

Topics in African American History 2

I Will Not Be Silent And I Will Be Heard:

**Martin Luther King, Jr., the
Southern Christian Leadership Conference,
and Penn Center
1964–1967**



by J. Tracy Power
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

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Cover: "These retreats were much more than an opportunity for King and his staff to rest for a few days . . . They served as a forum to discuss sensitive topics, as a mechanism to set SCLC policies and priorities, and as an incentive for King to redefine and clarify his positions on critical issues." (Bob Fitch Photo, 846-5.)

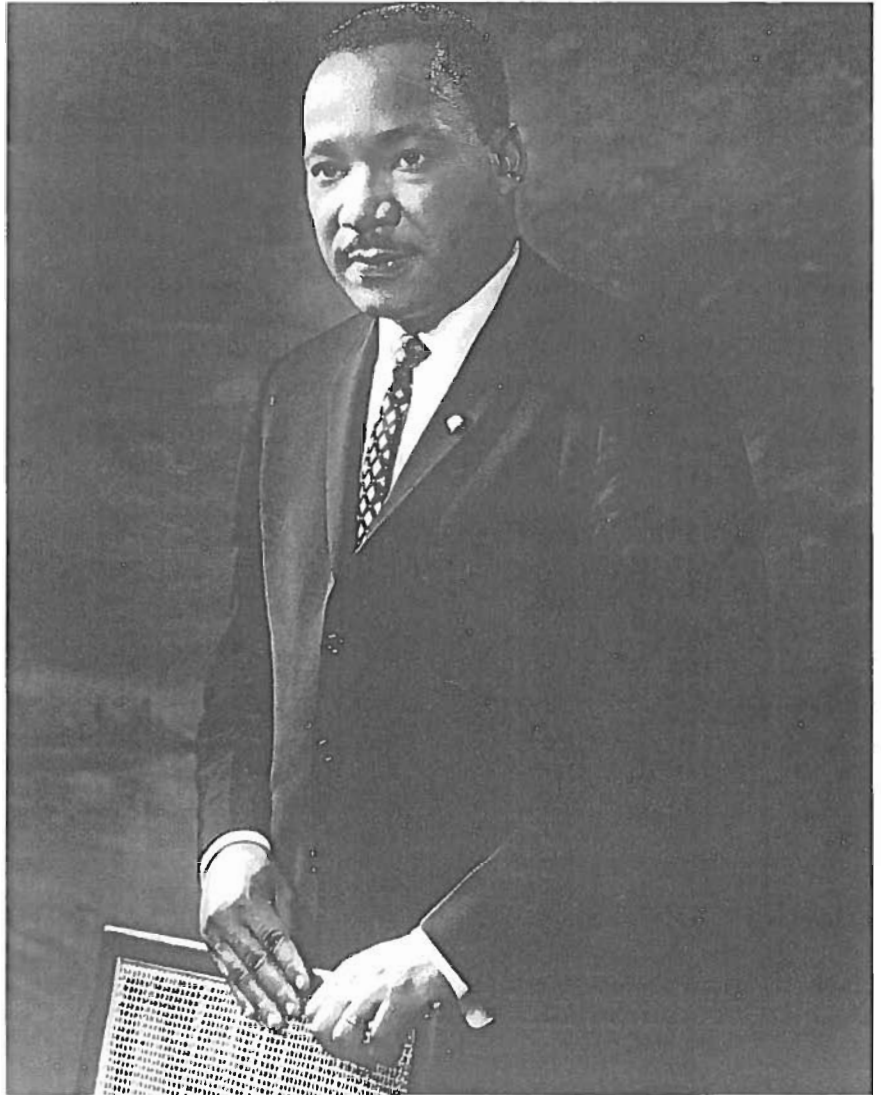
King and Jesse Jackson. Jackson, a native South Carolinian, was a divinity student in Chicago in September 1965 and helped with SCLC's "War on Slums" in the North. He later became a member of the SCLC executive staff.

Introduction

On a spring evening in 1967 after the first full day of a staff retreat, nearly seventy-five members of the executive and field staffs of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) met in an auditorium on St. Helena Island, a picturesque and secluded sea island on the South Carolina coast. The audience had spent the day discussing issues and planning strategies related to their participation in the civil rights movement. Now they were waiting to hear words of encouragement.

They were meeting at Frissell Community House in Penn Community Center, a complex of modest late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings with a backdrop of live oaks and Spanish moss. Frissell had been built in 1925 near the center of the island. It was the focal point of the complex and one of its most prominent buildings. New York architect John H. House had designed it as a one-story tabby building with a red tiled roof in the Spanish-mission style. It included the auditorium, a library, a kitchen, and a dining room.¹

Penn Center, often simply called Penn, was frequently the site for meetings, workshops, and staff retreats of organizations from all over the South. It was the successor to Penn School, which had been founded during the Civil War by Northern missionaries and named for the Quaker William



Martin Luther King, Jr. (Courtesy the King Library and Archives.)

Penn. These missionaries helped educate and train blacks on the South Carolina sea islands after Federal forces had occupied the area. In what became known as the Port Royal Experiment, teachers and administrators, with help from the United States

Army, taught the blacks how to make the difficult transition from slavery to freedom. It was the government's first large-scale attempt to help newly-freed slaves establish themselves as full and productive members of society.²

By 1900 the school, renamed Penn

Frissell Community House (built 1925) at Penn Community Center; Frissell was the site of four SCLC staff retreats and the scene of King's addresses to his staff. (Ian Hill, SCDAH, 1992.)



Normal, Agricultural and Industrial School, had evolved from a primarily academic institution to one that helped blacks become more self-sufficient and self-reliant by training them to improve domestic, agricultural, and industrial conditions on the island. After public education came to the island in the 1940s, Penn School became Penn Community Services. As such, it continued to serve as a focal point for the black community not only of St. Helena Island but of Beaufort County as well.³

On that spring evening in 1967 after an introduction from SCLC secretary-treasurer Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—SCLC president, minister, author, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and one of the best-known leaders of the modern American civil rights movement—shared his thoughts on the staff retreat and explained its purpose. “I think,” King began, “we are having a very nec-

essary and fruitful retreat here together. . . . In any movement, every now and then, you must take off from the battlefield and try desperately to see where you are going.” “This,” he reminded his staff, “is why we are here. . . . We are trying to see where we are going and how we are going to get there.”⁴

The SCLC frequently chose Penn Center as the site for these meetings, which it held each year either in the spring or the fall—or sometimes in both. They served as retreats or planning sessions for the executive staff, the field staff, and occasionally for both groups together. Staff members attending the retreats were assigned rooms either in Benezet House—a two-story frame building erected in 1905 to house Penn School’s female teachers and students—or in Arnett House—a two-story frame building erected in 1937 to house student-teachers—or in Lathers Dormitory—

a one-story tabby building erected in 1922 to house Penn School’s male teachers and students. King and some of the senior SCLC staff stayed in Gantt Cottage, a small one-story frame residence built in 1940 to replace the original Gantt Cottage, which had burned.⁵

The executive staff retreats were designed to provide King, his senior staff, and other advisors with a private forum where they could discuss the issues facing the movement and the direction in which SCLC was moving. Discussions often gave way to heated arguments over the best course of action, and King would remind the group, only half in jest, “Remember, we are a non-violent organization.”⁶ A recent study of SCLC has observed that in these sessions “SCLC, in its most complete expression, analyzed large questions of philosophy, strategy, and politics in an atmosphere of convivial informality.”⁷



Benezet House (built 1905), at Penn Community Center; Benezet housed female SCLC staff members during their retreats here. (Ian Hill, SCDAH, 1992.)

