>108</sup> W. Hamilton Aulenbach to Paul Washington, July 18, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Washington to W. Hamilton Aulenbach, July 31, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

Sallie Lea, another council member, approached Washington in a more conciliatory manner than Aulenbach. She expressed her admiration for the minister and appreciation for the friendship they had developed. Although she was staunchly against the Black Manifesto, she tried to empathize with Washington and wrote:

I respect your decision based on the principle that you cannot go along with a board which has taken a position entirely contrary to what you believe in. I would have been faced with the same decision if we accepted the Manifesto without reservation.<sup>110</sup>

However, she thought that adherence to the Black Manifesto would lead to “tyranny” and a “welfare state.”<sup>111</sup> Washington responded to Lea:

First you must note that the council did not take “a position entirely contrary” to what I believe in. The Council took No position...It was my hope that over the years you had learned enough of me to know that neither would I expect you to accept the Manifesto “without reservations”, nor even would I accept it “without reservation”...I don’t understand how you can get hung up on how anger, frustration and despair are expressed when you know that the cause is hunger, nakedness, homelessness...Is not the solution to the problem to remove the conditions which drive people to destruction? Does it make sense to scrutinize the symptom rather than joining in on an all out attack on the cause?<sup>112</sup>

Helen Wartman, a member of the diocese wrote to Washington to express her disapproval of his resignation from the Diocesan Council. She wrote, “It is silly of you to talk about being rejected...Can’t you see that it was the demand (which falls little short of black-mail) and not the individual that was rejected?”<sup>113</sup>

Bishop DeWitt believed that the Episcopal Church owed it to their African-American clergy to trust them enough to support the Black Manifesto. He felt “very strongly that the Council was not at its best” during the meeting with Kenyatta and called

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<sup>110</sup> Nancy Lea to Paul Washington, July 17, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Paul Washington to Nancy Lea, July 31, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

<sup>113</sup> Helen T. Wartman to Paul Washington, July 21, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Washington Papers.

their reaction to him “little short of disastrous.” The bishop believed that the main issue was not really Muhammad Kenyatta or BEDC, but the “Black community of America crying out for proper recognition.”<sup>114</sup> DeWitt immediately called for a special Diocesan Council meeting for August 6, 1969 in order to further discuss the Black Manifesto. During this intense five-hour gathering, the bishop successfully persuaded the council to create a nine-member committee to further explore creative ways that the diocese could assist the African-American community. This committee was to be led by the Reverend Richard Hawkins, rector of the affluent St. Thomas Church in suburban Whitmarsh.<sup>115</sup>

After two months of deliberation, the Hawkins Committee recommended that the diocese “raise \$5 million in the next five years for projects in the black community.”<sup>116</sup> In order to collect the necessary funds, the Hawkins Committee explained that the money could be raised if each member of the diocese increased their contributions by 10 to 15%. Stressing the importance of African-American self-determination, the Hawkins Committee proposed that the money be given to a group of African-American clergymen who would then decide how to disburse the funds. To many in the diocese, the most controversial part of the Hawkins Committee proposal was what it did not contain. It did not forbid any of the donations from going “directly or indirectly” to BEDC. This drew the ire of many conservatives in the diocese opposed to BEDC and the Black Manifesto at all costs.<sup>117</sup>

During Bishop DeWitt’s opening address at the October 1969 Diocesan Convention, he encouraged the delegates to act on the Hawkins Committee proposal. He

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<sup>114</sup> Robert DeWitt to Paul Washington, July 11, 1969, Box 19, Folder 3, Washington Papers.

<sup>115</sup> Randall, “Bishop DeWitt Awakens Diocese,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>116</sup> “Diocese Suggests Fund Drive to Aid Negroes,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 7, 1969

<sup>117</sup> Gerald McKelvey, “Penna. Episcopal Convention to Act on Urban Priorities, Black Manifesto,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 17, 1969.

called it “a courageous piece of work” that “presents us with an opportunity to make a bold move of mission with regard to what is perhaps the prime problem in American life today, the problem of racial disunity.” The bishop stated that “the church exists for those who are outside of it” and exhorted the delegates to “settle their differences and unify for the sake of their mission.” Acknowledging that this would require financial sacrifice, DeWitt stressed that he was going to make cuts to his own staff and “limit diocesan missions and parish programs.”<sup>118</sup> Despite the controversial nature of his speech, the delegates gave the bishop a resounding standing ovation.

Even though Bishop DeWitt gave an impassioned plea on its behalf, the Hawkins Committee proposal proved too controversial to pass through the Diocesan Convention. The concern over whether BEDC would receive funding galvanized the conservative wing of the diocese to block the plan. A resolution introduced by David Maxwell, a center-city lawyer, exhorted the delegates to “forbid payment of direct or indirect ‘reparation’ money” to BEDC. Maxwell believed the Black Manifesto’s rhetoric was “patently and utterly contrary to Christ’s teachings.” A moderate contingent of delegates offered a counter resolution that “recommended the convention repudiate language and ideology of the manifesto and of other advocates of violence, but direct the bishop and the diocesan council to develop the Hawkins report.”<sup>119</sup> In order to refine the Hawkins Committee Report, the diocese created a 24-member “Task Force for Reconciliation” that was to present their findings in the spring of 1970. It was at that time that the diocese

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<sup>118</sup> Gerald McKelvey, “DeWitt Urges Convention OK of Ghetto Fund,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 1969.

<sup>119</sup> Gerald McKelvey, “Episcopal Task Force Will Seek to Solve ‘Reparation’ Impasse,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 19, 1969.

would make its final decision on the programmatic aspects they would adopt to assist the African-American community.

