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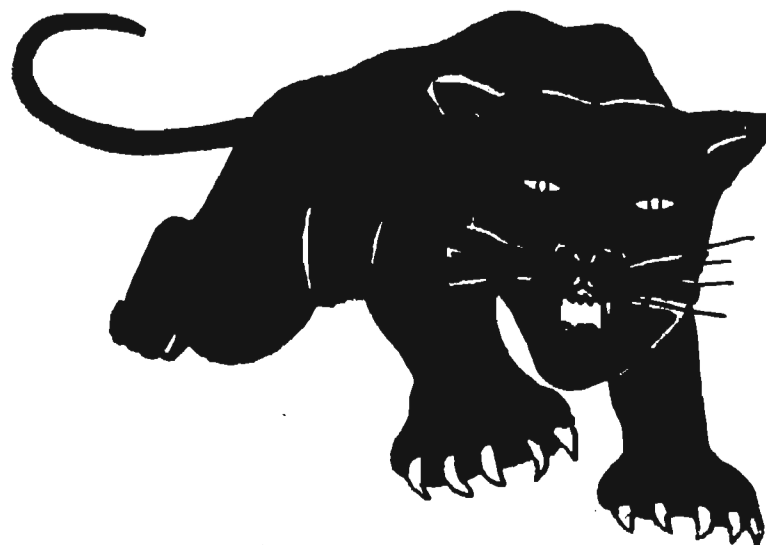
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THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY



**SPEECH BY JOHN HULETT
INTERVIEW WITH STOKELY CARMICHAEL
REPORT FROM LOWNDES COUNTY**

25¢

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	4
HOW THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY WAS ORGANIZED by John Hulett	7
A REPORT FROM LOWNDES COUNTY by John Benson	16
INTERVIEW WITH STOKELY CARMICHAEL	24

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INTRODUCTION

The story of the Black Panther Party can be an inspiring and powerful example to fighters against racist oppression all over the country. In Lowndes County Alabama, a place known for its racist violence, the Negroes have formed their own party in opposition to the Republicans and Democrats. The Negroes of Lowndes make up 80 percent of the population and they have as their goal nothing less than taking over the county courthouse and running the county.

The Black Panther Party is more than a vote getting machine like the two major parties—it is a social movement. Its members are active and dedicated. They directly determine its program. The serious and business-like meetings of the activists reflect this fact. The party is based on the Negroes of Lowndes and has deep roots among them. As Black Panther Party leader John Hulett puts it, "We will have three parties in Lowndes, the Republicans, the Democrats and OUR party."

The Black Panther Party is setting an example which is clearly applicable not only in the other rural black belt counties of the South, but in Birmingham, Watts, Harlem and all the other urban ghettos of the North and South.

SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael, who has been prominent in organizing the Black Panther Party, explained this in a June 4, 1966 interview with the *National Guardian*: ". . . after the riot last year, black people yelled and screamed about getting rid of [Los Angeles Chief of Police] Parker and he's still there. It's very clear to me that those people have no power to move that man out. And that the people who are supposed to be responsive do not intend to listen to them. The exact same thing is clear in Chicago, where for a year the people demonstrated, blocked sidewalks, went to jail to remove [Superintendent of Schools] Ben Willis. And he was not removed. He decided to resign. The same thing in Boston. Wherever you look across this country, the political control of the ghetto is outside of the ghetto. What we're saying in SNCC is that it must be inside the ghetto, and the people must control it."

This idea that Negroes should control their own communities has been viciously attacked as being "divisive," "crackpot," "racist,"

and "irresponsible." In attacking SNCC the press and the more conservative Negro leaders have constantly harped on the theme that since Negroes are a minority of the population, they are fools to take action on their own. When asked about SNCC's emphasis on independent Negro political action on a TV interview program, Martin Luther King replied by reminding his audience that after all Negroes are only a minority of the population.

But experience has time and time again shown that Negroes can make significant gains only by uniting and carrying on a struggle which is not dependent on unreliable white "friends" in the Democratic Party. It was the militant protests *against* the Democratic Party administration which have brought even the tiny gains made in the past few years. And it was the absorption of the protests in the Johnson 1964 election concensus that brought on the lull in the struggle in 1965.

The changes in the South over the past years, and the experiences in the struggle there, have brought to the fore many of the questions which up until lately have been faced only in the North. SNCC workers and the Negroes in Lowndes are beginning to see things more as they were seen by Malcolm X in the year before his assassination. They are saying—our goal is not integration. The fight for integration has not gotten us what we are really after—that is the chance to have a decent life with good schools for our children, good housing, jobs that pay, and protection against racist violence.

The Negroes of Lowndes have learned that the whites who run the county have no respect for moral obligation, that they will respect only those who organize and challenge their power.