The field staff retreats were meant to promote understanding within SCLC and to forge a renewed dedication to the struggle for civil rights. They gave the field staff an opportunity to “discuss their problems, air their grievances, and enjoy some rare contact with King.”⁸

Both retreats combined a variety of activities to help SCLC’s staff members respond to the constant pressures they faced. Group meals, recreation, and

sing-alongs were designed to improve morale; workshops recommended tactics for demonstrations or marches against injustice; philosophical discussions reinforced the fundamental role of nonviolent protest in the organization’s—and the movement’s—efforts; and strategy sessions outlined SCLC’s plan for the immediate and not-so-immediate future. In addition, King always gave at least one

speech, sermon, or informal talk—often on the first or the last night of the retreat—either to set the tone for the discussions or to reinforce their impact. Such gatherings played a significant, even vital, part in the evolution of SCLC’s—and King’s—participation in the civil rights movement. And those they held at Penn Center from 1965 through 1967 were among the most important of all.⁹

The birth of SCLC

In the ten years before 1965, events like the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott; the sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and other cities; the Freedom Rides in Alabama and Mississippi; the direct action campaigns against segregation in Albany, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama; and

the March on Washington had focused a great deal of national and international attention on America’s growing civil rights movement. They also highlighted the serious racial tensions created by a system that not only enforced legal segregation but in many ways encouraged illegal dis-

crimination as well. The opposition of the white establishment to black protests—frequently backed by the power of local, state, and national governments—was virtually universal and all too often gave rise to violence.

SCLC, with King as its first president, had been founded just after the

Arnett House (built 1937) at Penn Community Center; Arnett housed SCLC staff members during their retreats here. (Ian Hill, SCDAH, 1992.)



successful bus boycott in Montgomery in 1957 and had participated in varying degrees in major and minor protests throughout the South. It shared responsibility for directing the civil

rights movement with established organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and the Congress of Racial

Equality (CORE), and with more recently-formed organizations like the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).¹⁰

A distant rumble of drums?

Though SCLC held its first staff retreat at Penn in September 1965, the organization had already used the facilities there to conduct training sessions in its Citizenship Education Program. This program, which taught adults to read to encourage the registration of black voters, trained groups of prospective teachers under the direction of Dorothy Cotton and Septima Poinsett Clark. Cotton, who had been active in the civil rights movement in Virginia, and Clark, a teacher and activist from Charleston, South Carolina, had helped operate similar citizenship

programs for the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee and had joined the SCLC staff in 1960 and 1961, respectively.¹¹

SCLC had also used Penn Center in March 1964 to hold an early and important national meeting attended by some fifty delegates from twelve Southern states. These delegates represented affiliates—groups who had associated themselves with SCLC and its civil rights efforts in particular geographic areas, most often in cities and towns. Membership in SCLC was based in these affiliates rather than in

individuals to keep from alienating the NAACP, which had long offered individual memberships. The two-day meeting at Penn took place on Thursday 12 March and Friday 13 March. It was the first national meeting of SCLC affiliates and was designed to train local leaders to organize demonstrations and boycotts and to teach them about negotiation, publicity, and other tactics.¹²

This meeting received a great deal of attention—some of it sensationalized, most of it exaggerated, and all of it hostile—from the *Charleston News*



Lathers Dormitory (built 1922) at Penn Community Center; Lathers housed male SCLC staff members during their retreats here. (Ian Hill, SCDAH, 1992.)

and *Courier*, edited by staunch segregationist Thomas R. Waring, Jr. C. T. Vivian, SCLC director of affiliates, told reporters who covered the meeting that it stemmed from SCLC's desire "to see every person allowed the American privilege of registering and voting without knowing the reprisals, brutality and death that are being visited upon the voting Negro."¹³ One article claimed that King, who addressed the delegates on the first day, "left behind a flood of unanswered questions and a chill feeling of apprehension among Beaufort County's white population," who feared that Beaufort might be the scene of dem-

onstrations later that year.¹⁴ The rhetoric of an opinion piece by columnist Hugh Gibson painted the SCLC as a group of radicals under orders from Communist leaders, planning a revolution against the government. "It was difficult to realize that American history was written at Penn Center under the old oaks festooned with Spanish moss," Gibson wrote. "You had to listen very carefully to catch the distant rumble of drums. But it was there, lads, indeed it was."¹⁵

A succession of memorable events associated with the civil rights movement took place in the eighteen months between the affiliates' meet-

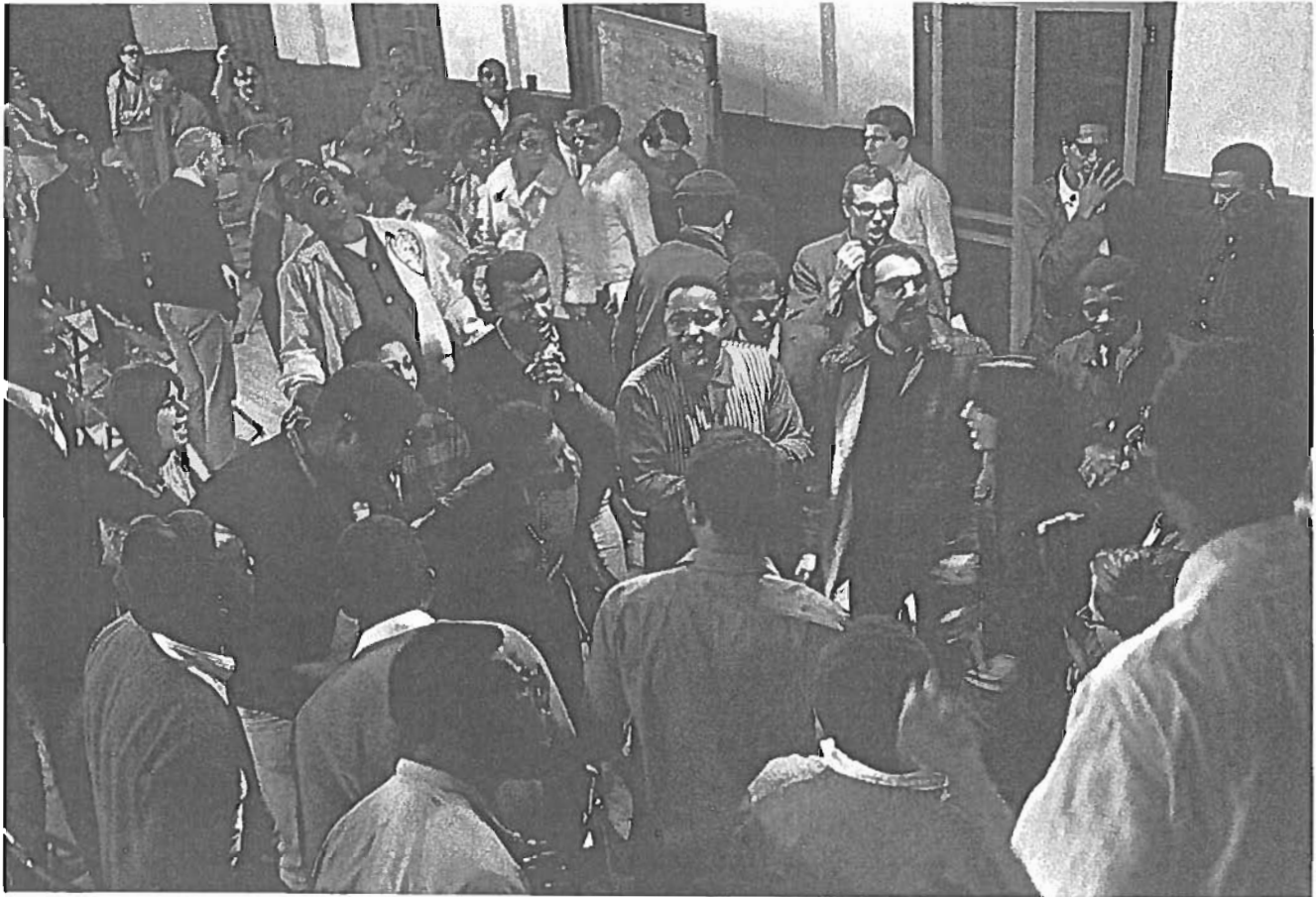
ing at Penn and the first SCLC staff retreat held there in September 1965. These events included the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi; the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; King's selection as the recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize; the dramatic march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital in Montgomery; and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The enactment of federal civil rights and voting rights legislation in consecutive years was a major milestone and in many ways represented the culmination of one struggle and the beginning of another.