Despite the positive notion that the Hawkins Committee proposal had not completely stalled, the diocese's African-American clergy left the convention extremely hurt and frustrated. James Woodruff, the group's spokesman, called the Maxwell Resolution "an insult to our intelligence and abilities, a flareback to the old ways of the white-black superior-inferior attitudes of the past, and certainly not an expression of trust in your black clergy and communicants." He declared that the African-American clergy "would not participate in any program in which funds are allocated with strings attached." Also, several African-American ministers believed that the conservative white clergymen had exploited them in an effort to frustrate Bishop DeWitt's progressive agenda. Prior to the Diocesan Convention, several African-American ministers signed a petition opposing the Black Manifesto. The Reverend Charles Poindexter, rector of St. Luke's Church in Germantown, decried the document's violent rhetoric. However, he was disgusted with the white clergymen for using the Black Manifesto as a wedge issue in an attempt to weaken African-American solidarity within the diocese. Poindexter was proud to be "part of a group that expresses unity such as it has never known" and stated, "Whereas I am not trying to explain away why I signed the statement, I resent very much that I have been used by a group of clergymen to press a point." Father Poindexter was also dismayed that he had been nominated by the conservative white clergymen without his approval to be a delegate to the Episcopal Church's upcoming national convention. Father Bruce Williamson, rector of St. Mary's Church, also signed the anti-Black Manifesto statement before the gathering. Despite his opposition to the Black Manifesto,

he told the Diocesan Convention, “I thank God for Forman...I thank God for the Black Manifesto. It has brought you today to the focus you must consider.”<sup>120</sup> In the end, the conservatives’ attempt to exploit the African-American ministers backfired by uniting them together even more.

As the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania’s Task Force for Reconciliation prepared for the special Diocesan Convention to be held in May 1970, Muhammad Kenyatta demanded that the Episcopalians pay BEDC \$500,000, his estimate for the market value of historic Holy Trinity Church of Rittenhouse Square and the adjacent Church House. Kenyatta lamented that “the Episcopal Diocese is willing to spend a hundred thousand dollars for the upkeep of Holy Trinity, but is unwilling to make even a token payment of reparations from its corporate wealth.” The BEDC leader said, “Aside from a few individuals of integrity and courage, white Episcopalians would rather risk further damnation than surrender that wealth to the insurgent black community.”<sup>121</sup> The special Diocesan Convention held in May 1970 finalized the process begun by the Hawkins Committee that finished the prior Diocesan Convention at an impasse. The diocese approved a \$500,000 “restitution fund” proposed by the Task Force for Reconciliation that was to be distributed by African-American leaders within the diocese. Despite being only one-tenth of the original Hawkins Committee proposal, Bishop DeWitt was heartened by the approved program. The bishop remarked, “The key to this was the principle of self-determination...to be spent by black people for black purposes, without controls.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Dixon, “Black Manifesto,” 39.

<sup>121</sup> “BEDC Makes Demands on Episcopal Diocese,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 19, 1970.

<sup>122</sup> “Diocese Sets Up Aid Fund,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 1970.

The Restitution Fund Commission was composed of thirty-four African-American leaders within the diocese and split evenly between clergy and laymen.<sup>123</sup> Only a year after its inception, the Restitution Fund Commission reached an impasse that threatened its existence. The commission's conservative members, led by the fund's chairman, Harold Pilgrim, insisted on a very methodical and cautious deliberation process before disbursing any funds. The commission's liberal faction led by Paul Washington and James Woodruff became frustrated by the lack of progress being made. They interpreted the painstaking deliberation as an attempt to shut BEDC and other grassroots organizations out of the process in order to placate conservative whites within the diocese. Despite the reality that BEDC's activism was the impetus behind the creation of the Restitution Fund Commission, the controversial organization did not receive any financial support from the entity it helped to create.

Muhammad Kenyatta was so despondent with the Restitution Fund Commission that he urged the group to return their money to the diocese. The BEDC leader was dismayed that the commission had avoided dealing with BEDC and many other grassroots organizations that were in dire need of funding. The activist accused the commission of ignoring BEDC's numerous proposals and lamented that organizations were forced to send the commission "detailed proposals as though they were petitioning the poverty program of the Nixon-Agnew Administration." Kenyatta was incensed that many needy programs were forced to wait as the commission "dawdled in bureaucratic paper shuffling and middle-class insensitivity." He believed that the commission had lost its sense of purpose and had begun to think the fund was their personal property.

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<sup>123</sup> John Rhodes, "Kenyatta Urges Returning \$500Gs to Episcopalians," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 8, 1971.

Kenyatta remarked, “While our children kill themselves with knives, guns and dope, you have refused to relinquish the resources over which you were granted stewardship—stewardship, mind you—not ownership.” Kenyatta accused the Restitution Fund Commission of trying “to placate racist critics and measure up to white bourgeois values” and exhorted the commission members to resign. He implored his fellow African Americans to “let the white church do its own dirty work” and not become their “hatchet men, callous to your own community.”<sup>124</sup> Kenyatta believed that Bishop DeWitt would disburse the funds in a more transparent and efficient manner than the commission had done. He somberly stated, “The truth is that Bishop DeWitt and other progressive whites...have had more of a black-mindedness about them, more of a concern for black and poor people, than these black men and women who have dawdled with this money.”<sup>125</sup>

Fourteen members of the Restitution Fund Commission shared Kenyatta’s critique and abruptly resigned. All fourteen were members of the Union of Black Clergy and Laity (UBCL), the Episcopalian African-American caucus that had previously endorsed the Black Manifesto. The group accused the commission of renegeing on “compromise agreements worked out between the Union and present commission leadership” and of “inaction and lack of accountability to the Black community in favor of accountability to the white church.” Barbara Harris, the UBCL’s local chairman and a former Restitution Fund Commission member, stated, “The eleven clergy and three lay persons who resigned have simply chosen to take their stand with the larger Black community against those Black churchmen who are unable or unwilling to seriously

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Gray, “Muhammad Kenyatta,” *Philly Talk*, July 1971, 15.

address themselves to the issue of Black self-determination.” Muhammad Kenyatta was heartened by the actions of the UBCL members and commented, “We are overjoyed with the strength of the brothers and sisters and will reopen our assault on racism in the Episcopal and other churches.”<sup>126</sup>

Barbara Harris believed that Harold Pilgrim, the Restitution Fund Commission’s chairman, was a tool of the white establishment assigned to his post in order to ensure that BEDC did not receive funding. Harris stated, “We have always questioned the leadership—particularly Harold Pilgrim—who never would disassociate himself from the One Church Slate and their opposition to restitution and to BEDC. We feel he should not be chairman.” Furthermore, Harris claimed that she “saw some of the now leaders of the Restitution Fund Commission vote against its creation” at the May 1970 special Diocesan Convention.<sup>127</sup> Harris was also disappointed that the commission favored established organizations run by African Americans who were already well-connected to the white power structure. She was particularly critical of a \$7,000 donation that the commission made to install air conditioners at Leon Sullivan’s multi-million-dollar federally-supported Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC). While Sullivan’s program was an effective outreach to the African-American community, it had already obtained million-dollar grants from the federal government. Harris argued that this was an example of funding safe projects that would not raise concerns from conservative whites within the diocese.

