

**Freedom North: Black
Freedom Struggles Outside
the South, 1940–1980**

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Chapter 6

Religion and Radicalism: The Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., and the Rise of Black Christian Nationalism in Detroit

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We went through certain stages getting here. It didn't just happen overnight. . . . It took time. A whole lot of people worked for years on this. It's a long way from Dr. King in Montgomery to Twelfth Street [in Detroit].

—Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr.¹

On Easter Sunday, 1967, the Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., rechristened Detroit's Central Congregational Church as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, and formally launched his ecumenical Black Christian Nationalism movement. With an overflow crowd and with much fanfare—including the unveiling of a seven-foot painting of the Black Madonna and Christ-child²—Cleage dedicated himself and his congregation to the cause of redefining Christianity and bringing the church in line with the political logic of black nationalism. As one of the founders of black theology, his actions were guided, in part, by the notion of a black Christ as a black revolutionary, and of a (new) black church as the cornerstone of a (new) black nation. “We reject the traditional concept of church,” Cleage explained:

In its place we will build a Black Liberation movement which derives its basic religious insights from African spirituality, its character from African

communalism, and its revolutionary direction from Jesus, the Black Messiah. We will make Black Man's struggle for power and survival. We will build a Black communal society which can protect the minds and bodies of Black men, women and children everywhere.³

Calling for community control of institutions in the inner city, as well as for self-determination in economics, politics, and, above all, religion, Cleage and his cohorts offered what they claimed was the only viable alternative to the "moribund" framework of the post-WWII and Southern-based civil rights movement.

The desire to mark a radical break between the movement's Southern, reformist past and its Northern, radical future had been on Cleage's ideological agenda at least since 1963. In that rather tumultuous year, which, as I argue below, was a major turning point in the history of Detroit's movement, Cleage was vocally insisting that "[i]n the North, the Black Revolt of 1963 departed radically from the pattern established in the South." In Northern centers such as Detroit, he continued, a "new kind of 'Black Nationalism' began to emerge," as one disillusioned with integration "began to look for another way—an independent course he could chart and travel alone."⁴ And by alone, Cleage meant without the assistance (and, more pointed, the leadership) of whites, since his evolving political theology demanded repentance from those guilty of an overidentification with their "white oppressors." They must declare, Cleage sermonized,

I have been an Uncle Tom and I repent. I have served the interests of my white oppressor all my life because in ignorance I identified with him and wanted to be like him, to be accepted by him, to integrate with him. I loved my oppressor more than I loved myself. I have betrayed my Black brothers and sisters to serve the interests of the oppressor...⁵

Along with such demands for cultural and psychological reorientation, in the Reverend Cleage's writings, speeches, and sermons from this period, there is a constant invocation of the radical newness of his project—a language and rhetorical strategy more commonly found among the young. But Cleage's critique was not structured exclusively or even primarily in generational terms. Rather, his call to action was based in what he saw conceived of as a rupture, or major departure, from the patterns established in the past, in general, and from the patterns established in the South, in particular. Foreshadowing one of the most pervasive strains of the movement's historiography (and perhaps mythology), Cleage was a proponent of the proposition that the movement underwent a radical transformation in Northern industrial centers such as Detroit in the second half of the

1960s. Decades later, debates over the nature of this "radicalization" via an embrace of black nationalism and Black Power remain rife within the histories of the movement.⁶ Did the black nationalist turn precipitate the destruction of the movement, or did it breathe new life and vigor into the struggle? Was there always an organic link between the Northern and the Southern branches of the movement, or did they develop along separate and distinct lines only to come into conflict with each other in the late 1960s? Was it, in fact, "a long way from Dr. King in Montgomery to Twelfth Street" in the heart of Detroit's burgeoning black ghetto?

In this brief essay, I hope to use the experiences of Reverend Cleage and others to begin to formulate a more nuanced picture of the movement's political and intellectual history—one that, ironically, necessitates a critical evaluation of Cleage's own claim to radical newness as well as his insistence on a North-South divide. The physical distance between Alabama and Detroit might be substantial, but the two locations are bound together—by patterns of migration and travel, by history, by culture, by family ties, and by mutual identification. Further, I want to emphasize Cleage's and Black Christian Nationalism's place in the long history of the Black Freedom movement in America, while foregrounding an indebtedness to the particular history of political and religious radicalism in twentieth-century Detroit. The introduction of "Black Power" into the national movement's public vocabulary may have shocked the nation in 1966, but the ideas implied by the slogan had been percolating in various activist communities in the city for years. Cleage was simply part of a gradual shift in ideas and ideologies that moved from the margins to the center by the late 1960s, and this is one of the reasons I selected him as a focal point for this analysis. Not only was he deeply involved in some of the most exciting developments in Detroit from the early 1960s onward, but he was also schooled, in various ways, by an older generation of ministers, labor unionists, and political militants whose activism structured the movement's earlier phases. Hence, he is an ideal figure to provide at least a thumbnail sketch of intergenerational patterns of both change and continuity within the various "phases" of Detroit's civil rights movement from the 1930s to the 1960s. And, last but certainly not least, Cleage is recommended because of his religious orientation.

As part of the coterie of individuals who embraced Black Power and black nationalism in the mid-to-late 1960s, Cleage's views were not entirely unique. But what makes his contribution notable and compelling was the theological foundations he constructed to substantiate and justify his call for nationalism, cultural separatism, and self-determination. For Cleage, who had previously supported the goals of integration and nonviolence, came to believe that one of the chief problems with King (and, by

extension, the Southern-based movement overall) was rooted in political theology. More specifically, he blamed the religious-political perspective tied to the Social Gospel: a product of early twentieth-century religious liberalism that viewed human nature as essentially good and human society as inherently malleable. What was needed to counter this overly optimistic vision of man and society, Cleage insisted, was an infusion of "realism" of the type proffered by neoorthodox theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr.