The Chicago Freedom Movement

Since 1957 SCLC had focused most of its efforts in the South, where segregation and other forms of racial discrimination were firmly entrenched. King,

though he was too much of a realist to believe that his work there was over, thought that SCLC should expand its movement into the North, organizing

nonviolent protests in large cities where the social and economic status of blacks was often just as wretched as in the rural South. King's "People to



"Staff retreats were meant to promote understanding within SCLC and to forge a renewed dedication to the struggle for civil rights." Hosea Williams, SCLC director of voter registration (in striped shirt at center), leading SCLC field staff in song; King is in the background, just left of the blackboard; Andrew Young is in the background against the wall at the far right; and Joan Baez is to the right of and facing Williams. This series of candid photographs was taken during the September 1965 retreat by photographer Bob Fitch; all interior views are of Frissell Community House, where the sessions took place. (Bob Fitch Photo, 840-11.)

People" tours of urban ghettos in New York, Boston, and Chicago in the spring and summer of 1965, and outbreaks of violence like the bloody riots in Watts, a Los Angeles ghetto, simply reinforced his view.¹⁶ "In the North, we have heard much about the validity of violence. It has become a

challenge to the nonviolent movement," King told his executive staff in late August. "On the heels of the Los Angeles riots, we must do a soul searching and profound analysis to properly chart our course."¹⁷ The decision was made to go North, using efforts already underway in Chicago as a pilot

project, and SCLC scheduled a retreat at Penn Center for mid-September to make plans and to train the executive and field staff who would be involved in the Chicago campaign and other projects in the coming year.

This retreat received much less press coverage than the 1964 affiliates'

meeting had, though SCLC public relations aide Junius Griffin, in answer to a reporter's question about the organization's presence at Penn, said, "We came to Beaufort because we like the area and its historical significance, particularly at Penn Center."¹⁸ The retreat, held from Monday through Thursday, 13–16 September, focused on SCLC's need to reaffirm its commitment to nonviolence and on ways in which staff could successfully import protest strategies into Northern cities. Andrew Young, SCLC executive director, stressed the value of direct action nonviolent protests like demonstrations, marches, and boycotts, saying they could be just as effective in helping blacks "imprisoned in Northern ghettos" as they had been in the South.¹⁹ Though Chicago was the major topic, SCLC discussed other plans, like the organization's possible involvement in local protest and voter registrations efforts in Mississippi, and announced the appointment of Robert L. Green as SCLC education director.

King, after meeting briefly with the executive staff on the first day, flew to Washington for meetings with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, then returned to Penn to address the retreat on Wednesday, 15 September. Folksinger and activist Joan Baez attended the retreat and remembered years later that at one point during his brief stay, King, exhausted and discouraged, sat in his room at Gantt Cottage and argued with members of his executive staff. He said "he couldn't take the pressure anymore, that he just wanted to go

back . . . and preach in his little church, and he was tired of being a leader."²⁰ With the unceasing and often unreasonable demands on his time and energy, the enormous responsibilities and public scrutiny, and the constant threat of physical harm, it was little wonder King expressed such emotions in a private moment—ironically, at a retreat intended to alleviate, not to add to his stress.

One issue weighing heavily on King's mind at this time—and one that would continue to trouble him for months to come—was the steady escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War and his public criticism of President Lyndon B. Johnson's foreign policy. King had opposed the war publicly for the first time in March 1965 and throughout the year, had increased both the extent and the frequency of his comments. "The war in Vietnam must be stopped," he said at a SCLC rally in July. "There must be a negotiated settlement."²¹ Many observers, however, believing this antiwar stand had no relevance to civil rights, criticized King for his opposition. Even SCLC, at its annual convention in August, passed a resolution that disavowed the organization's interest in the growing peace movement, stressed that its efforts would be "confined to the question of racial brotherhood,"²² and made it clear that any comments King made on Vietnam would be made as an individual and not as president of SCLC. Criticism of King's antiwar position increased when, just before the retreat at Penn Center, he met with United Nations Ambassador Arthur Goldberg and

expressed his hope that the United States would stop bombing North Vietnam and negotiate with the Viet Cong. Press reports of this meeting, followed by Senator Thomas Dodd's vigorous denunciation of King's views, gave him even more negative publicity. In the face of such opposition, which threatened to endanger his effectiveness in organizing support for SCLC's programs, King decided the best course would be to refrain from taking part in the growing public debate on Vietnam and concentrate his energies on the civil rights movement.²³

Even that course had its daily problems, disputes, and disappointments, however, most notably those associated with SCLC's Chicago campaign and those caused by growing tensions within and among the major civil rights organizations. After months of discussions about goals but relatively little substantive preparation for the staff assigned to achieve them, King announced in January 1966 that the campaign would be a "War on Slums." SCLC, in conjunction with the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO)—an association of several Chicago civil rights groups—would work to improve the social, economic, and day-to-day lives of the city's blacks, particularly those living in the ghettos. Such a wide-ranging approach differed dramatically from SCLC's approach in the South, where it had focused attention on single issues like the integration of public places or the registration of black voters. "Our primary objective," King told reporters, "will be to bring about the unconditional surrender of forces

"We came to Beaufort because we like the area and its historical significance, particularly at Penn Center," SCLC Public Relations Aide Junius Griffin told newspaper reporters from the State in September 1965. SCLC staff members talking outside Hampton House. (Bob Fitch Photo, 849-38.)



dedicated to the creation and maintenance of slums and ultimately to make slums a moral and financial liability upon the whole community."²⁴

When SCLC's attempts to organize a strong base of support among the tenants of Chicago's slums met with apathy—and sometimes outright hostility—the field staff lost their sense of direction and purpose. Most preferred the excitement and confrontation of mass demonstrations to the relative boredom and hard work of door-to-door community organization and were pleased, therefore, when, in the spring of 1966, the SCLC-CCCO "Chicago Freedom Movement" moved its emphasis away from community organization in the ghettos and back to the familiar tactics of direct-action rallies and demonstrations in the all-white sections of Chicago. They targeted the strict segregation of

neighborhoods, which was supported by the policies of the city's real estate brokers, and by June, had drawn up a list of several demands addressing inequities in education and housing and had announced plans for a 100,000-person rally followed by a march to City Hall and meetings with Mayor Richard Daley and other city leaders.²⁵

Meanwhile, however, events in Mississippi drew King's, and SCLC's, attention back to the South and away from their difficulties in Chicago. In early June, James Meredith, who, in 1962, had become the first black student at the University of Mississippi, announced his intention to undertake a one-man march from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. This march, designed to dramatize Meredith's belief that blacks in Mississippi should not be intimidated by the threat of white violence, lasted just a

little over a day before Meredith was shot by a sniper.

Though Meredith's wounds were not serious, the attack spurred SCLC, CORE, and SNCC to announce that they would continue his march. King, SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael, and others argued several times over the proper tone of the march, with King upholding his belief in nonviolence and Carmichael advocating not only self-defense but the concept of black separatism as well. While a common SNCC slogan was "Freedom Now!"—which referred to the need for governmental guarantees of civil rights—Carmichael and others coined a new—and controversial—one when they shouted "Black Power!" during the march. Press coverage of the dissension focused on SNCC's new slogan and gave many Americans the impression that "Black Power" repre-



Gantt Cottage (built 1940) at Penn Community Center; King and his senior SCLC staff stayed here during their retreats. (Ian Hill, SCDAH, 1992.)

sented a repudiation of King's philosophy of nonviolent protest.