Harold Pilgrim scoffed at Harris’s accusation that he was a tool of the white establishment. In reference to the former commission members, he stated, “They did not

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<sup>126</sup> “Clergy, Laymen Hit Fund Unit,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 26, 1971.

<sup>127</sup> “Restitution Fund..and Whither Reconciliation,” *The Diocesan News*, June 1971, Box 40, Folder 13, Washington Papers.

believe in the democratic process...and their objectives were not compatible with our mandate. They wanted all our dollars turned over to Muhammad Kenyatta and his associates. When they failed, they left.” Pilgrim was particularly amused by Harris’s accusation that he opposed the creation of the Restitution Fund. The embattled chairman emphasized that he was a member of the Reconciliation Task Force that had proposed the Restitution Fund in the first place. He pointed out that although he accepted the nomination of the conservative One Church Slate, he had no involvement or relationship to the group. Pilgrim responded to Harris’s charge that he never invited local African-American community leaders to address the commission by stating, “Activists were not invited to our meetings—no one else was either. We’re too busy; we know what we’re supposed to do. To be controlled by outsiders—no—our agenda is too full.” Pilgrim stated, “I have no time to be worried about pacifying discontent when discontent is based on an illogical basis. Their responsibility should have been to remain whether they won or lost.” However, the chairman left the door open to their return and remarked, “I would be glad, of course, to have them resume their responsibilities if they took the initiative...They walked out; they can walk back in—they’ll occupy the same position.”<sup>128</sup>

Paul Washington announced the mass resignation at the installation service for the officers of the Restitution Fund Commission on June 22, 1971 at St. Philip’s Church. Washington was supposed to give the sermon for the evening’s service, but he turned his preaching into a vehicle of protest against the commission. Overcome with emotion, Washington broke down in tears as he explained the rationale for the group’s resignation.

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

He stated emphatically, “If I cry tonight, understand that my cries are those of our children dying in the streets while we haggle in committee over procedure.”<sup>129</sup>

Muhammad Kenyatta also made an appearance at the service and lambasted the “right-wing Uncle Toms” in the commission.<sup>130</sup> Bishop DeWitt, the leader of the diocese who had put so much effort into seeing the reparations issue through, sat through much of the service “with his head in his hands.” The frustrated bishop remarked, “We now face the paradox of giving to a fund for black self-determination the allocating committee of which is seriously divided on the meaning of self-determination.”<sup>131</sup>

Later that year at the October Diocesan Convention, Pilgrim, Kenyatta, and Washington all addressed the gathering. Out of \$265,000 the Restitution Fund Commission had received, it had disbursed only \$132,500. Pilgrim made sure that his fellow Episcopalians knew that the commission worked extremely hard to “certify the validity and veracity of applicants” and that private investigators had been hired to help in the process of this validation. While Pilgrim was addressing the convention, Kenyatta led a group to the stage and told the convention, “Don’t give to BEDC, crucify us, but don’t shut out the black community, don’t divide us!” Washington then remarked, “The community and the Convention are not compatible—you cannot serve both. Some members heard not the mandate of the convention but the cry of the community.”<sup>132</sup>

The failure of the Restitution Fund Commission points to the fact that the conflict among Episcopalians over the Black Manifesto was in no way split along racial lines. Many of the Black Manifesto’s strongest supporters were white while many of its most

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<sup>129</sup> Washington and Gracie, “*Other Sheep I Have*”, 157-158.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>132</sup> “Black Episcopalians Debate Restitution,” *The Diocesan News*, October 22, 1971, Box 40, Folder 13, Washington Papers.

vehement detractors were African American. The conflict among white Episcopalians over the Black Manifesto was extremely contentious and almost tore the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania apart. While many African Americans supported the Black Manifesto, many blacks detested the BEDC activists and could not believe that white clergymen like Bishop DeWitt could be so gullible as to support self-appointed leaders like James Forman and Muhammad Kenyatta.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPARATIONS AT NOTRE DAME AND BEYOND

The Philadelphia contingent of Black Manifesto supporters made perhaps their greatest contribution to the reparations movement in the fall of 1969 at the Episcopal Special General Convention held at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. Muhammad Kenyatta, Paul Washington, Bishop DeWitt, and others from the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania played an integral role in procuring the first funding for BEDC by any majority-white denomination. While BEDC received only \$200,000 from the Episcopalians, the intense and rancorous debate over the Black Manifesto brought the issue of race to the forefront of the denomination's agenda.

At the 1967 Episcopalian national convention, the decision was made to hold an additional convention in the fall of 1969 in order to address some of the growing concerns within the denomination related to the turbulent times of the late 1960s. This was the first time since 1821 that the Episcopalians had departed from the routine of gathering every three years. The argument over the Black Manifesto and the funding of BEDC occurred at a time when the Episcopalians were in conflict over their own identity. The national denomination's progressive wing, led by Bishop John Hines, encouraged each diocese to bring additional minority, youth, and women delegates to the conference at Notre Dame. Although these delegates could not vote, they still participated in the discussions and committees at the conference. This greatly changed the atmosphere from

prior conventions that were almost exclusively populated by older and wealthier white bishops and lay leaders.<sup>133</sup>

After the Episcopalian Executive Council rejected the Black Manifesto in May 1969, Bishop Hines assembled a task force “to implement the spirit of the Council’s initial response to the Black Manifesto.”<sup>134</sup> The Coburn Committee, led by the Reverend Dr. John Coburn, rector of St. James Church in New York City and Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, invited representatives of BEDC and the UBCL to give their input at the task force’s meetings. Coburn also reached out to James Forman by taking him out to dinner.<sup>135</sup> The presence of Dr. Charles Willie, an African-American sociology professor at Syracuse University, on the Executive Council and the Coburn Committee had a great effect on its actions. Willie encouraged the Executive Council neither to accept nor reject the Black Manifesto in its totality.<sup>136</sup>

Prior to the Special General Convention, the Episcopalians, at the behest of the Coburn Committee, became the first predominantly white denomination to recognize BEDC as a legitimate organization. Although the Executive Council rejected the Black Manifesto’s “revolutionary language” and “frenetic ideology,” they described BEDC as “a movement which is an expression of self-determination for the organizing of the black community in America.”<sup>137</sup> The Coburn Committee proposed that if BEDC desired financial support from the Episcopalians, they would have to apply through the denomination’s General Convention Special Program (GCSP). The GCSP was the

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<sup>133</sup> “Black and White Militants Disrupt Episcopal Parley,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1969.