At first glance, this may appear to be nothing more than an overly technical theological dispute. Yet, it resonated with the *political* fights that shaped Cleage and his ideas about Black Christian Nationalism. "I read Niebuhr for a time," Cleage explained, "especially as an antidote to the social gospel." For Cleage and others who adopted a similar critique, neoorthodoxy was seen as a "realistic" remedy to the excessive "utopianism" of the Social Gospel. Where the latter held out the possibility that the Kingdom of God could be created on earth, neoorthodoxy depicted this doctrine as an unrealistic conceit. Neoorthodoxy also took exception to the conception of human nature on which much of the Social Gospel was said to be based. Individuals might be able to achieve a morally grounded existence, but morality is impossible as the foundation of the social order. Social change, moreover, is effected not through moral suasion or by God working through history toward perfection, as the old Social Gospel tended to assert, but by organized power meeting organized power. No amount of indulgence in millennial hope could hide the essential fact that the relationships between social groups are based in inequality and coercion, masked by ideology.⁷

There can be no "beloved community," no interracial brotherhood, in a world where social groups clash and individuals create a hell for each other. "This creating hell for each other," Cleage explained with reference to Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit*, "is terribly true, though people wish to think something else." Hence, for Cleage, who stubbornly chose to ignore the fact that King was also influenced by Niebuhr, King failed to be sufficiently realistic—not only about human nature and society but also about race and race relations. "We've got to make sure the definitions of human nature and society are sound," he argued. "This was the problem of Dr. King. He was not realistic. You can hope for change, but it must be predicated on reality, not what we dream of." Yet Cleage's critique seems in some ways less about King, himself (thus, perhaps, his refusal to credit the complexities of King's theology), than Cleage's derogatory view of King's overly complacent white supporters. To all the "white liberals," who in Cleage's eyes were more enamored with King's dream than with the realities of power, he suggested

that they "ought to all go back and read Niebuhr because they react when you say that all whites are part of immoral society."⁸

Although Cleage drew heavily on the work of theologians such as Niebuhr, his vision of Black Christian Nationalism developed at the nexus of academic theology, a rejection of integration and King's beloved community, as well as the shifting circumstances in Detroit and across the nation. While much has been written, both positive and negative, about the advent of Black Power and black nationalism in the mid-to-late 1960s, the generative role of religion remains relatively underexplored. Unlike studies of the movement's Southern centers, the role of religion in developing and maintaining cultures of protests tends not to be accorded the same degree of attention in Northern activist communities. Perhaps this has something to do with the biased view that Northern activism was more "advanced" and "rational," whereas the Southern trends remained more "backward" and "emotional." Such an unsupportable view adds nothing to our understanding of how activism was conducted in locations such as Detroit where, at almost every turn, religion—along with race and labor—was intimately intertwined.

"Detroit has a reputation as a city of good preachers"—so said the Reverend C. L. Franklin, pastor of Detroit's New Bethel Baptist Church for nearly three decades and once a leading figure in the city's civil rights community.⁹ By the time Franklin relocated to Detroit in 1954, the city had also amassed a formidable history of political activism among its clergy and members of its religious communities. As many histories of Detroit have at least alluded to, politically engaged ministers were in the forefront of every movement for social change and social justice that structured so much of the city's twentieth-century history: from industrial unionism in the 1930s, to the civil (and economic) rights movement of the 1940s and 1950s, to the rise of Black Power and black nationalism in the 1960s.¹⁰ Detroit was also, it is worth recalling, the birthplace of the Nation of Islam. Even after the shift of its home base to Chicago, the Nation of Islam continued to exert an influence within the city's various communities, and, as I discuss in more detail below, the Nation of Islam's ideology helped to mold Cleage's vision of Black Christian Nationalism.

With this broader historical context very much in mind, I want to suggest that one way of writing religion back into the story is to focus on figures such as Cleage who drew in equal measures on religious perspectives and political and cultural strategies to address the pressing social problems in a local and national arena. That Cleage was a minister with a seminary education matters to the story I want to tell about his life and his activism. That he was raised in Detroit and returned to the city to satisfy his dream of founding his

own church is also key. For Cleage was shaped by that distinctive urban industrial center where religion and politics and labor went hand in hand. Moreover, Cleage and Black Christian Nationalism are deeply embedded in a long local (and national) tradition of reconfiguring the black church to render it more politically and socially relevant to the lives and struggles and desires of African Americans. This tradition has not, however, been without moments of tension and conflict.

Laying the Foundation: Religion, Labor, and the Early Civil Rights Movement in Detroit

It is commonly held that the black church is the premiere independent institution created and sustained by African Americans, for African Americans. Yet, at key moments in the history of political radicalism in Detroit, the independence of the church was poignantly questioned and hotly disputed. It is worth briefly reviewing some of these older debates, particularly those to which a young Albert Cleage was witness. Cleage was born in Indianapolis in 1911 and moved with his family to Detroit while still an infant. The first of seven children reared by Dr. Albert B. Cleage, Sr., and wife, Pearl Reed Cleage, Albert, Jr., was drawn to the church from a young age. The prosperous Cleage family attended Plymouth Congregational, pastored by the pro-union and politically active Reverend Horace A. White. In the late 1930s, White was among the few African American clergymen who challenged the "cooperative" relationship between churches and the Ford Motor Company which, since 1918, had provided a major avenue of employment for black men in the company's area plants. One was required to secure a letter of recommendation from one's minister, certifying that the bearer was "upright" and "reliable." In exchange, ministers received gifts and donations from the company and benefited from well-paid congregants able to tithe and support the church.¹¹

Although the relationship was beneficial to the company, to ministers, and to their congregants, it nonetheless gave the company a powerful tool of social control. Ministers who supported unionization or who dared to provide pro-union speakers with a platform at their churches were threatened with reprisals, including the ever-present possibility that all members of their congregations who worked at Ford plants would be summarily fired. This form of economic terrorism was hardly inconsequential. The thousands of workers employed in the various Ford plants (River Rouge, Highland Park, and Lincoln Park, especially), plus their families, meant that the welfare of 30,000 to 40,000 individuals, or roughly one-fourth of

the black population of Detroit, depended on wages from Ford jobs. As one contemporary observer noted, "There is hardly a Negro church, fraternal body or other organization in which Ford workers are not represented. Scarcely a Negro professional or businessman is completely independent of income derived from Negro employees."¹² It was a situation that compelled White to ask what was swiftly becoming one of the major questions of the day: "Who owns the Negro Church?"