The Black Panther Party rejects the degrading begging which has gone hand in hand with the civil rights movement when it has been subordinated to white liberalism. They say, we are not going to compromise our fight for freedom now by depending on white "moderates" like Richmond Flowers. If whites want to ally themselves with us and support our just struggle, good.

The leaders of the Black Panther Party not only support action independent of the Democrats and Republicans in areas where Negroes are in a majority, but they oppose the Democratic Party on a national scale. Carmichael put it strongly in an interview with the *Militant*: "The Democratic Party in this country is the most treacherous enemy of the Negro, period. We've got to split it so Johnson and all the king's horses and all the king's men can't put it together again."

What Stokely Carmichael says about splitting the Democratic Party helps to explain why the Black Panther Party has met with a more hysterical reaction from the ruling class than other kinds of independent action taken by Negroes. An independent Negro party directly threatens the Democratic Party which is the most effective political instrument the rich and the white supremacists have for maintaining their rule. For, while Negroes do not need the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party needs the Negro vote to win in elections on a local, state and national level.

The 22 million Negroes hold the balance of power in the two-party system. An abandonment of the Democratic Party by Negroes would mean that white workers would also be directly faced with the need to break away and form a labor party of their own once the Democrats lose their chances to win. In such a shake-up a Negro party would provide a powerful example for imitation by white workers opposed to the Vietnam war, inflation, and the consistently antilabor policies of the Democratic Party.

Those who say that Negroes cannot make gains by organizing themselves independently of whites often imply that all-black organization means a total rejection of coalitions or alliances between Negroes and whites. This, of course, is not the issue. The question is not whether Negroes reject alliances and common action, but whether they have to continue accepting them on the basis of a subordination of their own needs.

The simple fact is that, as the Black Panther Party shows, Negroes are way out ahead of their potential white allies. The job of anyone who seriously wants to change this racist society is not to tell Negroes they must wait for the whites, but to support each new step forward in the freedom struggle while trying to spread revolutionary ideas among whites as well.

Elizabeth Barnes
National Secretary, Young Socialist Alliance
June 1966

A SPEECH BY JOHN HULETT

HOW THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY WAS ORGANIZED

John Hulett is Chairman of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. He gave this speech in Los Angeles on May 22, 1966 at a meeting on the Vietnam war. The meeting was sponsored by nine different antiwar committees.

* * *

I'm happy to have the opportunity to come and share this evening with you. I'd like to give you a general idea of what's happening in the state of Alabama and in Lowndes County. This county, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the worst counties in the state of Alabama, and not only that, it is one of the poorest counties in the nation.

Lowndes County consists of a population of about 15,000 people. Out of these 15,000 people, 80 percent are Negroes, 20 percent white. The entire county is controlled entirely by whites. It has always been this way...

Last year in March, some 30 people assembled at the courthouse in Hayneville to make an attempt to get registered. They were talked about and many people were sitting by their radios that day and their televisions, waiting to see what would happen in Lowndes County. We made the attempt and two weeks later, two people became registered voters. Today we have at least 2,500 registered Negro voters.

According to the 1960 statistics, there are only 1,900 possible white registered voters in the county. Today, all of these people are registered. Two years ago, 118 percent of these white people voted. In the general elections this year for governor, I learned that there will be even more white people voting.

Last year, we started a group in Lowndes County known as the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights. This was a civil rights group. We fought for integration in this county. We fought that Negroes might have a right to get registered to vote. We protested at the school so that all the people could have education—and for this we got nothing. . .

We sat down together and discussed our problems. We thought about what we were going to do with these 2,500 registered voters in the county, whether or not we were going to join Lyndon Baines Johnson's party. Then we thought about the other people in the state of Alabama who were working in this party. We thought of the city commissioner of Birmingham, Eugene Bull Connor; George Wallace who is now the governor of the state of Alabama; Al Lingo, who gave orders to those who beat the people when they got ready to make the march from Selma to Montgomery; the sheriff of Dallas County, known as Jim Clark—these people control the Democratic Party in the state of Alabama.

So the Negroes in Lowndes County decided that it's useless to stay in the Democratic Party or the Republican Party in the state of Alabama. Through the years, these are the people who kept Negroes from voting in the South and in the state of Alabama. Why join the Democratic Party?

A Political Group of Our Own

Some time ago, we organized a political group of our own known as the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, whose emblem is the Black Panther.

We were criticized, we were called communists, we were called everything else, black nationalists and what not, because we did this. Any group which starts at a time like this to speak out for what is right—they are going to be ridiculed. The people of Lowndes County realized this. Today we are moving further...-

Too long Negroes have been begging, especially in the South, for things they should be working for. So the people in Lowndes County decided to organize themselves—to go out and work for

John Hulett



the things we wanted in life—not only for the people in Lowndes County, but for every county in the state of Alabama, in the Southern states, and even in California.

You cannot become free in California while there are slaves in Lowndes County. And no person can be free while other people are still slaves, nobody.