<sup>134</sup> *A Running Account of Events and Issues at Notre Dame*, 1-2, Box 44, 1960s Scrapbook, Washington Papers.

<sup>135</sup> Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians and Race*, 191.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192.

<sup>137</sup> “Before You Read Further,” *The Episcopalian*, October 1969, 4, Box 41, Folder 4, Washington Papers.

multimillion dollar fund created by the denomination to support economic and community development among racial minorities in the country.<sup>138</sup>

The attendees of the national assembly at Notre Dame quickly realized that it was not going to be an ordinary church gathering. On Sunday, August 31, the opening night of the convention, Muhammad Kenyatta commandeered the microphone during a joint session of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies. Kenyatta, along with a few other BEDC activists and a band of barefooted white youth, turned the convention on its head. The young reparations advocate chastised the convention for not “dealing with realistic issues” of race in America.<sup>139</sup> As the BEDC leader spoke, Bishop Hines quickly approached him and the two began to wrestle over the microphone. Hines admonished Kenyatta, “Behave yourself, son!” and Kenyatta responded, “I’m a grown man, married with children! I’m no boy!”<sup>140</sup> William MacKaye of the *Washington Post* captured the chaotic scene:

Bishop John P. Craine...hurried toward the sound technician’s box, motioning to him to cut off the loud speaker system. But directly behind the bishop was the Very Rev. Frederick William Inkster, of Michigan, president of the unofficial Episcopal Union of Black Clergy and Laymen, who was gesturing with equal vehemence for the sound system to be left on. The operator, confronted by two men in clerical garb giving contrary signals, did nothing. Alternate cries of “let him speak” and “throw him out” filled the meeting hall.<sup>141</sup>

Prior to Kenyatta’s disruption of the opening session, three other African-American Philadelphians also considered the possibility of commandeering the microphone in an effort to force the convention to discuss the issues of race. The agenda

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<sup>138</sup> *A Running Account*, 2, Washington Papers.

<sup>139</sup> William R. MacKaye, “Episcopal Conclave Jarred by Black Clergy’s Outburst,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1969.

<sup>140</sup> *A Celebration of the Ministry of John Elbridge Hines: A Moment of Grace in the History of the Church*, October 1984, Box 41, Folder 4, Washington Papers.

<sup>141</sup> MacKaye, “Episcopal Conclave Jarred,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1969.

set by the Church had scheduled the debate over the Coburn Report proposals for Wednesday night.<sup>142</sup> The African-American delegates did not want to wait three more days to discuss what they believed to be the most pressing issue confronting the denomination. As Paul Washington, Jesse Anderson, Sr., and Barbara Harris discussed how to interrupt the proceedings, someone cried out, “Look! There is Mo down there on the stage!” All three ran from the top of the arena down to the stage. One usher tried to stop Harris, but she “just brushed the hand aside and kept on going.” As they arrived at the podium, Kenyatta relinquished the microphone to Bishop Hines. Jesse Anderson, Sr. then asked Hines if Washington, a deputy to the convention, would be able to speak to the convention. Bishop Hines proceeded to ask for a show of hands from the nearly 1,000 delegates as to whether they wanted Washington to be able to speak. Although the vote seemed split, Hines declared that a majority of people were in approval of allowing the minister to address the gathering.<sup>143</sup>

Washington called the convention “a waste of time” and stated:

The black people have to set the agenda for America and the Episcopal Church. White people are not sensitive to the problems of minority groups in this nation. You whites must learn to be humble and learn through humility to tell America what has to be done in order that the United States can be saved.<sup>144</sup>

Washington demanded that the Coburn Report be dealt with immediately and then reintroduced Kenyatta to the convention. The reparations advocate presented the Black Manifesto and requested \$200,000 in seed money to start up BEDC’s activities.

Washington then asked Bishop Coburn to amend the agenda to deal with the Coburn

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<sup>142</sup> Weldon Wallace, “Episcopalians Alter Plan, Give Negro Issue Priority,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>143</sup> *John Elbridge Hines*, Washington Papers.

<sup>144</sup> George M. Collins, “Episcopal Conclave Slowed by Blacks Asking Recognition,” *Boston Globe*, September 1, 1969.

Report. When the bishop refused his request, Washington ordered all of the African-American delegates to leave the arena. In a dramatic scene, most African Americans and a few sympathetic whites walked out of the convention and went to their caucus groups.<sup>145</sup>

After splitting into sixty caucuses following the intense session, the denomination's leadership instructed the groups to carry on with the agenda. However, most delegates simply reflected on what had just occurred during the opening session. The consensus of the caucus groups was that the issue of race should be dealt with immediately. Furthermore, Bishop Paul Moore of Washington D.C. persuaded Bishop Hines to scrap the agenda and immediately focus on the Coburn Report.<sup>146</sup> On Monday morning, two prominent African-American leaders were given the floor in order to explain their goals. Joseph Pelham of the UBCL informed the Convention that none of the \$200,000 requested by Kenyatta should be taken from the GCSP and that the African-American caucus would not be used as a buffer to funnel funds to BEDC. Pelham said, "It is up to the white church to deal with BEDC."<sup>147</sup> Kenyatta accused the Black Manifesto's opponents of focusing on the rhetoric and not the spirit of the document. He said, "White people have trouble with the Manifesto prologue. In part, this is because you are unwilling to write your own prologue, your own statement of commitment." Kenyatta believed that the church was "part of the present racist structure" and "an apologist for racism in the past and is in the present."<sup>148</sup> He challenged the Episcopalians to be "a

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<sup>145</sup> Betty Medsger, "Blacks Seize Episcopalians' Microphone," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 1, 1969;

<sup>146</sup> *A Running Account*, 3, Washington Papers.