In a 1937 article published in *Christian Century*, White railed:

In Detroit the people interested to see to it that the Negro stays anti-labor start with the preachers. The one organization through which the Negro ought to feel free to express his hopes and work out his economic salvation cannot help him because the Negro does not own it—it belongs to the same people who own factories. . . . The leadership of the Negro people is still in the hands of their clergymen and will be for years to come, and these clergymen are at the moment leading for the industrialists rather than for the welfare of the Negro people.¹³

Such opinions were duly seconded by labor activists and like-minded clergy. In fact, White's question was taken up again and again during the raucous national NAACP meeting held in Detroit in 1937, as the organization debated the merits of endorsing the efforts of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

The pro-Ford clergy, which dominated the local NAACP, was incensed, remarking repeatedly as one minister put it, "We can't afford to have Ford close us down."¹⁴ The union and its representatives weighed in, not only on the practical and political dimensions of the dispute but on the religious ones as well. "I come to you tonight representing the poor, the oppressed and the exploited people, both colored and white," proclaimed the United Auto Worker's (UAW) Homer Martin, an ex-Baptist minister turned union organizer. "The elimination of prejudice against the Negro is to me a definite part not only of a wise labor movement . . . but a part of Christianity itself."¹⁵ In the convention's aftermath, which did adopt a pro-union position over the howls of protest from the pro-Ford clergy, Roger Wilkins, the NAACP's executive secretary, felt compelled to pen an editorial that read, in part: "The spectacle of poor preachers, ministering to the needs of the poor whose lot from birth to death is to labor for a pittance, rising to frenzied, name-calling defense of a billionaire manufacturer is enough to make the Savior himself weep."¹⁶

The national NAACP came and went, but local ministers and activists were still confronted with the realities of the Ford-black church alliance; and fighting it became a sort of civil rights issue in and of itself. In this

regard, the young Albert Cleage not only benefited from the example of Reverend White, who he idolized, but was also instructed by the example of the Reverend Charles A. Hill, pastor of Hartford Avenue Baptist Church, and perhaps the most active black minister during the "early" phase of the city's civil rights movement. Hill was among the handful of ministers who refused the overtures of the company: "I told them that, when we were building our building, that we were going to do it out of our own pockets so we can be free to take a stand for anything that is right. . . . So we did it differently because we did it ourselves."¹⁷ And, like White, Hill used his social and professional position as a minister to critique the status quo and to push for a conjoining of the rights of labor with the rights of African Americans in general.

Echoing the sentiments of Reverend White, Hill believed that the church must play a commanding role in the civil rights battle to unionize Ford—the last holdout after UAW-CIO had conquered General Motors and Chrysler. For Hill, this was not only a political necessity but a spiritual one as well. Though not well-versed in academic theology, Hill was in essence a practitioner of the Social Gospel. Once described as "an old-fashioned Bible-thumping preacher whose only political concern was making things right in the sight of the Lord," he worked enthusiastically with anyone, from unions and labor-based organizations, to Communist "front" groups such as the National Negro Congress, to the NAACP and religious groups, to accomplish this task.¹⁸ More concretely, Hill opened the doors of his church to clandestine union meetings. "If they met in a regular union hall," Hill elaborated, "then some of the spies from Ford would take their automobile license numbers and they lost their jobs. By holding it in a church, it would be difficult for them to prove we were discussing union matters."¹⁹ Hill's religious liberalism and commitment to social justice led him to take many stands over the years, stands that would eventually land him in front of a House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) session in 1952. Yet he continued to search for concrete ways to put his faith into action, often working with marginalized activists and for unpopular causes. Despite being labeled as a "Red" and as a "dupe" of the Communist Party, Hill was nonetheless praised for being, as a 1963 article in the *Michigan Chronicle* put it, part of a generation of "Negro leadership that was born of the foggy gloom of the depression years and that later matured into a formidable and militant vanguard of Negro progress."²⁰

From this older generation of activists, Cleage (and indeed the entire apparatus of the post-1954 phase of the city's civil rights movement) was presented with examples of the centrality of coalition building, especially with labor activists and unions, as well as with a diverse array of religious

and secular individuals and organizations. In particular, Cleage learned, in both word and deed, about the importance of maintaining a truly independent institution; about opening the doors of the church to provide "free spaces" for organizing; about striving to speak in a language able to cross the so-called divide between the religious and the secular; and about the dynamic possibilities of what I have, for lack of a better term, been referring to as political theology.

By contrast, Cleage would, in time, come to reject the theological underpinnings of older generation ministers such as White and Hill. Of the former, he said, "Horace White was essentially social gospel, which had little connection to reality." And while he attended services and meetings at Hill's church and while he admired Hill's "radicalism," he could not abide the older minister's "spiritualism."²¹ (Hill, in turn, did not much care for Cleage or his politics, claiming, at one point, "I believe in God power, not Black Power.") But Cleage did embody the fierce dedication and activist spirit of his elders. How he came to embrace black nationalism and reject integration as a strategy for social justice and black freedom is an interesting story in its own right, and one that deserves much more attention than I can herein allot. It is also a story about the personal and political interaction between generations of activists in Detroit and, indeed, between two phases of the city's civil rights movement.

Albert Cleage, Jr., carried his early lessons with him as he continued his more formal education, first as a student in sociology at Wayne State University, during a brief stint at Fisk, and later at Oberlin's seminary school, where he became so enamored of neoorthodox theology. As a caseworker for the Detroit Department of Health between graduating from Wayne and enrolling at Oberlin, Cleage had been discouraged by the "band-aid" approach of city social services and was already viewing the church as an alternative to meet the needs of the poor and the marginal. Ordained in 1943, his early career as a pastor was relatively conventional, however. He passed an uneventful year as pastor of a church in Lexington, Kentucky, before receiving a call to serve as interim copastor of the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, until Howard Thurman, the noted black theologian, would be free to relieve him. Presumably, Cleage arrived with an open mind about this experiment in interracial worship but soon soured on it. Looking back on his experiences, he denounced the existence of an interracial church as "a monstrosity and an impossibility."²² There was, he claimed, an artificiality to the style and substance of worship, and a lack of concrete engagement in the problems of the world. He was particularly annoyed by his copastor's avoidance of issues such as the Japanese internment during the war, as well as the treatment of black soldiers and workers. When offered a permanent position, he declined.