In Lowndes County, there is a committee in the Democratic Party. This committee not only controls the courthouse, it controls the entire county. When they found out that the Negroes were going to run candidates in the primary of the Democratic Party on May 3, they assembled themselves together and began to talk about what they were going to do. Knowing this is one of the poorest counties in the nation, what they decided to do was change the registration fees in the county.

Two years ago, if a person wanted to run for sheriff, tax collector or tax assessor, all he had to do was pay \$50 and then

he qualified to be the candidate. This year, the entrance fee is about \$900. If a person wants to run, he has to pay \$500 to run for office. In the primary, when they get through cheating and stealing, then the candidate is eliminated. So we decided that we wouldn't get into such a primary because we were tired of being tricked by the Southern whites. After forming our own political group today, we feel real strong. We feel that we are doing the right thing in Lowndes County.

We have listened to everybody who wanted to talk, we listened to them speak, but one thing we had to learn for ourselves. As a group of people, we must think for ourselves and act on our own accord. And this we have done.

Through the years, Negroes in the South have been going for the bones while whites have been going for the meat. The Negroes of Lowndes County today are tired of the bones—we are going to have some of the meat too.

Fighting the "Tricks" of the Racists

At the present time, we have our own candidates which have been nominated by the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. And we fear that this might not be enough to avoid the tricks that are going to be used in Lowndes County against us. . .

In Lowndes County, the sheriff is the custodian of the courthouse. This is a liberal sheriff, too, who is "integrated," who walks around and pats you on the shoulder, who does not carry a gun. But at the same time, in the county where there are only 800 white men, there are 550 of them who walk around with a gun on them. They are deputies. This is true; it might sound like a fairy tale to most people, but this is true.

After talking to the sheriff about having the use of the courthouse lawn for our mass nominating meeting, not the courthouse but just the lawn, he refused to give the Negroes permission. We reminded him that last year in August, that one of the biggest Klan rallies that has ever been held in the state of Alabama was held on this lawn of this courthouse. And he gave them permission. A few weeks ago an individual who was campaigning for governor—he got permission to use it. He used all types of loud speakers and anything that he wanted.

But he would not permit Negroes to have the use of the courthouse. For one thing he realized that we would build a party—and if he could keep us from forming our own political group then we would always stand at the feet of the Southern whites and

of the Democratic Party. So we told him that we were going to have this meeting, we were going to have it here, on the courthouse lawn. And we wouldn't let anybody scare us off. We told him, we won't expect you to protect us, and if you don't, Negroes will protect themselves.

Then we asked him a second time to be sure he understood what we were saying. We repeated it to him the second time. And then we said to him, sheriff, if you come out against the people, then we are going to arrest you.

And he said, I will not give you permission to have this meeting here. I can't protect you from the community.

Then we reminded him that according to the law of the state of Alabama, that this mass meeting which was set up to nominate our candidates must be held in or around a voters' polling place. And if we decide to hold it a half a mile away from the courthouse, some individual would come up and protest our mass meeting. And our election would be thrown out.

So we wrote the Justice Department and told them what was going to happen in Lowndes County.

All of a sudden the Justice Department started coming in fast into the county. They said to me, John, what is going to happen next Tuesday at the courthouse?

I said, We are going to have our mass meeting. And he wanted to know where. And I said on the lawn of the courthouse.

He said, I thought the sheriff had told you you couldn't come there. And I said, Yes, but we are going to be there.

Then he wanted to know, if shooting takes place, what are we going to do. And I said, that we are going to stay out here and everybody die together.

And then he began to get worried, and I said, Don't worry. You're going to have to be here to see it out and there's no place to hide, so whatever happens, you can be a part of it.

And then he began to really panic. And he said, There's nothing I can do.

Support the Lowndes County Freedom Organization by wearing a button with the black panther symbol. Buttons can be obtained by writing to Merit Publishers, 5 E. 3rd St., New York, N.Y. 10003. They are thirty cents.

And I said, I'm not asking you to do anything. All I want you to know is we are going to have a mass meeting. If the sheriff cannot protect us, then we are going to protect ourselves. And I said to him, through the years in the South, Negroes have never had any protection, and today we aren't looking to anybody to protect us. We are going to protect ourselves.

That was on Saturday. On Sunday, at about 2 o'clock, we were having a meeting, and we decided among ourselves that we were going to start collecting petitions for our candidates to be sure that they got on the ballot. The state laws require at least 25 signatures of qualified electors and so we decided to get at least



Sydney Logan Jr., Lowndes County Freedom Organization candidate for sheriff

100 for fear somebody might come up and find fault. And we decided to still have our mass meeting and nominate our candidates.

About 2:30, here comes the Justice Department again, and he was really worried. And he said he wasn't satisfied. He said to me, John, I've done all I can do, and I don't know what else I can do, and now it looks like you'll have to call this meeting off at the courthouse.

And I said, we're going to have it.