<sup>147</sup> George M. Collins, "Episcopalians Hear Black Demand for \$200 Million," *Boston Globe*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>148</sup> "An Act of Faith," *The Episcopalian*, October 1969, 15, Box 41, Folder 4, Washington Papers.

revolutionary church in the tradition of Jesus Christ” instead of “an imposter church in the tradition of the money changers whom Jesus Christ drove out of the temple with a whip.”<sup>149</sup>

Pelham and Kenyatta received a great deal of support from the delegates. Spiro Kypreos, a young law student, defended the concept of reparations, “Muhammad Kenyatta has come to you as a court of conscience to consider what has been done to his people. What he seeks is just compensation, not payment out of guilt.”<sup>150</sup> William Farley, an African-American college student, personally appealed to the convention, “The issue is not reparations, but you, your life, your children. If you don’t deal with this issue there won’t be a Christian Church. Mr. Kenyatta is concerned about you.”<sup>151</sup> Don Walster, a white minister from Oregon, stated that he “acknowledged the debt owed under the terms of the Black Manifesto” and donated \$1,000 to BEDC on the spot.<sup>152</sup>

However, many ministers spoke out against BEDC and the Black Manifesto. Bishop Stuart Wetmore of New York argued that “the church has already paid out far more and for far, far better reasons” and defiantly stated that “the church has done far too much in letting other organizations take over our concerns.”<sup>153</sup> The Reverend Gerald McAllister of Texas described the Black Manifesto as “Marxist, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and anti-democratic.”<sup>154</sup> He stated, “We have not done enough. We have not been sacrificial. We have not led the way...I’m ready to see the church different than it

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<sup>149</sup> Collins, “Black Demand for \$200 Million,” *Boston Globe*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>150</sup> Wallace, “Episcopalians Alter Plan,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>151</sup> “An Act of Faith,” 16, Washington Papers.

<sup>152</sup> Seth S. King, “Episcopal Parley to Consider Demands by Black Group for ‘Reparations,’” *New York Times*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Collins, “Black Demand for \$200 Million,” *Boston Globe*, September 2, 1969.

is, but not ready to destroy it and the nation of which it is a part.”<sup>155</sup> Seaborn Flournoy of Virginia sarcastically commented that “the British Empire now owes us enough to pay Mr. Forman out of our petty cash funds.”<sup>156</sup>

On Tuesday evening the House of Deputies arrived at the moment of decision regarding the possible funding of BEDC and the manner in which it would be addressed. At the beginning of the session, Joseph Pelham alerted the convention that the African-American delegates would not participate in the evening’s discussion. He stated, “Our position has been made quite clear. This is your debate. We will sit and listen and watch very carefully.”<sup>157</sup> Earlier in the day in the House of Deputies, the Christian Social Relations Committee (CSRC) proposed that \$200,000 be given to the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) who would then transfer the funds to BEDC. Many Southern delegates quickly rejected the CSRC’s proposal and voiced their discontent. Sherwood Wise of Mississippi said, “I will not go back to my people and say I endorsed this infamous document.” Brown Moore of Louisiana stated, “I’m sick at heart to be asked by the Executive Council of my beloved Church to support this.”<sup>158</sup> In response to the CSRC’s motion to fund BEDC through the NCBC, William Ikard, a conservative member of Executive Council, proposed that BEDC would have to apply for funding through the GCSP. After hours of debate over if and how BEDC would be funded, Ikard’s motion to force BEDC to apply for funding through the GCSP passed.

The African-American clergymen looked on in frustration and anger as their hopes that their denomination would fund BEDC directly were dashed in the House of

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<sup>155</sup> Wallace, “Episcopalians Alter Plan,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 2, 1969.

<sup>156</sup> “An Act of Faith,” 15, Washington Papers.

<sup>157</sup> *A Running Account*, 11, Washington Papers.

<sup>158</sup> “An Act of Faith,” 23, Washington Papers.

Deputies. After the vote approving the motion to require BEDC to request funding through the GCSP, three UBCL clergy rose to speak. Bishop Junius Carter of Pittsburgh lambasted the convention:

You've talked a lot about your black brothers but you don't mean it...All of these resolutions are basically meaningless and you all ought to go home. Nothing has happened here but a damned lie! It hurts me terribly to know that I am in the Episcopal Church...If you don't trust BEDC, you don't trust me...I am sick of you. I am sick of you from the south to the north to the east and to the west...There won't be a resurrection for this church. We just finished a crucifixion—the crucifixion of every black man here!<sup>159</sup>

Bishop Lloyd Casson of Wilmington, Delaware argued that those opposing BEDC were simply using parliamentary procedures as a way to avoid confronting the issue of racism within the church. For those delegates concerned with the Black Manifesto's violent rhetoric, Casson pointed out that “the prophets warned of destruction” and that the document's rhetoric was “predictions of the inevitable” if racism was not dealt with sufficiently. The bishop declared, “Martin Luther King came preaching non-violence and was rejected. You, tonight, have decided for Mr. Forman what the course of action shall be. The Church has spoken!”<sup>160</sup> The delegates of the House of Deputies were so shaken by the words of Carter and Casson that they decided to revisit the BEDC issue in the morning. Before the session was adjourned, Paul Washington addressed the House of Deputies:

In love and gentleness we have afforded you the opportunity to rise up as men of God...I am nobody's slave, I am not afraid, but so many of you are afraid. You are afraid to love, you are afraid of freedom, you are afraid to be beautiful...What man is proud tonight of what you have just done?...After speaking of self-determination, you made an effort to put me in chains...It is as if you tried to squeeze me a little bit too hard and I just

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<sup>159</sup> *A Running Account*, 12, Washington Papers.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

slipped through your hands...I'm asking nothing for me, I am appealing to you now for yourselves...You have a chance for greatness...Yes you will go home and be crucified, but in doing so you can follow in the steps of our Lord."<sup>161</sup>

On Wednesday morning, the House of Deputies passed the CSRC proposal to fund BEDC through the NCBC. Despite the assurances that BEDC would receive funding, the African-American clergy were despondent because the convention still refused to trust them enough to relate to BEDC directly. After the motion was passed to fund BEDC through a middleman, Junius Carter again rose to address the convention. William MacKaye of the *Boston Globe* wrote that Carter “dramatically turned his back on the deputies to address the many bishops who were watching the action from the hall’s audience section. Canon Carter urged them to...eliminate the compromise language when they took up the resolution in their own house.”<sup>162</sup> However, Carter’s plea went unheeded as the House of Bishops approved the plan to fund BEDC via the NCBC.