Between 1945 and his return to Detroit in 1954, Cleage completed close to two years of course work toward an advanced degree at the University of Southern California film school and eventually secured another pastorate, this time in Springfield, Massachusetts, where he was able to throw himself into various modes of civil rights activism. While regarded in Springfield as an outspoken and even blunt opponent of police brutality, employment discrimination, and racial segregation in housing, there is little to suggest that he was inordinately radical in the context of post-WWII civil rights activism. He was, in fact, fairly popular among his congregants and coworkers. But Cleage wanted to be back in Detroit. When a post opened up at Detroit's St. Mark's United Presbyterian, he leapt at the chance. Unfortunately, Cleage was less than happy with his new church. With high hopes of building a real community church, once again he chafed at the "Sunday piety" of his congregation. Moreover, the Presbyterian hierarchy did all it could to discourage Cleage's activism on the political front. In the end, he led a small group of dissenters out of St. Mark's—"We didn't leave more than two Uncle Tom's sitting in the church building,"²³ Cleage later explained—and formed a new congregation.

Lacking a permanent physical structure, the small congregation held services around Detroit until 1957, when they purchased a building in the Twelfth Street district. For the first time, Cleage was able to build a church from the ground floor. Blending theology, social criticism, and calls to action, during the late 1950s Central Congregational began to attract a large following of young professionals and working-class residents. He also began to attract a core of activists who would become influential in the theory and practice of black nationalist politics in Detroit. Attorney Milton Henry and his brother, Richard (future founder of the separatist Republic of New Africa in the late 1960s), both attended services at Central; as did James and Grace Lee Boggs, local Marxists associated with the Detroit branch of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its various splinter groups; and Edward Vaughn, owner of the city's largest black bookstore. Outside of the church and pulpit, Cleage worked through the other traditionally recognized vehicle of social and political influence in African American communities: the independent press.

In the latter half of 1961, Cleage, along with his siblings and a few friends, launched their own bimonthly newspaper, the *Illustrated News*. Printed on bright pink newsprint and with a (self-proclaimed and potentially exaggerated) free circulation of 35,000, it appeared until 1965. How many persons actually read the family-financed paper is open to dispute, but during its brief existence, the *Illustrated News* was the chief public platform for Cleage and his associates. Cleage penned the majority of articles

with frequent contributions from his brother, Dr. Henry Cleage, as well as Milton and Richard Henry. It was an outlet for their emerging black nationalist views and their often virulent criticism of the racial status quo. It also served as a conduit for political organizing around community issues. In the pages of the *Illustrated News*, Cleage was especially critical of the black middle classes and the liberal-labor coalition that dominated African American politics. He took great pains to distance himself from both. Not surprisingly, he reserved special scorn for the clergy. In one article, for example, Cleage insisted, the "Negro church has prospered poorly in the North because it has been unable to relate the gospel of Jesus meaningfully to the everyday problems of an underprivileged people in urban industrial communities." Because it had failed to tap into the authenticity of "the folk," the church could not keep pace with the needs of the community. The church had, therefore, "become lost in a sea of triviality and aimlessness."²⁴

Politically, Reverend Cleage focused his dissatisfaction in two major directions: the public school system and the practice of urban renewal—two of the most pressing issues facing the black population in postwar Detroit. The former issue became a particularly important wedge issue between Cleage and the liberal-labor coalition, which had guided the course of civil rights activism in the city since the early 1950s.²⁵ On a personal level, Cleage recalled being aware of "discriminatory practices of our public schools since I was a student at Northwestern High back in the 1930s."²⁶ And he did not believe those practices, including mistreatment by white teachers, biased textbooks, inadequate funding, and unequal facilities. Part of the difficulties, of course, had to do with the changing demographics of the city. Between 1962 and 1966 as "white flight" was draining off the city's white middle class, the school population increased by over 11,842 students, well over half of whom were black. Patterns of residential segregation meant that entire districts became predominately African American, and because of the ever-shrinking tax base of homeowners (which determines levels of funding), predominately black schools became increasingly impoverished as well.²⁷

The sorry state of many Detroit schools serving the black population was a major impetus in the formation of GOAL, the Group on Advanced Leadership, an all-black organization led by Cleage and Milton and Richard Henry. Founded in 1961, GOAL was designed to be a "chemical catalyst" in the fight against racial discrimination. "A chemical catalyst speeds up the chemical reaction," Richard Henry wrote in the *Illustrated News*. "Similarly we will speed up the fight against bias."²⁸ Tensions between GOAL and the NAACP over how best to address the conditions

in public schools erupted throughout 1962, as Cleage and GOAL turned to what many viewed as an outrageous form of protest. In an unprecedented move, they proceeded to drum up support in opposition to a tax millage increase in property taxes for school funding. Why, Cleage asked, should African American parents vote themselves a tax increase and, in effect, increase funding for a system that mistreats their children?

Cleage's antimillage campaign brought down a storm of criticism for the liberal coalition. "We must decide whether we will follow in the paths of destruction and chaos of Negro extremists," read an article in the *Michigan Chronicle*, the city's major black weekly. "By voting against the millage, we are automatically casting our lot with the lunatic fringe. . . . We cannot afford to sacrifice the future of our young by following the foolish counsel of the radical elements in our midst."²⁹ While members of the black press and the liberal coalition did their best to render Cleage persona non grata, his campaign did have an effect: More than 50,000 black voters changed their votes from yes to no. Ninety-eight percent of all black voters were for a millage increase in 1959; in 1963, more than 40 percent voted against it.³⁰ Encouraged by this showing, Reverend Cleage and GOAL stepped up efforts to build alliances with others attempting to occupy a space to the left of the NAACP and the liberal-labor coalition. The seemingly radical positions adopted by Cleage, Central Congregational, and GOAL were particularly attractive to younger activists. A report on one group of young, mostly black, radicals noted that "they have a great deal of respect for Reverend Cleage and the leadership of GOAL," and suggested that only Cleage and GOAL could "give them a little discipline."³¹

