

Stokely: “We got to get some guns”

anon.

1968

To the delight of the Black populace of Detroit, Stokely Carmichael, on a mission to raise funds for the incarcerated Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver, the convicted H. Rap Brown and other up-tight black freedom fighters, came to town June 8 and with all the ardor and volubility of that other conqueror, he came, he saw and really rapped.

Before an overflow crowd of colorfully arrayed black revolutionaries, sardine tight inside Redeemer Presbyterian Church at W. Grand Blvd. and Trumbull, for almost 90 minutes or 1800 ft of recording tape Stokely C., with a speech centered around a theme of “undying love for your people” made his position “crystal clear” on such topical terms and events as Black Power and Vietnam.

After Selina Nelson’s moving rendition of “Death Of A Slave,” the persuasive and omnipresent Chairman of Detroit SNCC, Dan Aldridge, largely responsible for Stokely’s appearance, laid the foundation on which the quotable Stokely C. was to construct his mansion of eloquence.

Stokely made it very plain that he was not going to jail for what he said but for what he did. First, via the Bible, recalling how Jesus used the parable to subtly voice an opinion, Stokely quoted, the prophet Jeremiah, correlating it to our fight in the city, he said (Jeremiah 4:7) “The lion (Which Stokely chose to interpret as the Black Panthers) has come up from out the thicket and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way. He has gone forth from his place to make the land desolate and the cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant.”

At this point, in order to facilitate matters and eliminate the possibility of confusion, I will allow Stokely’s remarks to stand free and separate as he addresses himself to various subjects:

On Mass Rallies

“I think that mass rallies are going to have to be cut down because of necessity, because honkies are going to move more and more to cut them off. Already they are isolating all the brothers. Our job is to organize our people and prepare them for the confrontation.”

On internalizing Our Struggle

“We must no longer talk about burning down cities unless we have brothers to do it...Today our fight is different...today we are fighting for our survival.”

On Survival

“There are three important phases to our survival. First, we must raise the political consciousness of the masses. Second, we must develop a sense of discipline, and thirdly, we need a Black ideology.

On Moving Against Oppression

“The first things you move against are the symbols of oppression (the stores). Then you move against the tools of oppression (the police force). Finally, you move against the oppressor himself.”

On Black Power

“Black power ain’t the vote. The vote has always been irrelevant. For our survival we need food, clothing, and shelter, and the vote has never given us these things. Black power is not money. Money has never been a big thing with us. Black power is not education. Education has proven to be no more than learning what the white man wants you to. The only Way these things become important to us is in the way of organization.”

On Exploitation and Colonization

"Black-people are both exploited and colonized. Poor whites are only exploited, and that has only to do with money. But Black people are exploited and colonized and that has to do with stripping a people of their culture, their language and, their history. You dehumanize them. We are a dehumanized people."

On Vietnam

"The Vietnamese are our allies. I want the Vietnamese to defeat the United States."

On The Arab-Israeli Conflict

"We got to be for the Arabs. The creation of the state of Israel makes our position very clear. The Balfour Declaration allowed the land to be taken from the Arabs. We got to be for the Arabs, period."

On Robert Kennedy's Death

"The man was shot for his contradictions."

On Martin Luther King

"When Martin Luther King was killed every black man in this country was sad—why? Because you don't mess with somebody we love. If he has to be killed, then, we will do it."

And On Black Pride and Identity

"A wino can't be a revolutionary. A dope addict can't be a revolutionary. It is our job to clean them up. It is up to the revolutionary to set the image that will be followed by the rest of the community. If you wear a natural and act like a man others will want to be like you. Black women are going to have to stop wearing mini-skirts. You've lost your dignity when you wear your dress above your knees. When you imitate the white woman nobody wants the imitation, they want the real thing."

On The Endurance of Black People

"This honky has tried to wipe us out but he never could. He tried his jive slavery. When he put it on the Indians he killed them off; when he put it on us we did it and asked him what else he wanted to show us. He brought us through Reconstruction, night-riders, The Klu Klux Klan to World War 1 and we said what else can you show us."

"He sent us off to World War 1 and we whipped them and came back and said what else you want to show us. He took us through the Depression and he couldn't raise a family of two children and we raised a family of fifteen on cornbread and made them warriors, warriors. And when we got through we said what else you got to show us?"

"He sent us to Korea and we did his job and we asked him what else you got to show us. He sent us to Vietnam but we ain't going because we want him to show us what he can do."

"We must have an undying love for our people. And no revolution should start before this love for our people is established. You must remember that every Negro is a potential Black Man. You never alienate your allies, you give them time to come home. Our major enemy is the honky. The question of community is not just a question of land—it is a question of our people and where we are. Land is important but not as important as people."

On Africa

"We do not respect the white man's divisions. We are all Africans."

On having Guns

"We got to, now, now, now, got to, got to, get some guns. We don't need the guns to attack the white man, we need the guns because we believe in equality."

On Interpretation

"We must begin to interpret our own actions. We must not wait for the white man to tell us what our actions are. Those brothers who died during the rebellions last summer were our heroes. We must begin to interpret our own actions."

Stokely concluded his speech on some points of organization and brotherhood. And he continually emphasized the necessity of having an undying love for your fellow black sister and brother.

Finally, some congratulations must be extended not only to the excellent way the security functions were handled (so tight, in fact, that each glass of water brought for Stokely was actually consumed by his protective aides), but also to the fine manner of cooperation displayed by the audience, who maintained throughout the sweltering four-hour evening a most unusual cool.



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Fifth Estate #56, June 19-July 1, 1968

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