During the session of the House of Deputies, Bishop DeWitt motioned for a “direct allocation” from the Episcopal Church to BEDC, but his request was soundly defeated. Sallie Eckert, a white lay delegate from Michigan, interrupted the session to chastise the bishops for not funding BEDC directly. Eckert bluntly stated, “It’s hard for me to find adequate words to express the outrage I feel at your action. You were the last hope. But you choose instead to rubber stamp the actions of the deputies.” She believed the bishops had relinquished their moral and spiritual authority by refusing to relate directly to BEDC. Eckert remarked, “In fear of what the people back home will say, you

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> William MacKaye, “Episcopalians Vote Black Aid,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 1969.

have abdicated your leadership.”<sup>163</sup> George Murray of Alabama was the only bishop out of 200 to object to funding BEDC through the NCBC and lamented that “the only reason we are dealing with BEDC is because they have put a gun to our head and demanded money.”<sup>164</sup>

After the House of Bishops approved the plan, the funding of BEDC through the NCBC became official. Frederick Williams, president of the UBCL, described the action as a “political compromise” and believed that the Episcopalians were “using the National Committee of Black Churchmen as a buffer to avoid honestly facing...those uncomfortable people from the heart of the ghetto.”<sup>165</sup> The Reverend John Burgess, the African-American Bishop of Massachusetts, was even more critical of the Convention. He called the action “subterfuge” and the use of the NCBC as the middleman as akin to “a man selling dope who deals with pimps.”<sup>166</sup> The UBCL’s final response to the Convention was a letter written by Frederick Williams and James Woodruff that was read on Thursday night. The letter was a mixture of critique, admonishment, and hope. They wrote:

For the first time in your history, you have faced the issue of your racism and you have responded. The quality of your response can be judged by the degree to which you have sought what was acceptable to us rather than what was acceptable to you. You chose to use us, then GCSP and, finally, NCBC to be your middlemen. That is your choice and it is unacceptable...because it is neither hot nor cold...Your response falls short of the mark of leadership which would have given force and direction to that process, but we have begun. And to your surprise and our joy, we have begun together.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Betty Medsger, “Episcopal Bishops Criticized For Method of Negro Fund Grant,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 4, 1969.

<sup>164</sup> William R. MacKaye, “Episcopalians Vote Black Aid,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 1969.

<sup>165</sup> Seth S. King, “Episcopal Leaders Vote \$200,000 in ‘Reparations,’” *New York Times*, September 4, 1969.

<sup>166</sup> Weldon Wallace, “Negroes To Get Episcopal Fund,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 4, 1969.

<sup>167</sup> *A Running Account*, 24, Washington Papers.

Muhammad Kenyatta expressed mixed feelings about the funding approved by the Episcopalians at Notre Dame. He was excited that BEDC was going to receive its first payment from a majority-white denomination, but was also disappointed that the denomination's African-American clergy felt betrayed by their white brethren. Kenyatta believed that the Episcopalians had missed an opportunity to exhibit trust and confidence in the UBCL by funding BEDC directly. He believed that the chance for the Episcopalians to support their black caucus was "much more important than the \$200,000." Kenyatta also emphasized that he did not consider the Episcopalians' payment as reparations and remarked, "The reparations demand has to do with millions of dollars, and the reparations demand does have to be payable to BEDC." Kenyatta was highly complimentary of the Pennsylvania Diocese led by Bishop DeWitt who helped to spearhead the call to support BEDC. Kenyatta said that "any denomination...with cats like them is going to go the right way."<sup>168</sup>

Following the approval of funds to BEDC through the NCBC the Episcopal Church was consumed with paranoia over the public perception that they had capitulated to a militant black organization. A *Chicago Tribune* article entitled, "Episcopalians Vote \$200,000 as Reparations to Black Race," incensed many convention delegates to the point that some considered suing the newspaper.<sup>169</sup> A *New York Times* editorial accused the Episcopalians of setting a "strange precedent" by dealing with BEDC and asked, "Why should this particular self-appointed group be chosen as the channel for making

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<sup>168</sup> Betty Medsger, "Episcopal Bishops Criticized," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 4, 1969.

<sup>169</sup> Richard Philbrick, "Episcopalians Vote \$200,000 as Reparations to Black Race," *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1969; *A Running Account*, 21, Washington Papers.

amends?”<sup>170</sup> In response to the editorial, Bishops Hines and Coburn attempted to dispel the notion that the Episcopal Church had paid reparations. They wrote, “Neither in the official action of the Convention, nor in the report submitted to it by the Executive Council upon which the action was based, was the principle of reparations mentioned, much less approved.”<sup>171</sup> In the special convention edition of the *Episcopalian*, the denomination’s official publication, a concerted effort was made to soften the news of the payment to BEDC for its more conservative members. In a section entitled “Before you read further,” the editors made sure to point out to that while the Convention had recognized BEDC, it rejected the Black Manifesto’s ideology. They stressed that the Episcopal Church had “never paid “reparations” to any group” and that, “Not one dollar of General Church Program money or of your pledge to parish and diocesan budgets will be put into this fund.”<sup>172</sup>

Despite the denomination’s best efforts, many Episcopalians were horrified at what transpired at the special general convention. One critic called the gathering “a field day for the militants and a coup for the radicals” and claimed that after the conference, “there is little that would shock churchgoers short of a ‘holy war,’ with revolutionary clergy armed with Bibles and bayonets, marching against those who still entertain some doubt about their particular version of ‘love’ and ‘brotherhood.’”<sup>173</sup> Other Episcopalians

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<sup>170</sup> “Strange Precedent,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1969.

<sup>171</sup> John Hines and John Coburn to the Editor of the *New York Times*, Box 20, Folder 1, Washington Papers.

<sup>172</sup> “Before You Read Further,” *The Episcopalian*, October 1969, 4, Box 41, Folder 4, Washington Papers.