Cleage and GOAL may not have offered much discipline, but they did offer encouragement. Historian Sidney Fine may be right that many of the new organizations created by younger activists were "flyspecks in terms of posing a threat to the black leadership position occupied by the NAACP."³² But they were nonetheless important markers of the slow yet steady ideological shifts creating tensions within the city's civil rights movement. In fact, by the late 1960s, this younger generation of activists would have a decisive impact on the course of political mobilizing in Detroit—in the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, in the sphere of antipoverty and welfare rights organizing, and in other causes relating to black empowerment. In the early 1960s, one of the most dynamic "flyspecks" to appear was UHURU, founded in March 1963 by Luke Tripp, John Watson, Ken Cockrel, and General Baker—all of whom had ties to Reverend Cleage and GOAL. In a sense, UHURU was among the earliest organizational expressions of the diverse intellectual and political

trends circulating in radical circles where nonviolence as a strategy and as a philosophy was critiqued and where black nationalism and worldwide revolution was embraced. Many of those involved in small groups such as UHURU had been regular attendees of the SWP's Militant Labor forums. Some had been involved in the Southern struggle, traveling south to work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Many had been influenced by the writings and examples of Cuban and African revolutionaries and, closer to home, by Robert Williams, Malcolm X, and Albert Cleage.³³

Few, apparently, saw any ideological or political incongruities in moving from a SWP forum, to attending a talk by Cleage, to traveling to or otherwise supporting the Southern branch of the struggle. Rather, it was a fertile social and political space in which younger activists and older radicals were striving to make connections: between an "old left" and a "new" one, between local, national, and international struggles for justice. "I think Detroit radicalism ran ahead of the national pace," says Dan Georgakas, who went on to chronicle the experiences of his cohort group in his 1975 volume (with Marvin Surkin), *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*:

In the early 1960s a group of Black Detroiters went to New York to meet Che Guevara when he was at the United Nations and others were on the first flights made to defy the travel ban to Cuba. All those guys belonged to a broad social circle I was connected with. The Cuban missile crisis drove the last liberalism out of people like myself. I remember attending a lecture by Albert Cleague [sic] and going home and thinking we might be dead by morning.³⁴

Most of these younger activists were not religious in the conventional sense. For Luke Tripp, one of the founders of UHURU, while still at student at Wayne State, religion was relatively unimportant. "Man, I don't operate out of a religious bag," he told a reporter. "I was baptized a Catholic but now you can say I am a free thinker." "When I was eighteen I left the church," recalled Charleen Johnson, who became heavily involved in community organizing and welfare rights. The church, she felt, contributed to a sense of "powerlessness" in its members' lives, while she was seeking "to overthrow the system."³⁵ Cleage understood this impulse to leave or to critique the church, and he shared many of the frustrations articulated by younger activists. And, further, he aspired to heal the breach, the disjuncture between religion and radicalism within activist communities in Detroit. In his fights with the NAACP and the liberal-labor coalition, Cleage repeatedly attempted to tap into the potential of younger activists, and they responded in kind.

1963 and the "Black Revolt" in Detroit

Too often, historians of the post-WWII civil rights movement present the "sudden" eruption of calls for "Black Power" in 1966 as *the* key turning point in the movement's evolution (or devolution, depending on one's point of view). Yet, in places such as Detroit, the development of a black nationalist agenda was neither so stark or so sudden. Rather, as early as 1963, fights within and between local activist communities were becoming increasingly frequent, and the events of that year proved to be more decisive. It was a year filled with tensions: some of them based in disputes about what strategies should be pursued, some based in philosophical differences, some based in the dynamics of personality and pride. Nearly all had to do with race and the emergent vision of black nationalism and self-determination. All of these tensions came to a head during the planning of Detroit's "Walk to Freedom March." Held several weeks before the national March on Washington—which so eclipsed the Detroit march that it is rarely ever noted outside of the historiographical literature on Detroit—it was judged to be a success by the media and by many of its participants. Yet its greater historical relevance may have to do with the ways in which it exacerbated numerous fissures and fractures within the local activist community. The religious nature of this internal struggle among local activists was, far from being in any way unusual, perfectly understandable, given the city's and the movement's history.

On the one side of what was increasingly taking on the cast of a religious "holy war" stood Reverend C. L. Franklin, pastor of New Bethel and head of the Detroit Council for Human Rights (DCHR), an organization that had aspired to eclipse the more cautious NAACP. On the other side stood the NAACP itself which, at one point, threatened to boycott the march altogether. Having been repeatedly denounced as "a bunch of Uncle Toms" by Franklin and others within the DCHR, they were in no mood to cooperate. On still another side stood the Reverend Albert B. Cleage.

Initially, Cleage had been fairly close to Franklin. Both had been involved in issuing the original call for a march. Both desired an "unprecedented show of strength" that would stand as a reproach to the previous "disappointing" NAACP-sponsored demonstration in sympathy with the Southern wing of the struggle.³⁶ Both ministers were, at the beginning, open to a broad coalition. Since the "Walk to Freedom March" was to double as a fund-raiser for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), there was general agreement that King should be invited to lead the procession and to address the postmarch rally at Cobo Hall, a convention center on the city's downtown waterfront. There were hostile disagreements,

however, about who the other dignitaries should be. Reverend Cleage, who served on the board of the DCHR, wanted to keep the march as black-led as possible. On this score, he lost. The NAACP was especially keen on the idea of inviting Mayor Jerome Cavanagh and the UAW's Walter Reuther. This proved to be the price exacted for their support, causing Cleage and his supporters to balk that the march did not need to be "legitimated" (and contained) by the white establishment.³⁷

There were also disputes among various segments of the black clergy, and the DCHR found itself forced to placate members of one group in particular: the Baptist Minister's Alliance. As it turned out, one member of the alliance was the newly designated Detroit representative of the SCLC and the alliance felt that he, and not Franklin or Cleage, should play the bigger role. They were also reportedly disquieted by the "Negro character" of the planned march, insisting that "local white churches wanted to have a share in raising funds... and to support future actions toward desegregation." In addition, Franklin and Cleage had already angered members of the alliance by keeping a studied distance from the organization. When Franklin attended one of their meetings to extend an olive branch, the alliance forced him to pay a membership fee before being allowed to speak. Even after he made his case for religious and political solidarity, the alliance not only declined to officially support the march but actively boycotted it.³⁸ Once again, questions and debates over the proper role and function of the black church rose inevitably to the surface.

