

GRADE 12**HISTORY****IF. AIMS, METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT****Why did Northern Blacks begin to support Black Power Movement?**

By the 1960s many blacks in the North were feeling neglected. Martin Luther King was concentrating on ending segregation in the south and so blacks in the north were losing patience with his peaceful methods which were not solving their problems. The Vietnam War also led many Blacks to support Black Power later in the 1960s.

1) Blacks still suffered racial discrimination and violent attacks. In major cities like New York white policemen would regularly beat blacks for no reason (this provoked riots in the Harlem ghetto in 1964). Martin Luther King was concentrating on ending segregation in the South, his Civil Rights movement had done little to solve the discrimination in the North.

2) Northern blacks were also much poorer than whites. In the north there was segregation due to money; whites moving to the suburbs and leaving blacks to live in poor ghettos. On average blacks received only half the pay of white workers. Many blacks lived in poverty and had little opportunity to improve their lives.

3) Later in the 1960s the Vietnam War encouraged even more blacks to support Black Power. These blacks were annoyed that blacks were being made to fight for a country that discriminated against them. The fact that 23% of America's Vietnam soldiers were black but only 12% of Americans were black made them even more angry towards a Government which they saw as hypocritical. Blacks thought they were being made to do the white's dirty work in Vietnam - discrimination again. (Their dislike for the War sometimes led Black Power supporters to link up with Students so increasing the violence of the university riots of the late 1960s)

How the Aims/Ideas of the Black Power Movement Developed

The Aims/Ideas of the Black Power developed over time but they always involved separation from the whites. Black Power supporters thought that this was the only way blacks could become stronger and wealthier (i.e. gain true equality) as they argued that whites would never accept blacks as equals (that would mean giving up their privileged position). Unlike the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power leaders also believed it was necessary to use violence as a means of achieving your aims and defending yourself.

During the early 1960s, Malcolm X, the movement's first leader, told blacks to separate themselves from 'white values and religion'. Instead, Malcolm X encouraged blacks to join his Nation of Islam faith (Muslim) and become teetotalers and hardworking. By doing this Malcolm X hoped to restore pride to the black community so increasing its power.

Stokely Carmichael (leader of the SNCC) made the movement even more radical after Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965. Stokely Carmichael argued that blacks should not try to live 'side by side' with whites. Instead, he suggested that blacks should separate

themselves from their white oppressors and live in their own areas (urban areas). To start the process Carmichael even banned whites from being members of his SNCC party (even though they supported black equality).

Black Power leaders now believed that, if blacks controlled their own areas, they could start black communities in which blacks would help each other to improve living standards. The Black Power movement encouraged blacks to use businesses owned by other blacks so they would be helping each other to become wealthier and more powerful.



Stokely Carmichael knew, however, that to be truly free from oppression, blacks had to control the institutions of power in their own areas:

- i) Most importantly this meant controlling the police force in their ghetto. That would mean appointing black police chiefs and hopefully removing all white officers from the area.
- ii) Black candidates had to be supported at elections.
- iii) Blacks needed to organize their own schools so black children would be taught to take pride in their color and the need to work together in a black community.

Only by doing all this could the idea of a black community work.

The Results of Black Power

1) Black Power ideas led many frustrated blacks to violently protest 'against their white oppressors'. During the late 1960s Northern American cities were swept by violent race riots that left hundreds dead. For example, during the 1965 Watts riot in LA, 34 people were killed. And in 1967 43 people were killed in the Detroit riot. The city race riots from 1965 onwards were different from those before because they were not started by white police brutality. Instead, they were triggered by black anger over their lack of opportunities and poor living conditions. The black rioters were often members of the Black Panther Party which was trying to put Black Power ideas into practice (see below).

2) However, the Black Power movement never achieved its aim of a powerful, unified black community with better standards of living. The Vietnam War ended and conditions improved (a little). Large black ghettos remained but they never succeeded in getting rid of the white authorities or improving living standards a lot.

The Black Panther Party - trying to put the ideas of Black Power into practice

The Black Panther Party was an organization that tried to put the ideas of Black Power into practice.

Provocative tactics:

1) The Panthers wanted blacks to control ghettos instead of the white authorities (police). Consequently, they played a part in organising the city race riots of the late 1960s. They carried guns as they believed they were in an armed struggle against their white oppressors. Consequently, they used violent tactics for self defense (e.g. shoot outs with the police) to further their aims. The Panthers saw themselves as an alternative, black police force that was ready to protect the black community.

2) They also encouraged blacks to believe in a mix of black pride and communism (working together for the whole [black] community). This went against the 'American dream' of 'rugged individualism' but it appealed to many blacks living in poverty.

Positive tactics:

1) The Black Panthers also tried to help the black community by giving free breakfast and healthcare to poor black children from the ghettos.

2) They also taught courses in Black History as a way of restoring black pride and a sense of community.

3) They also used the media to put their message across; like at the Olympics where black medal winners made the Black Power salute.