<sup>173</sup> “A Triumph of Lawlessness,” *The Christian Challenge*, October 1969, Box 44, 1960s Scrapbook, Washington Papers.

were so enraged that they refused to financially support their denomination until they could verify that “not one penny” of their donations would wind up in BEDC’s coffers.<sup>174</sup>

Like many Black Manifesto supporters, Paul Washington was disappointed that the Episcopalians refused to deal directly with BEDC and was also saddened that the NCBC offered themselves as intermediaries. The minister was adamant that the white churches should personally interact with the controversial organization and not use their own African-American clergy as a safer avenue to engage the reparations demand. Because BEDC alone issued the Black Manifesto, Washington believed they were to be considered the plaintiff and the white churches the defendant. In his view, it should not be up to the defendant to set the terms and conditions for who receives the reparations they pay. The white churches had no justification in telling African Americans to calm down or be patient and wait for gradual improvement. Washington remarked, “The ‘haves’ have no right at this point to demand that the ‘have-nots’ endure his emptiness.” The minister warned that it was imperative that African-American clergymen not avail themselves as a safer alternative to dealing with BEDC and stated, “White racists have always had ‘house niggers’ whom they would favor and we are not going to act as ‘house niggers.’” The minister pointed out that African Americans must force the white churches to deal directly with BEDC in order to “establish the legitimacy, credibility, worth and dignity of all black people and not accept the ‘White Man’s’ definition of our credibility.”<sup>175</sup>

Despite Washington’s insistence that the white churches deal directly with BEDC, he acknowledged that there “still would have been a confrontation” between whites and

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<sup>174</sup> “Church Hits Payment to Black Group,” *Washington Post*, September 11, 1969.

<sup>175</sup> Paul Washington at All Saints’ Church, Palo Alto, California, November 15, 1969, Box 20, Folder 1, Washington Papers.

African Americans even if BEDC or the Black Manifesto did not exist. Washington believed that the Christian Church was at a crossroads where they had an option of continuing business as usual or truly repenting and following the teachings of Christ. Washington exclaimed to his white audiences, "I can't live this lie any longer and frankly I don't see how you can!" Washington openly questioned whether the Church as presently constituted was appropriate for African American participation. He pointed out that "Christianity [is] not a product of our black culture, but a product of white culture and from Constantine to today the white man has conquered in the name of the cross." He compared United States and the white churches to the parable of the rich young ruler who was unable to give up his possessions and follow Christ. Washington challenged his white audiences with questions like, "How can you justify tying up millions in investments when the hungry cry out for food?" and "As Christians how do you stand justified before God in your affluences in the midst of poverty?"<sup>176</sup>

Washington believed the Black Manifesto was a potential antidote to the American idols of white power, militarism, and materialism. The minister claimed that Americans were "an idolatrous people" who had "rejected the God it professes to believe in."<sup>177</sup> He accused Americans of worshipping their own power and possessions instead of venerating the true God. Washington charged that the Church had replaced "Christian theology" with "the secular morality" of the United States. In the minister's view, this led American Christians to make the dangerous assumption that God endorsed any and all actions that benefitted the United States' national interests. Washington believed that the nation's worship of white power led to the dehumanization of African Americans living

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> "U.S. Problems Tied to Worship of 'God of Gold,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 1, 1969.

in their midst. He commented, “When mention is made of us in history usually it is colored by a white ideology, a white supremacy, and there is a rejection of many contributions which have been made by black people to this country.”<sup>178</sup> Although Washington supported the Black Manifesto and the concept of reparations, he believed that all of the money in the world would not matter if the hearts and minds of the American people did not change. Washington lamented:

If tomorrow, you made every school an ideal school, the problem wouldn't be solved...If you took every house in the ghetto and made it into a castle, that would not solve the problem...If you built enough tot lots, playgrounds and pools, that wouldn't solve the problem...These are not problems, but simply the symptoms of a society where certain basic human rights are no longer regarded as foremost and important.<sup>179</sup>

Washington's Black Power activism and support for the Black Manifesto were accompanied by his opposition to the Vietnam War and American imperialism. The minister equated the violence and death of the Vietnam War to the daily poverty and violence of the African-American ghetto. Washington argued that the United States was perfectly willing to accept the carnage at home and abroad in order to preserve the nation's power. The minister commented, “There's no difference between what's happening here and what's happening in Indochina. It's the same mentality in both cases. We can talk about thousands of lives lost, but we've learned to tolerate it or even to ignore it.” Washington believed that the Vietnam War and the daily carnage of the ghetto were destroying the psyches of American children by normalizing violence and destruction. An American child could “accept destruction around the world,” Washington

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Paul Washington, Digital Archives of the Episcopal Church, [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Afro-Anglican\\_history/exhibit/audiovisual/index.php](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Afro-Anglican_history/exhibit/audiovisual/index.php)

<sup>179</sup> “U.S. Problems,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 1, 1969.

argued, “because he himself has been destroyed.”<sup>180</sup> At the same time that he voiced strong opposition to the war, Washington challenged anti-war protesters to care as much about the injustices taking place in American cities as they did about the injustices occurring in Vietnam.

One particularly ambivalent relationship of Washington’s was the Chestnut Hill-North Philadelphia Pipeline. The Pipeline was created as a way for middle-class and wealthy whites in Chestnut Hill to assist impoverished African Americans in North Philadelphia. The Chestnut Hill residents donated “used clothing, bedding and furniture for a thrift shop” in North Philadelphia and also provided transportation to North Philadelphia youth who wanted to take part in activities in Chestnut Hill. At the annual Pipeline meeting in 1970, Washington had finally heard enough about what all the wealthy white people had done for the poor blacks in the ghetto. He expressed to the audience that hearing about all that Chestnut Hill had done for North Philadelphia filled him “with mixed emotions of shame, gratitude, embarrassment, and anger.” Washington wondered aloud:

How much longer will it be before an impoverished black community is able to stand with pride, having the basic necessities of life, so that it will not be necessary to ask for your money, station wagons, used clothes and furniture?<sup>181</sup>

Washington also questioned the motivations of the Chestnut Hill residents who were perfectly comfortable with the situation of always being the ones who help.

Washington stated, “It is unfair to you and me to know that you are always doing the helping and the black man is always receiving. There must be a giving and a receiving

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<sup>180</sup> Len Lear, “Persecution of Blacks Here Worse than Cambodia: Father Washington,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 30, 1970.

<sup>181</sup> Marie Reinhart Jones, “Father Washington Pleads for Change in Structure,” *Chestnut Hill Local*, June 11, 1970. Box 43, 1960-1982 Scrapbook, Washington Papers.

from equals rather than unequals.” Washington further emphasized that “the poor don’t like the idea of always having to ask for the necessities of life from other human beings who in the eyes of the Creator are no more worthy than themselves.” Washington alerted the audience that they are all part of an economic and social system that creates and perpetuates inequity between blacks and whites. He remarked that “we are not with nothing because we have chosen to have nothing. We have nothing because there are those who make sure we have nothing.”<sup>182</sup> Washington would only participate in the Pipeline if the goal of the program was to eventually eradicate the need for it.