In the end, Detroit's "Walk to Freedom March" was not all Franklin, Cleage, and the DCHR had hoped it would be, even though the turnout surprised the organizers and represented an impressive show of solidarity with the Southern wing of the struggle. It seems that no one was quite prepared for the thousands and thousands of mostly black and working-class marchers, dressed in their Sunday best, who created a sea of people washing down the broad avenues of the city. During his address at Cobo Hall, King proclaimed it the "largest and greatest demonstration for freedom ever held in the United States," with numbers far greater than the vast majority of Southern demonstrations. It was, in King's words, a shining example of a "magnificent new militancy" that could be harnessed and magnified into an equally massive March on Washington. At the close of his 48-minute speech, King delivered a longer and richer version of his "Dream sequence," which would become the highlight of the national march two months later. Reverend Cleage also addressed the overflow crowd. As local radical activist James Boggs recalled, "After King finished talking about conditions in the South, Reverend Cleage got up and said that we'd better start looking at conditions in Detroit."³⁹

On this last point, if on little else, there was a general sense of agreement, although disputes over strategy, tactics, and philosophy continued to present persistent problems. In the wake of the march, for instance, the DCHR continued its minor war with both the NAACP and the Baptist Minister's Alliance. To make matters worse, ideological differences between the Reverends Cleage and Franklin became increasingly apparent. The final break between the two ministers and, by extension, the left-of-center coalition as a whole, occurred during the DCHR's attempt to harness the momentum of the march by creating a Northern Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC) to serve as a regional counterpart to the SCLC. While significant for reminding us of the transregional nature of the movement, the plans for a NCLC also provide us with an ideal case study of the sorts of ideological, political, and religious struggles inside the local activist community, especially where the issue of black nationalism was concerned.

Originally, the proposed three-day founding convention of the new NCLC was to be open to *any and all* representatives of Northern-based civil rights organizations. Yet, difficulties began to emerge when Franklin categorically rejected Cleage's intention to invite Conrad Lynn and William Worthy, both of whom were charter members of the recently organized Freedom Now Party (FNP), one of that era's most interesting and successful attempts to construct a national, all-black political party.⁴⁰ Both also had long-standing ties to the SWP and to Robert Williams, who had been ousted from his post as head of the Monroe, North Carolina, branch of the NAACP for questioning the efficacy of nonviolence and who was then living in Cuba. In addition, Cleage also made the "mistake" of inviting representatives of GOAL and UHURU, as well as representatives from the Nation of Islam, including Minister Malcolm X and his brother, Minister Wilfred X, head of Temple No. 1 in Detroit. Franklin was incensed. He rejected the attendance of anyone associated with "Communists" (Lynn, Worthy) and with "extremists" (Malcolm and Wilfred X). Such promiscuous "mingling" with "communists, black nationalists and persons with criminal records," Franklin maintained, would "only destroy our image."⁴¹

"Ours is the Christian view and approach," added James Del Rio, another member of the increasingly fractious DCHR. "Those who refuse to turn the other cheek are having their own conference."⁴² And, indeed, Cleage resigned in protest from the DCHR and set about coordinating plans for a rival conference—the Grass-Roots Leadership Conference—whose very name was meant to symbolize their separation from and critique of the NCLC. The situation in Detroit was thrown into further chaos when Cleage and his allies decided to hold their conference during the same weekend as the NCLC's. It was no doubt gratifying to Cleage that the

NCLC meeting was widely judged to have been a flop. Even with Adam Clayton Powell addressing the NCLC's main event at Cobo Hall, only a "disappointing 3,000 souls attended." (Cobo Hall seats 15,000.) Further, less than half of the delegates from Northern organizations showed up, and many left the NCLC proceedings to attend the Grass-Roots sessions across town in the Twelfth Street district.⁴³

The Grass-Roots Leadership Conference, while well-attended, with estimates ranging from 300 to 400 persons, was itself only a blip on the larger radar of progressive black politics and the rise of a black nationalist agenda. Although generally remembered (if at all) for Minister Malcolm X's now famous "Message to the Grass Roots" speech, it nonetheless serves in retrospect as an important moment in the formation of a new activist coalition with its own distinctive ideology and, moreover, its own distinctive political theology. Cleage, GOAL, and the Grass-Roots organizers went out of their way to smooth over the differences between local and national radicals as well as between Christians and Muslims. The latter was symbolized, as the *Liberator* put it, by "a Christian minister [Cleage] marrying an Islamic invocation into a Christian prayer" during the opening event.⁴⁴ Cleage's experiences in organizing and facilitating the conference and his fights with the DCHR, the NCLC, and other moderates also proved to be a crucial step in the evolution of his own political and religious thinking. In fact, it was the planning and implementation of the Grass-Roots Conference that provided much of the substance to Cleage's claim that 1963 represented the beginnings of a "Black Revolt" in places such as Detroit.

From this point on, Cleage had very little that was positive to say about King, SCLC, and most of the Southern branch of the movement—although he did support what he saw as the more radical potential of youth-oriented groups such as SNCC. Working with the FNP and other local and national black organizations also allowed Cleage to keep abreast of various political developments in other regions of the country. As the decade wore on and the civil rights movement increasingly "moved" North, Cleage and other black nationalists in Detroit continued their struggle to redefine both the nature of the movement and the very meaning of "civil rights." For Cleage, this meant not only black nationalism in terms of politics and economics but also in terms of culture and religion. The real difference, Cleage wrote in 1963, was that "Black men began to talk of Black History, Black Art, Black Economics, Black Political Action, and Black Leadership. Black Nationalists didn't merely talk black, they began to act black."⁴⁵ Certainly, Cleage felt he had good reason to proffer such an analysis. Yet, it obscures the ways in which post-1963 developments are organically tied to previous eras in the Black Freedom Movement.

They were hardly the first generation to take black history, art, politics, economics, and culture seriously.

Like politically engaged black ministers before him, Cleage struggled to make the black church relevant to the needs, desires, and struggles of the community it was meant to serve. He knew well that many younger activists felt alienated by the conventional teachings and practices of the church and continuously sought to provide them with a meaningful spiritual home. Like Reverend White, his old mentor, Cleage worked to maintain a truly independent institution, and like Reverend Hill, he opened the doors of his church to various organizations, coalitions, and individuals, including labor unionists, black and, yes, white, radicals, community organizers, and others.