The public debate over both the meaning of "Black Power" and the direction in which the civil rights movement was going lasted through the summer and into the fall and led to a "white backlash"—a criticism of the movement that was fueled by fear at the prospect of widespread violent demonstrations and marches.²⁶ King, for his part, tried to subscribe to the slogan's positive connotations and to distance himself from the negative ones. "We must not be ashamed of being black," he said at a Chicago rally on 10 July to the some thirty-five thousand people who had gathered. "We must believe with all our hearts that black is as beautiful as any other color." Then, he stressed "I do not see the answer to our problems in violence" and warned against "the error

of building a distrust for all white people."²⁷

Over the next few weeks, hopes for racial or social progress in Chicago seemed quite slim. The day after the rally, King and other leaders of the SCLC-CCCO coalition presented their demands for open housing to Mayor Daley. Daley and the city fathers reacted angrily to the Chicago Freedom Movement's position, the discussions degenerated into accusations on both sides, and the meeting closed in an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. Frustrated black youths in the slums, some disillusioned over segregation and living conditions and others upset by what they thought was mistreatment by the Chicago police, initiated a week of nightly violence and vandalism. Amid charges from the city that SCLC's efforts there had encouraged the rioting, and counter-

charges from King that the city's neglect or abuse of its black citizens had caused it, the Chicago Freedom Movement launched a series of protest marches in white neighborhoods that began at the end of July and lasted throughout August. Angry hecklers and often violence greeted the demonstrators, who were protected, not always successfully, by the Chicago police. During one particularly vicious attack, King was struck by a rock. When press coverage of the vandalism, violence, and demonstrations contributed to the perception that the situation was getting out of hand, both sides agreed to meet in an attempt to come to terms. On 26 August, after two weeks of spirited negotiations, the city and the Chicago Freedom Movement announced that the city government would end its participation in or support of discriminatory practices,

particularly in regard to housing. Some in the SCLC-CCCO coalition viewed this settlement as a victory; others saw it as a defeat. Though King be-

lieved that the agreement was the best they could hope for under the circumstances, some accused SCLC and King of “selling out” to the white establish-

ment—a disturbing anticlimax to the Chicago campaign after nearly a year of work.²⁸

Staggered but not stopped

David J. Garrow, author of the monumental study *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, has observed in a recent article that in the fifteen months between August 1965 and November 1966, “four major setbacks—black riots, beginning with Watts; the moral trauma of Vietnam; the perceived failure of the Chicago

campaign; and the debilitating debate over “Black Power”—had staggered but not stopped Martin Luther King, Jr. Gradually he was moving toward an explicit decision to make issues of economic justice the focal point of his future work.”²⁹ The setbacks and the need to outline a plan for SCLC’s future led King to the conclusion that he himself needed “a respite from his

wearing daily schedule of travels and speeches” and that he and the SCLC needed “the opportunity for serious reflection on the strategic choices that lay ahead.”³⁰ Accordingly, he called for a five-day retreat at Penn Center from Sunday through Thursday, 11–17 November, for all executive and field staff.

Where do we go from here?

Arguably, this retreat was the most important of all the SCLC staff retreats. It marked a turning point in King’s career as he completed his evolution from a spokesman for civil rights to an advocate of human rights. It also demonstrated that King could criticize with “vigor” both “America’s war policies abroad and its deep-seated economic injustices at home.”³¹ King delivered a major speech to an audience of some seventy-five SCLC staff members on the evening of Monday 14 November. Garrow has noted that King, who usually spoke extemporaneously or from rough notes, undoubtedly considered this an important speech because he took the

time to prepare a handwritten—and later, typed—outline before he delivered it; Adam Fairclough has called this address “among [King’s] most significant statements, for it staked out the radical position which guided him for the rest of his life.”³² Garrow also observed that “what began as a two-stage draft outline for the November 14 speech also became the initial outline for a book and supplied the book’s title.”³³

After an introduction by Andrew Young, King made a few opening remarks. “I want all of us to recognize the seriousness of this retreat and of all that we are doing,” he reminded the SCLC staff. He thanked “those of

you who are working on a day to day basis in communities all over our country to make the American dream a reality.” Then, he introduced his main topic as “First, from whence we have come. Secondly, where we are now. And thirdly, where do we go from here.” He continued, “Now, I want to assure you that I am still searching myself. I don’t have all the answers. . . . I don’t know everything so you can feel free after I finish my informal statement to question me and we question each other.”³⁴

Beginning with a look at “from whence we have come,” King gave his staff a short narrative and analysis of the civil rights movement from 1954



"The Southern Christian Leadership Conference's staff retreats at Penn Center 'played a significant, even vital, part in the evolution of SCLC's—and King's—participation in the civil rights movement.'" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (just right of center) and SCLC staff singing at the September 1965 retreat. Andrew Young, SCLC executive director, is third from left with his arms crossed; Ralph Abernathy, SCLC secretary-treasurer, is on King's left. (Bob Fitch photo, 838-3.)

to its present situation in the fall of 1966. He emphasized two turning points, which he considered crucial to the movement. The first he called the legal turning point—the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, in which "the highest tribunal of our nation pronounced legal segregation consti-

tutionally dead." The second, he called the psychological turning point—the series of developments from the Montgomery bus boycott of 1957 to the Selma marches of 1965, in which "the Negro recognized that if freedom was to be real, it had to be not only something from the top down, but something from the bottom up."

King, after recounting the strides made "as we engaged in nonviolent action during the psychological turning point," admitted, "Now what we must see is that this period did not accomplish everything."³⁵ Problems still faced the movement. One arose from the fact that the legal successes that elevated civil rights in the South did



"Discussions often gave way to heated arguments over the best course of action, and King would remind the group, only half in jest, 'Remember, we are a non-violent organization.'" Hosea Williams in an animated moment during a staff session. (Bob Fitch photo, 843-9.)

not address questions of social and economic rights in Northern cities—as SCLC's recent experiences in Chicago painfully illustrated; another arose from the fact that most of the successes were themselves minor victories and did not address larger issues; yet another stemmed from that fact that although many forms of legal segregation were falling, the underly-

ing racism, which had helped create and support that segregation, was still very much alive. "If you say that I am not good enough to live next door to you, if you say that I am not good enough to eat at a lunch counter, if you say that I am not good enough to go into a hotel or motel because of the color of my skin or my ethnic origins, then you are saying in substance that

I do not deserve to exist. And this is what we see when we see that racism still hovering over our nation."³⁶

Proceeding to an examination of "where we are now," King acknowledged that the "Black Power" debate and the corresponding "white backlash" had contributed to "a great deal of confusion in the air, and I think we would all agree that a lot of people are

frustrated, a lot of people have lost their way." His response was to argue that the movement was actually a social revolution—a revolution taking place not only in America but throughout the world—and that revolutions did not always develop by moving from one event to another in an orderly progression. "Often you feel like you are going backwards and it looks like you are really going away from the goal . . . But you are in fact still moving on . . . in every social revolution, there is a period of progression, there is a period of recession."³⁷ Conceding that the civil rights movement was in just one such recession, King then began to address the problems posed by "Black Power" and the "white backlash." "Black Power is a cry of pain," he claimed. "It is in fact a reaction to the failure of White Power to deliver the promises and to do it in a hurry." It was, he said, "a cry of hurt" that contained within "an unconscious belief in Black separatism" and "an unconscious belief in the validity of violence;" and he argued again that "the concept of Black Power is something we are certainly able to understand and accept . . . I hope what we are seeking is black equality, not black domination."³⁸ As for the recent and much-debated "white backlash," King believed that "the so-called White backlash is really White reaction to questions being raised by the Civil Rights Movement which demand a restructuring of the very architecture of American society," and that "Black Power did not create the so-called White backlash. . . . The backlash is not new."³⁹