He stayed around for awhile and then got in his car and drove off, saying, I'll see you tomorrow, maybe. And we stayed at this meeting from 2:30 until about 11:30 that night. About 11:15, the Justice Department came walking up the aisle of the church and said to me, Listen. I've talked to the Attorney General of the state of Alabama, and he said that you can go ahead and have a mass meeting at the church and it will be legal.

Then we asked him, Do you have any papers that say that's true, that are signed by the Governor or the Attorney General? And he said no. And we said to him, Go back and get it legalized, and bring it back here to us and we will accept it.

And sure enough, on Monday at 3 o'clock, I went to the courthouse and there in the sheriff's office were the papers all legalized and fixed up, saying that we could go to the church to have our mass meeting.

To me, this showed strength. When people are together, they can do a lot of things, but when you are alone you cannot do anything...

There are 600 Negroes in the county who did not trust in themselves and who joined the Democratic Party. We warned the entire state of Alabama that running on the Democratic ticket could not do them any good, because this party is controlled by people like Wallace; and whoever won would have to do what these people said to do...

Now, to me, the Democratic Party primaries and the Democratic Party is something like an integrated gambler who carries a card around in his pocket and every now and then he has to let somebody win to keep the game going. To me, this is what the Democratic Party means to the people in Alabama. It's a gambling game. And somebody's got to win to keep the game going every now and then.

There is another guy who was running on the ticket calling himself a liberal, the Attorney General of the state of Alabama, Richmond Flowers. Most of you have heard about him. When he

started campaigning to the people of Alabama, especially the Negro people, he assembled all their leaders and he made all kinds of promises to them—if you elect me for your governor, I'll do everything in the world for you.

And at the same time, he never made a decent campaign speech to the white people of this state. We kept warning our people in the state of Alabama that this was a trick and many Negroes listened to their so-called leaders, who profess to speak for the state of Alabama, and they got caught in the trap too.

I would like to say here, and this is one thing I am proud of, the people in Lowndes County stood together, and the 600 people who voted in the Democratic primary have realized one thing, that they were tricked by the Democratic Party. And now they too are ready to join us with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization whose emblem is the black panther.

We have seven people who are running for office this year in our county; namely, the coroner, three members of the board of education—and if we win those three, we will control the board of education—tax collector, tax assessor, and the individual who carries a gun at his side, the sheriff.

Let me say this—that a lot of persons tonight asked me, Do you really think if you win that you will be able to take it all over, and live?

I say to the people here tonight—yes, we're going to do it. If we have to do like the present sheriff, if we have to deputize every man in Lowndes County 21 and over, to protect people, we're going to do it.

There was something in Alabama a few months ago they called fear. Negroes were afraid to move on their own, they waited until the man, the people whose place they lived on, told them they could get registered. They told many people, don't you move until I tell you to move and when I give you an order, don't you go down and get registered. . . .

Evictions and Threats

Then all the people were being evicted at the same time and even today in Lowndes County, there are at least 75 families that have been evicted, some now are living in tents while some are living in one-room houses—with 8 or 9 in a family. Others have split their families up and are living together with their relatives or their friends. But they are determined to stay in Lowndes County, until justice rolls down like water.

Evicting the families wasn't all—there were other people who live on their own places who owe large debts, so they decided to foreclose on these debts to run Negroes off the place. People made threats—but we're going to stay there, we aren't going anywhere.

I would like to let the people here tonight know why we chose this black panther as our emblem. Many people have been asking this question for a long time. Our political group is open to whoever wants to come in, who would like to work with us. But we aren't begging anyone to come in. It's open, you come, at your own free will and accord.

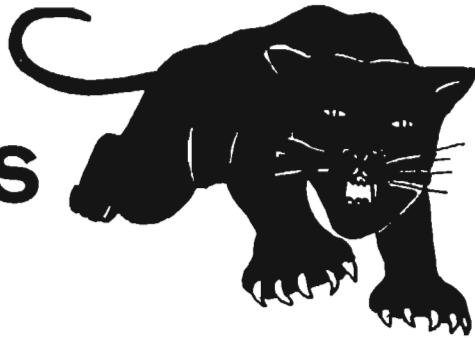
But this black panther is a vicious animal as you know. He never bothers anything, but when you start pushing him, he moves backwards, backwards, and backwards into his corner, and then he comes out to destroy everything that's before him.

Negroes in Lowndes County have been pushed back through the years. We have been deprived of our rights to speak, to move, and to do whatever we want to do at all times. And now we are going to start moving. On November 8 of this year, we plan to take over the courthouse in Hayneville. And whatever it takes to do it, we're going to do it.

We've decided to stop begging. We've decided to stop asking for integration. Once we control the courthouse, once we control the board of education, we can build our school system where our boys and girls can get an education in Lowndes County. There are 89 prominent families in this county who own 90 percent of the land. These people will be taxed. And we will collect these taxes. And if they don't pay them, we'll take their property and sell it to whoever wants to buy it. And we know there will be people who will buy land where at the present time they cannot buy it. This is what it's going to take.