Thus, it was in the arena of theological scholarship and activism that Cleage rendered a truly distinctive contribution. He was, as noted black theologian James Cone wrote in 1969, "one of the few black ministers who has embraced Black Power as a religious concept and has sought to reorient the church-community on the basis of it."⁴⁶ But even here we would do well to consider the similarities between Cleage's Black Christian Nationalism and the African Orthodox Church established by the Garveyite movement in the early twentieth century, as well as the Nation of Islam, both of which took the existence of a "Black God" as a point of departure.⁴⁷ Cleage not only pressed for the wide acceptance of a "Black Christ" (and Madonna and child), but he also sought to strip traditional Christianity of its "excessive mysticism." For example, the belief that Jesus was resurrected from the dead was, for Cleage, at best a mystification and at worst a lie. Tracing out the implications of this vision, he insisted that the original disciples were not primarily concerned with bodily resurrection but with the resurrection of a "Black Nation." Hence, he argued, we modern-day disciples, whether Christian, Muslim, or secular, need to get back to the original and more authentic message of Jesus' mission.⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, Cleage's political theology constantly placed him at odds with fellow clergy and not a few more conventionally religious lay people. Some, including the Reverend Charles A. Hill, even attempted to persuade other ministers to close the doors of their churches to any meetings or forums in which Cleage and his supporters organized or participated in—raising, ironically, and once again, the question, "Who Owns the Negro Church?" "I don't want anything to do with organizations which want all-black," Hill told an audience of Baptist ministers. "We should close our churches to them."⁴⁹ Undaunted, Cleage kept up the fevered pitch of radical black nationalists organizing, working with groups such as the Inner-City Organization, the Interfaith Foundation for Community Organizing, the FNP on whose ticket he ran for governor in

1964, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, many of whose members got their start in radical politics in UHURU and the old SWP Saturday night forums. When the 1967 urban uprising swept through sections of Detroit, Cleage saw it as a "dress rehearsal" for the revolution in politics, economics, culture, and religion yet to come. After 1967, and well into the 1970s, the embrace of Black Power and calls for programmatic implementation of black nationalism were well-established as part of the political logic in Detroit's activist communities.

Cleage did not fully revolutionize the movement or the society that gave birth to it. Although managing to erect sister temples in other locations, his Shrine of the Black Madonna eventually suffered gradual decline. It continues to exist, however, with branches in Detroit (Temple No. 1), Atlanta, Houston, and Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, despite the patriarch's recent death in February 2000. Yet, Cleage, who changed his name to Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman in the 1970s, did succeed in pushing the movement in new and interesting directions and in ways that combined an activist's faith and an unflinching political commitment. By helping to create one of the earliest black nationalist coalitions in Detroit, he played a leading role in laying the foundations for that city's ongoing struggle for black freedom. In the end, the gradual embrace of Black Power and black nationalism, including Black Christian Nationalism, constituted less of a major or radical break with the past. Rather, it represented just one more tenacious twist in a road whose tortuous path has always been structured by debates, tensions, rivalries, and new departures—a road, moreover, consistently defined by and rooted in a sense of place but never defined exclusively by region or location. In the end, it may be that Twelfth Street and Montgomery are not so far apart after all.

Notes

1. Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., "An Enemy Has Done This," in *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 167.
2. According to the artist, Glanton Dowell, the painting was meant to symbolize the connections between the Madonna and "any Negro mother, an ADC [Aid to Dependent Children] mother whose child does wrong, anyone." Quoted in "Black Madonna Unveiled," *Detroit Free Press*, March 25, 1967.
3. Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church* (New York: William and Morrow, 1972), 16.
4. Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., "The Next Step," *Illustrated News*, November 1963.
5. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism*, 75.

6. See, for example, August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and Black Wakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
7. Hiley Ward, *Prophet of a Black Nation* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1969), has a good discussion of Cleage's understanding of neoorthodox theology on pages 102-110. It remains the only book-length biography of Cleage and benefits from extensive interviews with him. On Niebuhr and his influence on the left in general, see Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); and Niebuhr's own *Moral Man, Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner's, 1932, 1960).
8. Cleage, quoted in Ward, *Prophet of a Black Nation*, 102-103. Cleage does not, however, acknowledge Niebuhr's influence on King's theology. Nor does he credit the richness of either King's theology or, indeed, the Social Gospel tradition overall, especially in its connections to African American prophetic Christianity. See, for example, Ralph Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Radical Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Susan Lindley, "Neglected Voices and Praxis in the Social Gospel," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18 (spring 1990): 75-103. For a good overview of King's theology, see Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), chapter 4. Jean Paul Sartre, *No Exit* (New York: Vintage, 1989).
9. Until the publication of Nick Salvatore's much-anticipated biography of Franklin, one of the best sources on Franklin remains, Jeff Todd Titon, ed., *Give Me This Mountain: Life History and Selected Sermons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); the Franklin quote appears on page 19.
10. Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town* (New York: Adama, 1984); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Richard Thomas, *Life For Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Dominic J. Capeci, *Race Relations in Wartime Detroit: The Sojourner Truth Housing Controversy of 1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Elaine L. Moon, ed., *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African-American Community, 1918-1967* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).
11. This relationship between select black ministers and the Ford Motor Company has been widely documented and analyzed. See, for example, Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*, 16-18; Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It*, 272-275; Lloyd Harding Bailer, "Negro Labor in the Automobile Industry" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1943), 113-114; and Elizabeth Anne Martin, *Detroit and the Great Migration, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor: Bentley Historical Library Printing Services, University of Michigan, 1993), 34-40.
12. Bailer, "Negro Labor," 113; Joyce Shaw Peterson, "Black Automobile Workers in Detroit, 1910-1930," *Journal of Negro History* 64 (summer 1979): 177-190.
13. Reverend Horace A. White, "Who Owns the Negro Church?," *Christian Century* 55 (February 9, 1937): 177-178.
14. Editorial, "Mind Your Own Business," *Crisis* 44 (August 1937).
15. Homer Martin, "Address to the Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" (June 30, 1937), Martin Papers, Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit [Cited hereafter as ALHUA].
16. Wilkins's editorial, quoted in Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit*, 58; "Resolutions Adopted by the Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the N.A.A.C.P. in Detroit, Michigan, July 4, 1937," NAACP papers, I, B-4, Library of Congress.
17. Reverend Charles A. Hill, Oral History interview, ALHUA.
18. Coleman A. Young, *Hard Stuff: The Autobiography of Coleman A. Young* (New York: Viking, 1994), 42. A full-length published biography of Reverend Hill has yet to appear. For more details on his life and activism, see my "From the Reverend Charles A. Hill to the Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr.: Change and Continuity in the Patters of Civil Rights Mobilizations in Detroit, 1935-1967" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995).
19. Hill, Oral History interview, ALHUA.
20. *Michigan Chronicle*, October 5, 1963. Hill's contributions to the "early" phase of the movement are also chronicled in Nelson Lichtenstein and Robert Korstad, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 790-815. The authors argue that the early phase of the civil rights movement was destroyed by the dawning of the cold war and the ravages of anticommunism. Yet, they do give enough attention to the ways in which the early phase continued to influence later developments, especially in light of interpersonal and intergenerational ties in local communities such as Detroit.
21. Cleage on White and Hill, quoted in Ward, *Prophet of a Black Nation*, 103.
22. Cleage, quoted in Ward, *Prophet of a Black Nation*, 102-103.
23. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., Sermon, November 1, 1967, Audio and Visual Division, ALHUA.
24. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., "The Negro in Detroit," *Illustrated News*, December 18, 1961; cf. E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States* (New York: Collier, 1957); and Joseph R. Washington, *Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in the United States* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), especially chapter 2 on "Folk Religion and Negro Congregants."