Concluding with a lengthy discussion of "where do we go from here"—almost half his speech—King told his staff, "we must honestly face the fact that the Movement must address itself to the restructuring of the whole of American society."⁴⁰ He spoke of forty million Americans living in poverty and elaborated on his belief that "something is wrong with capitalism"—a theme he thought could be explored more fully in the confines of a private staff retreat than in a public forum. He wanted, he explained, to bring up the topic "in this quiet setting, in this atmosphere where you can discuss such things, and you are not accused of being a Communist for discussing it." He did not, he said, embrace all the tenets of Marxism, and he theorized on the differences between capitalism and socialism. "Capitalism fails to realize that life is social. Marxism fails to realize that life is individual. Truth is found neither in the rugged individualism of capitalism nor in the impersonal collectivism of Communism." Referring to persistent charges that he was a communist or was heavily influenced and supported by communists, King remarked, "when you read about me being a Communist you really know where I stand."⁴¹ He then suggested courses of action. The best way to eliminate poverty and other social inequities, he believed, was to establish a guaranteed annual income—"Until we come to the point in America of saying that every family must have a livable wage," he said "then we aren't going to solve the problem."⁴² King returned to the theme of nonviolence and the rising

spirit of black separatism in the movement, saying "We must still believe that violence, in our struggle, is impractical and immoral. . . . I think the ultimate weakness of violence, practically, and morally, is the fact that it never really deals with the basic evil in the situation."⁴³ He also stressed his wish that SCLC, through interracial cooperation, would be "that lamp of hope, that light in a very dark situation. . . . We are tied together. And in some strange way every Negro is a little White, and every White man is a little Negro. . . . we must still sing Black and White together, We Shall Overcome."⁴⁴ Apologizing for speaking "far too long," King spoke briefly about the "three basic evils in America: the evil of racism, the evil of excessive materialism, the evil of militarism." He called these three evils "inseparable triplets" and noted that the movement would have to address not only civil rights as most people perceived them but human rights as well.⁴⁵

King brought his speech to a stirring end by employing the analogy of football to describe the task facing SCLC in particular and the movement as a whole. "We have some difficult days, but I think some challenging days," he admitted.

We brought the football of Civil Rights through gains in public accommodations, and the right to vote to about the 50 yard line. And now we are moving into the opposition's territory. We must not forget now that there are diehards on that team determined to defeat our advance, determined to keep us from getting



across the goal line, determined to resist every move. . . . I think at this moment that we have got to get together and see that we have some good quarterbacks calling sound signals. That we have some good forces in the backfield running the ball. That we have a great dedicated, abiding line making the way through. . . . As we move on, sometimes we may even fumble the ball, but for God's sake recover it. And then we will move on down the field. And I believe that with this kind of moral power, with this kind of determination, with this kind of willingness to suffer, we'll get across that goalline.

If they were successful, King concluded, "people everywhere will rise up and sing, there lives a great people, a Black people with marvelous White allies who injected new meaning into the veins of Western Civilization."⁴⁶

After being acknowledged, educated, encouraged, and challenged by such an address, the staff spent the three remaining days of the retreat in topical sessions. Executive staff members led the sessions—Andrew Young on "SCLC & Strategy for Social

"The [September 1965] retreat . . . focused on SCLC's need to reaffirm its commitment to nonviolence and on ways in which staff could successfully import protest strategies into Northern cities." James Lawson of the SCLC executive staff (at blackboard) and Ira Sanperl, activist, lead a staff session on strategies in nonviolent protest. (Bob Fitch photo, 842-37.)

Change;" King on "SCLC & Foreign Affairs;" James Lawson on "Practice and Training in Nonviolent Action;" Hosea Williams on "Voter Registration Emphasis;" and Young on "Personal Decorum & Group Discipline of SCLC Staff."⁴⁷ The discussions emphasized openness, and executive and field staff talked frankly about the issues they considered important; the concerns they had; their personal strengths and weaknesses; and SCLC's philosophy, projects, and programs.⁴⁸

A partial transcript survives from the session on nonviolent action, held on the afternoon of Tuesday, 15 November; it reveals a diversity of opinion among the SCLC staff, who embraced differing and sometimes contradictory views on the best way to further nonviolent protests. At one point, the discussion focused on the question whether differences between the South and the North were differences of reality or perception. At another, it dealt more explicitly with the concept of nonviolence and how it related to the daily work of the SCLC staff. "Now, most people think that if we get whooped on our heads for the white man and take this, that we are nonviolent," one staff member claimed. "There are lots of different points in nonviolence."⁴⁹ The group agreed that "a political organization is a means of bringing about nonviolent social change" and that one of SCLC's priorities should be "to build a political base in the South—to bring about social change to provide justice." Lawson tried to get the group to apply the concept of nonviolence to the specific situations SCLC faced in Chi-

cago or in Mississippi, saying, "we ought not to be facing it with this kind of abstract, and universal and worldwide context. We ought to be saying, what is it that I ought to be doing now."⁵⁰ Though this session—like most at these retreats—raised more questions than it answered, it gave staff members the opportunity to discuss successes, failures, hopes, and concerns about their work and SCLC's place in the movement.

A session on Wednesday gave the staff a chance to evaluate the executive staff. Ralph Abernathy opened it and invited everyone to "Please feel free to speak very freely." Concerns, which were numerous, ranged from "the breakdown in communication between the field staff and the Executive staff" to "the lack of our employing the principles of nonviolence among ourselves;" from "being sent into a project cold with no prior orientation about the local set-up" to "the attitude of the secretaries toward the field staff."⁵¹ Some comments and questions were quite pointed. "I have lost a lot of my effectiveness as a worker because of inter-personal relations," someone claimed. "The only time I have ever been hit is by a staff member."⁵² Another complained, "If I can't feed my kids, how am I going to buy \$5.00 worth of [SCLC] stock?"⁵³ A third asked bitterly, "What are we going to do for the Negroes[?]"—that is what I want to know. We have got them in a lot of trouble [by committing the organization's limited resources to too many projects], and SCLC is fixing to go to Chicago [to organize a voter registration drive]."⁵⁴ Such discussions

not only confirmed King's Monday-night observation that "we all live with day to day tensions and day to day problems, and we do need to let our hair down, so to speak at times," but honored as well his wish to "take all of these sessions very seriously because we are dealing with serious problems."⁵⁵

Though the retreat gave the SCLC staff an opportunity to discuss important issues and to get away from daily demands on their time and energy, King himself still needed an uninterrupted period in a secluded place where he could reflect seriously on the future of the movement. Within a few weeks, SCLC announced that he would be taking a two-month leave of absence to work on a book. The book, which would develop many of the themes and incorporate much of the language of his speech at Penn Center, was written and revised in January and February 1967 and published as *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* It received mixed reviews, and most focused either on the long chapter dealing with "Black Power" or its emphasis on economic justice and King's belief that Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" was largely ineffective.⁵⁶ *Where Do We Go From Here*, as edited, often softened the tone of King's speech of 14 November. Its discussion of "Black Power," for example, called the slogan "a reaction to the failure of white power" rather than "a reaction to the failure of White Power to deliver the promises and to do it in a hurry."⁵⁷ Touching on topics like the civil rights movement to 1967, "Black Power," the "white backlash," the war

in Vietnam, education, employment, housing, and poverty, and offering a blueprint for the future, *Where Do We*