We aren't asking any longer for protection—we won't need it—or for anyone to come from the outside to speak for us, because we're going to speak for ourselves now and from now on. And I think not only in Lowndes County, not only in the state of Alabama, not only in the South, but in the North—I hope they too will start thinking for themselves. And that they will move and join us in this fight for freedom...Thank you and good night.

A REPORT FROM LOWNDES COUNTY



BY JOHN BENSON

This is one of a series of articles by John Benson on the Lowndes County Freedom Organization written after he visited Lowndes County during May of 1966. The article first appeared in the May-June-July 1966 *Young Socialist*.

* * *

The southern freedom movement has taken a new step forward. In several Alabama black belt counties, where large numbers of Negroes will be voting for the first time this year, independent black parties are being formed in opposition to the Democratic Party. At least one, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization—known as the Black Panther Party because of its symbol—is strong enough to win in November if free elections are allowed.

The "liberal" Democratic Party candidates who are vying for the Negro vote in Alabama have been receiving extensive sympathetic coverage in the press. But the Black Panther Party has either been given the silent treatment or has borne the brunt of slanderous attacks.

The *New York Times* headed up the attack with an editorial on April 21, accusing the third party movement of "extremism for the sake of extremism," a "disruptive doctrine," and "a rule or ruin attitude." The *Times* directed its attack against the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) which has been active in building the independent parties. One week later the liberal *New York Post* attacked the Panther Party as "divisive" and "inflammatory."

What sends these editorialists into such a frenzy? Just the simple idea of Negroes organizing their own party to put their own candidates into office and openly campaigning against the Democratic Party.

I had just returned from Lowndes County when the attacks in the press began. I read that the Black Panther Party and SNCC were "disruptive," and that building a new party was "mischief making" and could "only produce frustration and defeat." But this was not a description of the movement I had seen.

What I saw in Lowndes is that the Negro people there are fed up with the racist officials. They are determined to end the killing and brutality and oppression they have been forced to live under every day of their lives. Contrary to the *New York Times*, I have never met people so united and enthusiastic about what they are doing. They are proud of their new party and go out of their way to explain what they are doing and why they are doing it. While in the county I attended the meetings of the new party and talked to its supporters and leaders. They explained to me how they began and developed their party and some of their plans for the future.

How the Black Panther Party Was Formed

The Negroes of Lowndes County have lived under one of the most blatantly racist administrations in the South. Even though they comprise eighty-one percent of the population, not a single Negro had been registered to vote before March of last year. At the same time, 2500 whites are registered out of an eligible 1,900—130 percent! Sixty percent of all employed Negro men are farmers or farm laborers, most of them tenant farmers. Fifty percent of the Negro women employed are domestic workers.

While the median income for Negro families is \$935, whites have a median income almost five times higher, and eighty-six white families own ninety percent of the land. Most of the officials in the county are members of these eighty-six families. As a result there is no money to pave the streets in the Negro areas and no money to build decent schools for Negro children.



Black Panther Party organizer canvasses on a dusty unpaved road in Lowndes County.

The movement to change this situation began in January, 1965 with a discussion among several people about registering to vote. They held a meeting in the middle of February with fourteen people to discuss the registration forms and literacy test. Later that night one of the people, John Hulett, met a woman on his way home from work and told her about the meeting. She said she knew some people who wanted to register and together they arranged a meeting a few days later with eight more people.

By the next registration date, March 2, a total of thirty-eight people decided to go to the courthouse in Hayneville to register. Everyone was turned away and told to return two weeks later. When they came back only fourteen applications were processed and of these only two passed—a school teacher and John Hulett.

Before the second attempt to register, the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights was organized (known as the Christian Movement for short). Twenty-seven people attended the first meeting, including a representative from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and one from SNCC. Only SNCC remained active in the county after that meeting.

Before beginning any major activities the new organization began a campaign to recruit new members. They held meetings every Sunday night in different areas of the county. In each area they recruited a person to canvass the area. After the first few meetings average attendance grew to 200-300.

After assembling a basic cadre, the Christian Movement began two projects—one to register Negroes to vote and the other to protest against inadequate schools. Most of the school protest activity was carried out by Lowndes County high school students. They began to protest within schools for better libraries, better dining room service, and an end to the practice of holding extra curricular activities during school hours.

During the summer, plans were made for a September school boycott with the aim of ousting the principal. The boycott was unsuccessful. But this experience along with a number of others made the people of Lowndes realize that protest against the white county government was not enough. Some began to think in terms of running the county government themselves.

Meanwhile voter registration was proceeding and discussions were beginning on who to vote for. Some people wanted to join the Democratic Party and work within it to elect Negro candidates. But the overwhelming majority saw the Democratic Party of Ala-

bama as their most direct oppressor. A decision was made to see if it would be possible to organize a new party of their own and run candidates under their party's banner.