25. The liberal-labor coalition was comprised of such groups as the NAACP and other race improvement organizations, factions within the UAW, labor-oriented groups such as the interracial Trade Union Leadership Council, and others who managed to survive the purges associated with anticommunism and the dawn of the cold war.
26. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., *Michigan Chronicle*, February 2, 1962.
27. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., "What's Wrong With Our Schools?," *Illustrated News*, December 18, 1961; Marilyn Gittell and T. E. Hollender, *Six Urban School Districts* (New York: Praeger, 1968); Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations and the Detroit Riot of 1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 41-46.
28. Richard Henry, "GOAL," *Illustrated News*, November 13, 1961.
29. Editorial, *Michigan Chronicle*, November 2, 1963.
30. "We Defeated the Millage," *Illustrated News*, April 8, 1963; *Detroit Free Press*, April 7, 1963.
31. Detroit Council on Human Relations [DCHR], "Inter-Office Correspondence, Re: UHURU," (September 15, 1963), DCHR Papers, III, Box 21, ALHUA.
32. Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 27.
33. "UHURU Says US Has 'Racist, Savage Society,'" *Michigan Chronicle*, October 19, 1963. See also Robert H. Mast, ed., *Detroit Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 105-107; and Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).
34. Georgakas, quoted in Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 292.
35. Luke Tripp, quoted in *Michigan Chronicle*, October 19, 1963; Charleen Johnson, quoted in Mast, *Detroit Lives*, 50.
36. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., "The Detroit NAACP Is a Joke to People Everywhere," *Illustrated News*, March 4, 1963.
37. The march was even postponed once because of the NAACP's intransigence. *Michigan Chronicle*, May 25, June 22, 1963; *Detroit News*, June 25, 1963.
38. "Negro Ministers Vote 'Hands Off,'" *Detroit Free Press*, June 12, 1963; "Ministers Row Over March," *Michigan Chronicle*, June 1, 1963; Jose Rames, "Racial Anatomy of a City," *New University Thought* (September-October, 1963).
39. "Questions of the American Revolution: Conversations in Detroit Between James Boggs and Xavier Nicholas" (spring 1973), Labadie Collections, University of Michigan, 10; Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 842-843.
40. Much more deserves to be said about the FNP both nationally and in Michigan. For a good overview, see Conrad Lynn, *There Is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill, 1979). Cleage, who was chairman of the Michigan FNP, ran for governor in 1964, with others on the ticket, including Milton Henry and local activist Ernest C. Smith. "Fact Sheet on the Freedom Now Party Candidates, November 3, 1964 Elections," Ernest C. Smith Collection, Box 1, ALHUA.
41. "Plan Rights Group Patterned on King's," *Detroit News*, November 6, 1963; Franklin, quoted in *Detroit Courier*, November 16, 1963. On Lynn, Worthy, Williams, and others, see Van Gosse, *Where The Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (London: Verso, 1993), especially chapter 5; as well as Lynn, *There Is a Fountain*.
42. Del Rio, quoted in *Detroit News*, November 10, 1963.
43. Fine gives a brief overview of the development of rival conferences in *Violence in the Model City*, 28-29. "Northern Negro Leadership Conference 'A Failure,'" *Detroit Courier*, November 16, 1963; *Detroit News*, November 10, 11, 1963; "Questions of the American Revolution: Conversations in Detroit Between James Boggs and Xavier Nicholas" (spring 1973), Labadie Collections, University of Michigan, 10-11.
44. Sterling Gray, "Man of the Year: Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., Architect of a Revolution," *Liberator*, December 1963, 8. Recordings of the proceedings are available in the Audio and Visual Division, ALHUA.
45. Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., "The Next Step," *Illustrated News*, December 1963.
46. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1969, 1989), 21. Grace Lee and James Boggs discuss the importance of Cleage as "the first Christian Minister who has become a leading black nationalist spokesperson," in "Detroit: Birth of a Nation," *National Guardian*, October 7, 1967.
47. See Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978). The idea of a "Black Christ" can also be traced by to the nineteenth century in the writings of Henry McNeal Turner and others. See Kelly Brown Douglass, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994).
48. Cleage, *Black Messiah*, 92-94.
49. Hill, quoted in "Negro Ministers Here Hit Rights Group on Violence..." *Michigan Chronicle*, April 15, 1964; "Dexter Baptist Turns Down Freedom Now Meeting," *Michigan Chronicle*, March 21, 1964; *Detroit News*, March 16, 1964.