Go From Here has been called “far and away the best starting point in all of King’s published writings for the

reader who wants to reflect upon where King had come from and where he potentially was going.”⁵⁸

“Ain’t gonna study war no more”

After completing the revisions for his book, King turned his attention to a subject he was thinking about more and more and mentioning quite frequently in the speeches and public statements he was making in the first few months of 1967—the military and political quagmire of the Vietnam War. Two crucial factors influenced this shift in direction: King’s uneasiness over his 1965 decision to refrain from extended public comment on Vietnam, and the pleas of advisors and others that he speak out more forcefully against American involvement in the war. In his speeches and public statements, he began to criticize war in general as the antithesis of nonviolence and this war in particular as the product of misplaced national priorities.⁵⁹ In a speech at Riverside Church in New York on 4 April, King explained his decision to voice his firm opposition to the war. “My conscience leaves me no other choice.”⁶⁰ He gave several reasons—military spending undermined the “War on Poverty;” a disproportionate number of blacks were fighting and dying in Southeast Asia; violent young men in America’s ghettos and slums were no worse than “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government”; and critics claiming the civil

rights movement had nothing to do with the peace movement were sadly mistaken.⁶¹ “Somehow this madness must cease,” King told his audience. “We must stop now. . . . The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.” He also demanded that “we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people.”⁶² After outlining several steps toward ending American involvement in the war, he encouraged nonviolent protest and concluded with a call to action, adapted from the final chapter of *Where Do We Go From Here*. “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. . . . We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world—a world that borders on our doors.”⁶³

Criticism of King’s more aggressive antiwar stance was both immediate and widespread, not only among those who had opposed him in the past but among some who had been his closest supporters as well. The NAACP, for example, when it issued a resolution opposing any effort to

combine the civil rights and peace movements, rebuked King’s speech by implication, though it did not mention him by name. Even Stanley Levison—one of his closest advisors, who had urged him to take a more public stand on the war—thought the speech would harm King’s standing in the eyes of most Americans. Editorials and press coverage were overwhelmingly negative, questioning his qualifications to criticize American foreign policy and his motives for doing so.⁶⁴ “He has diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country and to his people,” the *Washington Post* claimed. “And that is a great tragedy.” Press support for King’s speech, like the *Christian Century*’s characterization of it as “a magnificent blend of eloquence and raw fact . . . of tough realism and infinite compassion,” was rare indeed.⁶⁵ David J. Garrow has observed that King was “pained but not shocked” at the bitter controversy over his 4 April speech and that he “pledged not to be undaunted by the unpopularity of his stand.”⁶⁶

The themes of economic justice and the Vietnam War would be central to King’s thought until his death a year later. His address at the third SCLC retreat at Penn Center, which was held from Sunday through Thurs-

day, 21–26 May, bear this out. Andrew Young, in a memo to all SCLC staff members, cautioned them that “no one will be excused from this retreat.” Some seventy-five members of the executive and field staffs arrived on St. Helena Island on the 21st.⁶⁷ King delivered his speech to the staff the next night in Frissell Community House. He intended to provide “a few points on where we are. . . . I think we need to look at these points in order to charter our course for the future.”⁶⁸

His first point demonstrated the way his thinking had evolved since the fall of 1965, about the same time as the first SCLC retreat at Penn. “It is necessary for us to realize that we have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights,” he observed. “You see when we think of civil rights we are referring to those rights that are clearly defined by the Constitution. The denial of those rights can be dealt with by going into court, by demonstrating to dramatize the denial, or by an Executive Order But when you deal with human rights, you are not dealing with something clearly defined in the Constitution. They are rights that are clearly defined by the mandates of a humanitarian concern. . . . We are talking about a good, solid, well-paying job. We are talking about a good, sound, sanitary house. We are talking not merely about desegregated education, but we are talking about quality education.”⁶⁹

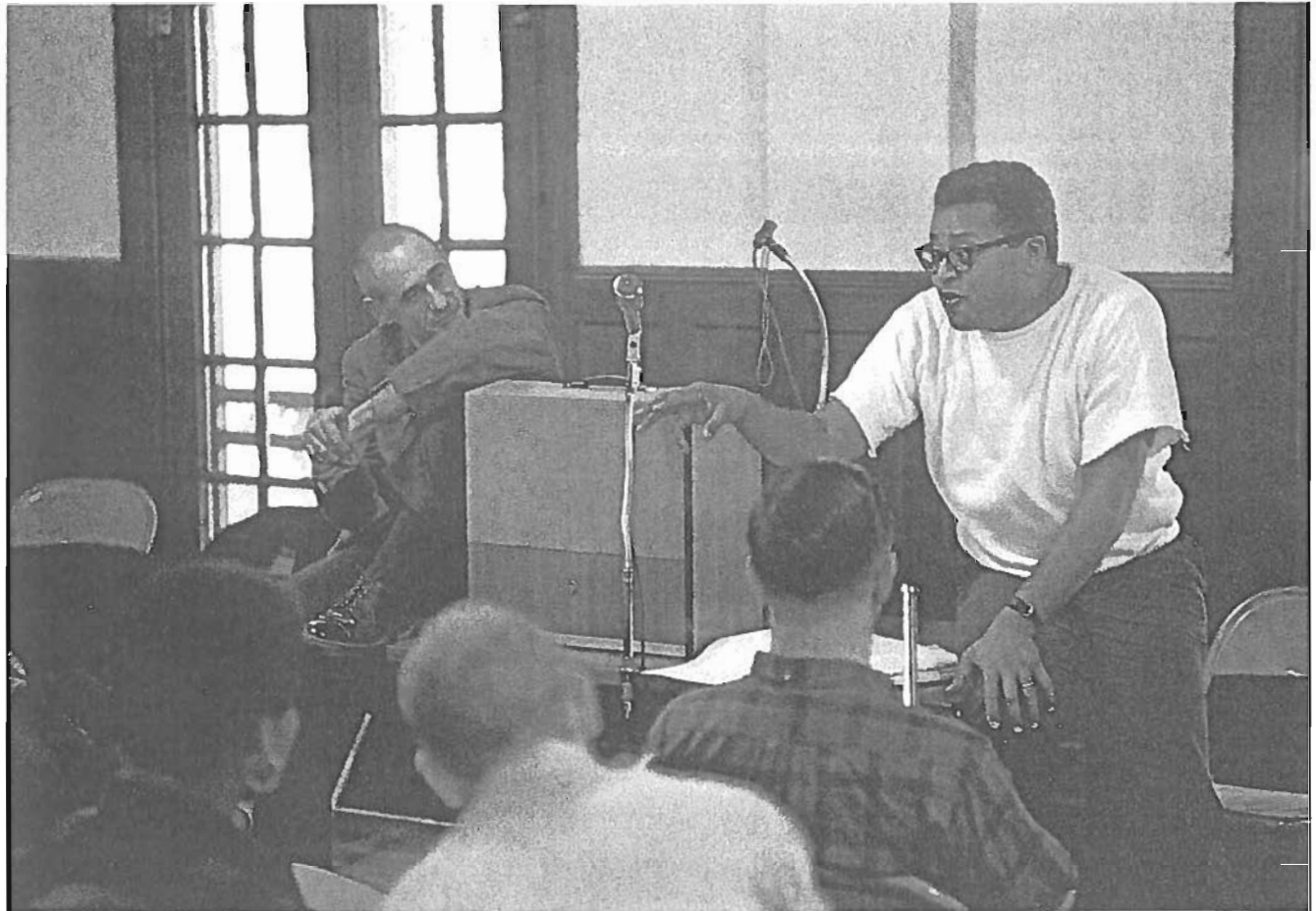
King emphasized other points as well. One centered on his belief that the movement’s fight against segregation and other legal forms of discrimination was not enough “in this new era

where the struggle is for genuine equality.” He stressed that the movement, which, up to 1967, had been a reform movement, would have to undergo a transformation in the immediate future. “I think we must see the great distinction between a reform movement and a revolutionary movement. . . . In short, we have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society.”⁷⁰ Another point centered on his view that “the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together. And you really can’t get rid of one without getting rid of the other. . . . what America must be told today is that she must be born again. The whole structure of American life must be changed.”⁷¹