According to Alabama law, any political organization can hold a mass meeting on the day of the primary and the county registrar is required to put their candidates on the ballot for the November elections. Thus the Black Panther Party began to build itself with the aim of taking over the county courthouse in November 1966.

The Black Panther and the Democratic Party

From its inception the Black Panther Party has been organized in opposition to the Democratic Party. Their leaflet calling for the formation of a new party said, "We all know what happened when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party tried to work within the structure of the national Democratic Party (the party of Lyndon Johnson, George Wallace, Bull Conner, James Clark, John Sparkman)—they got the door slammed in their faces.

"If Alabama doesn't want to repeat what happened in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party then Alabama doesn't have to."

This year the only offices the Black Panther is trying to win are the county sheriff, tax collector, coroner, tax assessor and board of education, as these are the officials the Negroes of Lowndes have to deal with every day. They are not concerned with which Democrat wins the statewide or federal offices. They believe that the only way to progress is to have their own party and this will take time and will have to be done in steps.

Despite their concentration on the Lowndes County elections, however, the supporters of the Black Panther Party are campaigning against the Democratic Party "liberals" who are running for state offices, and encouraging Negroes to vote only for Black Panther candidates. An article in the April 24 *New York Times* goes through a long list of southern "liberals" running in the Democratic primaries. With larger numbers of Negroes registered to vote, old style segregationists will more and more be challenged by northern style Democratic Party politicians. They may even let Negroes win a few more posts. This process has already begun in urban centers like Birmingham and Atlanta where Negroes have been registered for some time.

A campaign is being waged by the liberals and "moderate" Negro leadership to keep the Negro vote within the Democratic Party. It is focused on the governor's race where George Wallace

who cannot legally succeed himself, is running for re-election through his wife, Lurleen Wallace. His major opponent is Attorney General Richmond Flowers, who has been presented as a courageous fighter for Negro rights.

This campaign is beginning to take on the phony aspects of the Johnson-Goldwater campaign. Wallace is presented as the evil madman who is trying to circumvent the law and succeed himself while Flowers is the "friend of the Negro people." But Flowers is also a part of the racist administration of Alabama. His image is being refurbished just as Johnson, with the help of the press, changed his image from conservative Texan to liberal man of peace and civil rights fighter.

As Attorney General, Flowers was responsible for getting convictions on crimes against civil rights fighters, but he has never pressed for them. The people of Lowndes have had direct experience with his failures. When Jonathan Daniels, a white seminary student working on voter registration was killed in Lowndes, the killer went free.

Stokely Carmichael, one of the main organizers of the new party, spoke on this at a meeting I attended: "When Jonathan Daniels was killed, Richmond Flowers said he was for justice. He didn't say he was for Negroes. He said he was for justice. When Sammy Younge was killed that cracker didn't say anything. When a white man is killed, he says he is for justice and when a Negro is killed, he doesn't say anything . . . He's only said he's for justice. He's never said he's for us, and there's a big difference."

King Campaigning For Democratic Party

Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference have entered the campaign directly in an attempt to stop the growth of a new, black party. King himself has toured Alabama urging people to vote for Flowers, but his tour, which went through the black belt counties, passed over Lowndes. From what I saw there his pro-Democratic Party line would not be very well received.

Two Negro organizations, the Alabama Democratic Conference and the Confederation of Alabama's Political Organizations which was recently set up by SCLC's Hosea Williams, have endorsed Flowers for governor, and SCLC is backing Negroes in the Democratic primaries where they have no hope of winning.

Albert Turner, SCLC's Alabama project director and a candidate for state senator in the Democratic primary, showed up at a

mass meeting in Perry County and attacked the Freedom Organization SNCC was trying to build there. He said, "SNCC doesn't register voters, doesn't care about registering voters," and pointed to two SNCC workers and said that all they wanted to do was split the Negro vote.

In spite of all these attacks, the Freedom Organizations in Alabama's black belt counties are gaining support. Pointing to the racism and oppression in the North, the organizers of the new parties argue that significant gains can best be won outside the framework of the Democratic Party.

Advocates of "reforming" the Democratic Party claim that increased Negro registration in Alabama has forced the Democratic Party to drop the words "white supremacy" from its state symbol—a white rooster. However, the actual credit for even this minor gain goes to the independent organization of the Negroes of Lowndes County. Not until the Freedom Organization had circulated a leaflet exposing this symbol did the Democratic Party replace this phrase with the word, "Democrat."

Although independent parties are being organized in a number of black belt counties, the Negroes of Lowndes realize that their's is the strongest. Whenever they are asked, people from Lowndes speak in other counties about their Freedom Organization. On one day alone, sixty people spoke in six different counties encouraging people to build new parties.

Frank Miles Jr., an officer of the Freedom Organization told me, "First, we're going to straighten out this county, then, we're going to spread abroad. First, we'll go into other counties of Alabama, then into the North, into Harlem, Chicago, and Watts."