While much of the audience was receptive to Father Washington’s concerns, some in Chestnut Hill were appalled at what they perceived to be a lack of gratitude on the minister’s part. One elderly white woman disagreed with Washington’s claim that society was to blame for the economic inequity between the races. She commented, “As a person works, he increases his means, and thus pays more taxes, which makes for better schools, hospitals, and other essential organizations—the building and operating of these, in turn, provides needed employment, and helps reduce poverty.” She also pointed out, “I know many black families, having worked abnormally hard, now see in this generation the fruit of their labors as their children receive a good education at schools and colleges.” She questioned what Father Washington had in mind as a replacement for the Pipeline program and was concerned about his negative attitude. She wrote, “Let us hope Father Washington will put away his bitterness and sense of frustration, and try to work

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

peaceably with his friends and well-wishers, toward providing everyone with the good things in life.”<sup>183</sup>

In many ways, the Chestnut Hill-North Philadelphia Pipeline encapsulated the challenges facing Black Power advocates like Paul Washington. The minister desperately wanted to end the African-American community’s reliance on the charity of affluent whites. Washington supported the Black Manifesto because it was an attempt to finally end the dysfunctional and exploitative relationship between African Americans and whites in the United States. The movement for reparations was not motivated by a desire for punitive measures, but to infuse much needed financial capital into African-American urban communities. The unwillingness of some whites within the Episcopal denomination to discuss the valid arguments of the Black Manifesto proved that they did not understand or care about the power dynamics within American society.

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<sup>183</sup> Ruth F.C. Ogden, “Instead of Pipeline, What?,” *Chestnut Hill Local*, June 1970. Box 43, 1960-1982 Scrapbook, Washington Papers.

## CONCLUSION

The detailed study of the Black Manifesto in Philadelphia reveals that the quest for racial justice in the North was just as compelling and dynamic as the fight against Jim Crow in the South. Rather than a malignant force that derailed the civil rights movement, the Black Power campaign should be viewed as a constructive attempt to realize a level of African-American self-determination that the interracial civil rights movement was unable to achieve. The Black Power advocates who demanded reparations from white churches were striving to attain financial capital that the structural racism in American society had for so long denied them. Black Power activists moved beyond protest and demanded autonomy over their lives and communities.

While Black Power activists discarded the interracialism of the civil rights movement, they did not reject personal relationships with individual white people. In fact, the Black Power ideology brought together like-minded persons of all races who shared the same critique of systemic racism in the United States. White leaders such as Bishop Robert DeWitt of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania supported the Black Power movement for reparations in a manner that respected the autonomy and self-determination of his African-American allies. BEDC's Muhammad Kenyatta held Bishop DeWitt in such high esteem that he trusted the white clergyman more than he did most African-American leaders within the diocese. DeWitt's support for Paul Washington's Black Power activism enabled the Church of the Advocate's minister to reach out to suburban whites who were receptive to the Black Power ideology. While many historians emphasize the racial separatism of the movement, it is impossible to view Black Power in

a holistic manner without acknowledging the impact their white allies had on the movement.

The transformation of Paul Washington is a great example of the evolution of many African-American clergy in the North. Washington, a minister within a predominantly white Episcopalian denomination, had for many years concentrated on breaking down racial barriers within Philadelphia. However, his interracial activism of the early 1960s turned to Black Power advocacy in the late 1960s because of his frustration at the civil rights movement's inability to achieve tangible benefits for the majority of African Americans. Washington, like other African-American clergymen, argued that the poverty and hopelessness of the ghetto was a direct result of the racist economic and political structures in the United States. Their antidote for this systemic racism was to achieve corporate Black Power so that they would not be supplicants to the white power structure.

One may question whether there ever was a reasonable chance that the Black Manifesto activists could convince white churches of the need to pay reparations. The first major flaw of the reparations campaign was its dubious origin at the NBEDC in Detroit. The approval of the Black Manifesto as the official position of the IFCO without over half of the conference delegates present was not an effective way to inspire unity among African Americans. With the feeling that the Black Manifesto was forced upon them by overzealous activists, many African Americans rejected the call for reparations. The questionable manner that the Black Manifesto was approved at the NBEDC provided a wobbly foundation from which to run a successful mass movement.

The Black Manifesto's second critical shortcoming was its violent and threatening rhetoric. In *Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America*, Arnold Schuchter argued that Forman's strategy had little chance to succeed because it antagonized the white working class, the very group of people it needed to have on its side in order to succeed.<sup>184</sup> As Forman later acknowledged, the document was much too antagonistic to the very population he was attempting to extract reparations from.<sup>185</sup> While an argument can be made that the white churches would not have listened to a well-reasoned and calm argument, the Black Manifesto's threatening rhetoric gave the white churches a built-in excuse to reject the call for reparations.

As many scholars have successfully argued, the Black Manifesto and the movement for reparations were quickly appropriated by African-American clergymen as a way to address racism within the Church. As Schuchter pointed out, everyone knew that BEDC was not really a legitimate organization and had no real power. It was completely reliant upon liberal whites for its financial support. The clergymen, particularly those within predominantly white denominations, used the threat of the Black Manifesto to address grievances over racism that they had had for decades.<sup>186</sup> While these grievances were legitimate, the demands of the Black Manifesto quickly turned into a battle for respect for African-American ministers. The white churches rejected the Black Manifesto even though the African-American clergy took it upon themselves to tone down the document's rhetoric.

The study of the debate over the Black Manifesto within the American Church reveals how much people's worldviews and historical beliefs impact their views on race.

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<sup>184</sup> Schuchter, "Reparations," xiv-xv.

<sup>185</sup> Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, 210.

<sup>186</sup> Schuchter, "Reparations," 26.

While the reparations movement had little to no chance of succeeding from the start, the radical views of the reparation seekers helped to remind white American Christians of the history of race in the United States. While many scholars have cast reparations advocates to the radical fringe of American historiography, one may wonder if the true radicals are present-day Americans who consistently ignore the economic, political, and social structures upon which their wealth is built. Perhaps the true radicals were not the African Americans demanding compensation for their nation's past and present sins, but those Americans who conveniently dismiss the role that race has played in the nation's history.

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