Introducing the central argument of his speech, King gave his staff a lengthy and detailed analysis of the Vietnam War and what its continuation meant to him, to the civil rights movement, to the future of American society, and to the future of the world community. He disputed “those who tell us that the reason we are fighting in Vietnam today is because we are fighting Communist aggression.” King claimed that there was no North or South Vietnam—that Vietnam was actually one country fighting a civil war—and that the Viet Cong were not Communists at all but were actually part of a resistance movement fighting against an oppressive regime.⁷² “I couldn’t look at this without raising my voice against it,” he continued, addressing his critics. “Now I know the voices that are being raised against me

and they are enjoying it now. Because they can lash out against Martin Luther King. . . . That it’s hurting the civil rights movement, to take a stand against the war in Vietnam. I want you to help me as God’s prophets. And a prophet tells the truth. What is the truth? The war in Vietnam is doing much more to hurt civil rights than our standing against the war is doing.”⁷³

After briefly speaking about other issues of American domestic and foreign policy, King talked to the SCLC staff in a more informal, more personal way, explaining how his philosophical and political positions had evolved since the November 1966 retreat. “I went away for two months to do a lot of thinking, but basically to write a book. . . . I thought about civil rights and I thought about the world situation and I thought about America. And I thought about the war in Vietnam,” he told the audience. “There are times in life when you must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular. But you do it, because it is right.”⁷⁴ King called his public opposition to the war his own personal cross and commented, “when I took up the cross I recognized its meaning. . . . The cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on.” He concluded his speech by assuring his staff, “I want you to know that my mind is made up. I backed up a little when I came out [against the war] in 1965. My name then wouldn’t have been written in any book called *Profiles of Courage*. But now I have decided. I will not be intimidated. I will not be harassed. I will not be



James Lawson making a point in a discussion on the philosophy of nonviolence while Ira Sandperl listens. (Bob Fitch photo, 841-3.)

silent and I will be heard." As King sat down the audience broke into the spiritual "Down By the Riverside," singing the refrain, "Ain't gonna study war no more."⁷⁵

This retreat, just like the 1965 and 1966 retreats before it, attracted almost no press coverage, even in South Carolina. King did speak to an Associated Press reporter by phone from

Penn Center, however, replying to recent criticisms of his opposition to the Vietnam War. A position paper issued by Freedom House, an organization that included Roy Wilkins of the NAACP on its board of directors, had claimed that the peace movement included "well-known Communist allies and luminaries of the hate-America left" and attacked King for

lending his name and "mantle of respectability" to the antiwar cause. King told the reporter that such charges were "totally untrue and unwarranted," and defended the peace movement as motivated by "a deep love and concern for this nation."⁷⁶

For the next few months, King, anxious to show progress in SCLC's efforts to organize blacks in Northern

cities, devoted more attention to campaigns there than to Vietnam. For the rest of 1967, he focused on voter registration, open housing, and right-to-work campaigns in Chicago; and on the mobilization of similar campaigns in Cleveland. Urban violence broke out again during the summer, just as it had in 1965 and 1966, with Newark and Detroit suffering the worst rioting in July. King responded to this third summer of riots, blaming the white society for creating the ghettos rather than the rioters themselves. He told

President Johnson, “only drastic changes in the life of the poor will provide the kind of order and stability you desire.”⁷⁷ The summer riots, and the white establishment’s reaction to them, spurred King to arrive at a more radical approach to non-violent protest in urban America. He believed that the SCLC could channel the frustration that had helped create the riots into constructive protests against the living conditions that gave rise to the

frustration. “To raise protest to an appropriate level for cities, to invest it with aggressive but nonviolent qualities,” King said at the SCLC annual convention in August, “it is necessary to adopt civil disobedience.”⁷⁸ Such disobedience would be aimed at the disruption of normal life in American cities, using tactics designed to force schools, businesses, and transportation routes to shut down to get attention—and relief—from the federal government.⁷⁹

The “Poor People’s Campaign”

Though the concept of massive civil disobedience as a weapon against poverty had been discussed and debated in the movement for several months, King, his staff, and his advisors began concrete planning for a specific campaign in the early fall of 1967. Some preliminary discussions, which targeted Washington, D.C., as the most effective site for these protests, were held in September during a staff retreat in Warrenton, Virginia. The proposed protest, set for the spring of 1968, was intended as a second, more confrontational March on Washington, and was named the “Poor People’s Campaign.” It would be an effort to forge a new movement, one that would focus on social problems rather than racial ones, and one that would encourage the participation of all citizens who sought to change American society—whites as well as blacks. King soon called another staff retreat, this time at Penn

Center, to work out the details of the project.⁸⁰

This last SCLC staff retreat at Penn before King’s death was a seven-day meeting held from Monday, 27 November, through Sunday, 2 December. It featured one brief, informal, and motivational speech by King titled “Why A Movement?” and a second longer, more formal and more inspirational one, titled “The State of the Movement.” These speeches demonstrate the way King used different types of addresses for different purposes at staff retreats, and they provide excellent illustrations of the ways in which these retreats gave SCLC opportunities to refocus.

When the retreat opened on Monday night 27 November, King’s first spoke about the Poor People’s Campaign and the reasons for it. “My brothers and my sisters,” he said, “we are going to Washington to confront the seat of government and to say to

our nation and the powers that be that something is wrong. And we are not going to sit down on stools of do-nothingism and accept this. Something is wrong.” Answering the skeptics in SCLC and among his advisors, who feared that the new campaign had not been adequately thought out, King exclaimed, “We’re talking about the right to eat, the right to live. . . . You see, I don’t care if we don’t name the demand—just go to Washington!”⁸¹ He stressed his conviction that barriers to cooperation—like tension between blacks and whites, or disputes between those who believed in nonviolence and those who subscribed to it—would disappear during the campaign. “It doesn’t matter what, just get on to Washington.”⁸² Hope, King believed, was the central force behind this new campaign, and he told the staff a story about a violinist who broke a string in the middle of a concert but transposed the piece



"Both [the executive and the field staff] retreats combined a variety of activities to help SCLC's staff members respond to the constant pressures they faced . . . [like] sing-alongs designed to improve morale." Joan Baez, folksinger and activist, singing to King and the SCLC staff; Ralph Abernathy is seated on King's left. (Bob Fitch photo, 841-24.)

and finished it by playing on three strings instead of four. Applying that story to SCLC, King acknowledged past disappointments and failures, saying, "Our A-strings have broken," but insisting, "We're going to Washington, and we're going to transpose the composition. And we'll go on, in spite of."⁸³ Telling his audience, "I don't know if I'll see all of you before April, but I send you forth," King expressed faith that they would "do something that will give new meaning to our own

lives, and I hope, new meaning to the life of the nation. I may not see you before, but I'll meet you in Washington."⁸⁴

King addressed the SCLC staff again the next night, after the first full day of the retreat. This speech emphasized determination rather than hope, stressing the need to change society by coercion rather than by trusting in the good will of the establishment. It pointed out that the boycotts, sit-ins, and marches of the late 1950s and

early 1960s gave blacks "a sense of achievement" but gave many whites "a sense of completion." "As elation and expectation died," King explained, "Negroes became more sharply aware that the goal of freedom was still distant. . . . A sense of futility and frustration spread." Some blacks responded with "dismay and hostility in a succession of riots," while many whites reacted with equal dismay and hostility to this "new stage of Negro struggle replacing the old and alleg-

edly outworn tactic of non-violent resistance.”⁸⁵ He discussed the adoption of violence by urban blacks, argued that their environment helped push them to riot, and quoted Victor Hugo: “If the soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin but he who causes the darkness.”⁸⁶