There is no more powerful idea than the simple one that black people should organize themselves independently to do the things that the two major parties have failed to do for over a hundred years. But the Democratic Party and the ruling groups which use it to organize support for their interests will fight tooth and nail to keep Negroes voting Democratic. The Democratic Party is dependent on the Negro vote to win.

Stokely Carmichael explained this in a talk when he said, "The Democratic Party in this country is the most treacherous enemy the Negro has, period! Black people need power, and Bobby Kennedy doesn't want us to have power.

"It's in the interests of Robert Kennedy and Washington to squash the Lowndes County Freedom Organization because it will spread. And that's what we're working for—a national organization."

Every partisan of the Negro struggle should watch what happens in Lowndes County closely. As the *New York Times* articles show, the rulers of this country will also be watching it—doing everything within their power to prevent the Negroes of Lowndes from continuing their independent struggle in an effective way.

Any successes which the Black Panther has will encourage people throughout the country to follow its lead. Just the fact that the people in Lowndes have been able to organize the Black Panther Party is a gain in the struggle for Negro equality.

INTERVIEW WITH STOKELY CARMICHAEL



BY JOHN BENSON

Stokely Carmichael was elected Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in May of this year. He has played an important role in the formation of the Black Panther Party and has been working in Lowndes County since February, 1965. This interview was given on Tuesday May 3, after the Black Panther Party had held a mass meeting to nominate its candidates for the November elections, and just before Carmichael became Chairman of SNCC. It first appeared in the *Militant* of May 23, 1966.

* * *

You held a meeting to nominate candidates today. How did the movement begin here and move toward forming a new party?

We began with a protest movement. We worked on voter registration; we held a school boycott; we protested police brutality. Using the energy built up, we then built a movement to take power to get control.

If we control the school board, we won't have to have school boycotts anymore. Instead of protesting police brutality, we decided to take over the office of sheriff. If the Negro can get power, we won't have to protest anymore.

I've always been taught majority rules. In Lowndes we're 80 percent. We're the majority. We're going to take power in Lowndes

county and rule. We don't even want to integrate. We want power, pure unadulterated political power.

We've built a political organization to put our candidates in office. We're neither Republican nor Democrat. But it's not a party yet, and won't be recognized as a party until we get 20 percent of the vote. Our name is the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. After November it will be the Lowndes County Freedom Party. The black panther is our symbol.

Today we held our mass meeting to nominate our candidates. Their names will be on the ballot Nov. 8 along with our symbol, the black panther. All the people have to do is pull the lever under the panther. Nov. 8 we vote. Nov. 9 we take over the courthouse.

You say Negroes are 80 percent of the population in Lowndes. Are enough Negroes registered to win the election?

Yes. And we've got until 45 days before the November elections to continue registering.

What will the Freedom Organization do if it wins?

We're going to tax people the way they should be. If people don't pay the tax, we can auction their land to pay the taxes for them. The biggest company in the county is Dan River Mills, and it's here on a tax-free basis. Even if they leave because they get taxed, what have we lost? They're not paying tax now. It's almost a completely automated plant so we don't get jobs. Then we're going to take all that tax money and build our schools. After we win we're not going to have to drive to the white folks' part of town to get paved roads.

You said you are neither Republican nor Democrat. Why is that?

There's no room for Negroes in the same party as Wallace. No matter who wins, Wallace will still be in the Democratic Party and he will tell the party what to do. We're going to face Wallace with power. It's not our job to get Wallace out of the party. It's Kennedy's and Morse's job. How can they all say what they say about civil rights and then sit down at the same table? Then they ask me to go in and reform the Democratic Party. Did they ask the Jews to reform the Nazi party?

What about the Democratic Party in the North and on a national level?

The Democratic Party in this country is the most treacherous

enemy of the Negro, period. We've got to split it so Johnson and all the king's horses and all the king's men can't put it together again. The only way the Negro in Alabama will get justice is to smash the Democratic Party.

And the national party is opposed to the interests of Negroes. The Daley machine in Chicago is the same thing as the Wallace machine in Alabama. The Negroes in Watts are all loyal Democrats, and they're not going to get anything until they get out of the Democratic Party. And we've got to start tearing up the Democratic Party in Harlem.

One of your leaflets points out that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party tried to work within the framework of the national Democratic Party and Alabama doesn't want to make this mistake. What did you mean by this? Was the MFDP a failure?

First, I don't call the MFDP a failure. It was successful because we learned from it. We learned a lot from it. In order to get the MFDP we went to the North and appealed to the liberals. We had that big summer project with Northern white students and all kinds of money from Northern whites. That limited our choices. We had to have everything approved before we could do it. We learned that we had to have Negro control, no white control. That was the first lesson.

In Lowndes we have raised almost all our money within the county. People from Lowndes who moved to Detroit formed a sympathy movement and send us \$100 a month. And most of the organizers are from the county. So now we can go to people and say, "This is what we are doing. Will you help us? Will you give us money for this?" Recently some people in Boston, who knew Jonathan Daniels, the only white who was working in the county, have been raising money for us to buy land to build homes for the people that have been evicted for registering. [Jonathan Daniels was murdered by racists last year.]

The second thing we learned from the MFDP was about the Democratic Party. The MFDP tried to integrate into the national party. It went to Atlantic City and said "We've been suppressed by the Eastlands and the Barnetts. They don't support your candidates. We are the party that supports your candidates. Seat us." They were turned down. Their appeal was denied because of coalitions. And that taught us something about the Democratic Party. Its interests aren't our interests. Negroes have to control their party and they can't have control and be a part of the Democratic Party.

So far you have mentioned only the Democratic Party?

I talk about only the Democratic Party because it lied. And a lot of people don't know that yet. Negroes vote as a bloc in the Democratic Party, but it lied. It said it was good, it said it was nice, it said it was liberal, it said it was for peace, it said it was for Negroes. And it lied. I know it lied. At least the Republican Party never lied. I don't care a bit for the Republican Party, but Negroes just don't vote in it like they do in the Democratic Party.

Do you expect any opposition from the government to what you are doing in Lowndes?

We're trying to get power. The power structure doesn't want black people to have power. I'm not talking about George Wallace, I'm talking about Bobby Kennedy. They don't want black people to have power. It's in the interests of Robert Kennedy and Washington to squash the Lowndes County Freedom Organization because it will spread. And that's what we're working for. A national alternative, when Negroes will be organized independently, neither Republican nor Democrat. So it's in their interests to stop us, but I don't know what they'll do.

Do you think the local racists will use violence against the Freedom Organization? What plans do you have if you face violence?

The Lowndes County Freedom Organization is not nonviolent. Nonviolence is irrelevant. What King has working for him is a moral force, but we're building a force to take power. We're not a protest movement. We're out to take power legally, but if we're stopped by the government from doing it legally, we're going to take it the way everyone else took it including the way the Americans took it in the American Revolution. And we've seen the way the federal government protects us or rather doesn't protect us. If one of our candidates gets touched, we're going to take care of the murderers ourselves.

I've heard people attack the Freedom Organization because it is all black and that whites and Negroes are fighting the same enemy so they should fight together. Would you comment on this?

We've got to fight separately now because we've never done anything on our own. That's most important now. We have to have control over our own fight right now. In this county anything all black could never be worse than it has been all white. Things have been all white too long. We're going to change that. Some

people say we should save a place in our party's slate for a white, but whites didn't ever leave any places open for us in their primaries, and we don't need to leave any places open for them.

Sometimes you hear Negroes talking about all black is no good. Well they're just talking about themselves. If I say something all black is no good, I'm talking about myself. I'm *all* black and I know I'm good. So they're just talking about themselves.

Do you have any plans for the future beyond Lowndes County?

Right now we're concentrating on the county level. I feel strongly about organizing on the local level. At the state and federal level things get confused and you have to make too many compromises. But we're going to spread. People from Lowndes speak in other counties now. On March 20, 60 people spoke in six different counties about the Freedom Organization. Today, Freedom Organizations nominated candidates in three counties in addition to Lowndes. After that I want to work toward 1972. By then the Negroes should be organized as an independent force. We have the power to smash the Democratic Party. If we do that, they'll never be able to put it together again.

Earlier you said you didn't even want to integrate. Could you explain that?

We've been caught in what I call the pitfall of integration. The answer to all the Negro's problems in this country has been integration. We have operation uplift. We've got to "headstart" the Negro. But the reason the Negro is in the position he's in today is not because he's not integrated, but because he doesn't have power. Integration is an insidious subterfuge for white supremacy.

I'll take an example from Lowndes County. Last year, five Negroes entered the white school. All the papers hailed this as a great triumph. Finally Lowndes County had been cracked. But all the other Negro children had to go to the same old schools. And no whites went to the black schools, because they were in fact inferior.

Integration has always been Negroes going to white schools because the white schools are good, and black schools are bad. A Negro would go from his school to a better school, a white school. Negroes have been made to believe that everything better is always white. If integration means moving to something white is moving to something better, then integration is a subterfuge for white supremacy.

Well, what do you think of the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision?

The problem with that decision was that it emphasized integration. What it should have emphasized was equal per capita money for white and black schools. The problem is that less money is spent on black schools than on white schools. We're not so concerned about going to a white school—we want a good school.

Two more questions. First, how do people in Lowndes feel about the war in Vietnam?

Most people in Lowndes are against the war. But you can't go talking to them about teach-ins or Geneva. The only thing that makes sense is saying "end the war" or "get out" or something like that. My way of ending the war is to tell all the Negroes to stop fighting. Then the war will be over.

How do you feel after today's meeting?

Great. It was great. Now we work for Nov. 8.

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