Getting to the heart of the Poor People’s Campaign, King told his staff, “we must formulate a program and we must fashion new tactics which do not count on government good will, but instead serve to compel unwilling authorities to yield to the mandates of justice.” He reaffirmed his faith in nonviolent protest while acknowledging that it needed to “mature to a new level, to correspond to heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. . . . There must be more than a statement to the larger society, there must be a force that interrupts its functioning at some key point.” The idea was to “transmute the deep anger of the ghetto into a creative force,” to “dislocate the functioning of a city without destroying it.”⁸⁷

Then, speaking in more general terms, King identified an entire generation of potential allies—the youth of America—and expressed the hope that they might “help keep open the

possibility of honorable compromise.” He warned against the temptation to give in to despair, calling courage “the hallmark of any great movement.”⁸⁸ Returning again to the theme of non-violence and its central place in his thought, King told his staff, “I want to close by saying what I am sure you expect me to say, and that is that we must remain faithful to love and non-violence.”⁸⁹ If the movement was faithful to nonviolent protest, he assured the audience, “we will be able to go to Washington, we will be able to move through the cities of our country. By the thousands we will move. Many will wonder where we are coming from. Our only answer will be that we are coming up out of great trials and tribulations. . . . We may just be able to speed this nation upside down and right side up.”⁹⁰ King and the SCLC publicly announced the Poor People’s Campaign just a few days after the retreat, calling it a “strong, dramatic, and attention-getting campaign” and a “last desperate demand” for “jobs or income for all.”⁹¹

Even before the retreat ended, some observers, confident that the nation was already “right side up” and that King represented a dangerous threat to its continued security, denounced the Poor People’s Campaign

and SCLC’s mere presence at Penn.

The lead editorial in the *Charleston News & Courier* on 28 November, titled “Dr. King at Frogmore,” was a particularly striking illustration of such attitudes. It described Frogmore—the former name for the post office on St. Helena Island—as being in “a backwater of the South Carolina coastal plantation country,” where “Emancipation and Reconstruction left its people to doze in the sunshine, unmolested by overseers and mildly guided from the Penn Community Center” until King and SCLC came to Beaufort County and stirred up trouble. The *News & Courier*, claiming that “civil disobedience programs that have come out of Frogmore have rocked the country and unleashed among others a Black Power campaign of explosive violence,” warned that the proposed dislocation of Washington might have international repercussions. The editorial continued with a reference to Penn as “a secluded meeting place . . . said to have been the scene where the campaign was planned for passage of the Civil Rights bill of 1964,” and concluded with the comment, “whether any good thing can come out of Frogmore is a question that only time will answer.”⁹²

I will be heard

Martin Luther King, Jr., never returned to Penn Center and did not live to see the Poor People’s Campaign reach Washington; he was as-

sassinated a few months later, on 4 April 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Courtney Siceloff, director of Penn Community Center, commented

shortly after King’s death that the SCLC president visited Penn “seeking a quiet retreat from the demands of his busy life.”⁹³ Though this was

undoubtedly so, the true significance of the SCLC staff retreats there from 1965 through 1967 lies in their role as vehicles for organizational and personal growth. These retreats were much more than an opportunity for King and his staff to rest for a few days, often demanding just as much work and creating just as much pressure as any other period demanded from them. They served as a forum to discuss sensitive topics, as a mechanism to set SCLC policies and priorities, and as an incentive for King to redefine and clarify his positions on critical issues.

Time has answered the rhetorical question “whether any good thing can

come out of Frogmore,” for King’s frequent visits to Penn represent yet another example of the institution’s central—and continuing—significance to black history and culture not only in South Carolina but throughout the United States. “It was difficult to realize that American history was written at Penn Center under the old oaks festooned with Spanish moss,” the *Charleston News & Courier* had commented in 1964. “You had to listen very carefully to catch the distant rumble of drums.”⁹⁴ American history *was* written at Penn Center; it had been written there one hundred years earlier, during the Port Royal Experiment; it had been written there since;

and it was written there again from 1965 through 1967, during the staff retreats of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. That “distant rumble of drums,” it can be argued, was not the sound of a military revolution. It was, instead, the sound of a social revolution, a revolution of American hearts and minds, a revolution yet to be completed almost thirty years later. The distant rumble was the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr., echoing in Frissell Community House at Penn Center: “Now I have decided. I will not be intimidated. I will not be harassed. I will not be silent and I will be heard.”⁹⁵

Notes

1 Penn Community Services, "Penn's Campus Tour Guide," n.d. (c. 1981), in Penn Center Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Files, South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

2 Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), passim.

3 Elizabeth Jacoway, *Yankee Missionaries in the South: The Penn School Experiment* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), passim.

4 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Speech at Staff Retreat, Penn Center, Frogmore, South Carolina, May 1967," [sometimes called "To Charter Our Course For The Future"], Speech to Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Staff, 22 May 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers, Series III: Speeches, Sermons, Articles, Statements, 1954–1968 (January–July 1967), 1; Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as King Papers).

5 "Penn's Campus Tour Guide;" Gloria Fraction to J. Robert Passmore, 12 May 1967, "Conference Scheduling Form," 15 May 1967, and Penn Conference Center, "General Conference Information," Records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Series IV: Records of the Executive Director's Office, 1957–1970, Subseries 3: Administrative Records of Andrew J. Young (Box 49, Folder 13); Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as SCLC Papers).

6 "The Men Behind Martin Luther King," *Ebony* 20:8 (June 1965), 172.

7 Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 171.

8 Fairclough, 171.

9 For evaluations of the importance of these retreats see David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York:

William Morrow and Company, 1986), 443, 446–47, 536–38, 563–64, 581–83; and Fairclough, 171, 275, 324–26, 341–42, 347–48, 368. Extensive material from the retreats, including correspondence, agendas, transcripts of discussions, and transcripts of King's speeches, can be found in the King Papers and the SCLC Papers.

10 The best work on King and the SCLC is Garrow's, which received the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1987. Also useful are Fairclough's study, cited above; David L. Lewis, King: *A Critical Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1970); and Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982). *We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), edited by Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman, is an excellent collection of essays written by a distinguished panel of King scholars. Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988) shared the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1989 and is the first volume of a projected two-volume study of the civil rights movement.

11 Garrow, 120, 149, 151, 161; Fairclough, 69–70. For a view of the South Carolina sea island citizenship schools, see Jerome D. Franson, "Citizenship Education in the South Carolina Sea Islands, 1954–1966," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1977. Septima Clark's autobiography *Echo in My Soul* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1962) covers her early career; while there is no satisfactory biography, Cynthia Stokes Brown, ed., *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement* (Navarro, California: Wild Trees Press, 1986), is useful.

12 Fairclough, 33–34; C.T. Vivian, "With the Affiliates: First National Meeting," *SCLC Newsletter* 2:5 (February 1964).

13 Hugh Gibson, "SCLC Leaders Get Briefed, Primed for Rights Battle; Secrecy Prevails at Meeting," *Charleston News and Courier*, 14 March 1964. See also "SCLC Leaders Meet Today in Frogmore" [the common place name then preferred by the post office on St. Helena Island], *ibid.*, 12 March 1964; Hugh Gibson, "Frogmore Racial Meeting is

Shrouded in Secrecy," James Felder, "Top Secret Meeting; Negro Woman Silenced Quickly at Frogmore," 13 March 1964; the editorial "Segregated Session," 14 March 1964; and Hugh Gibson, "Dateline Columbia: Frogmore Agenda Presages Trouble," 15 March 1964. A much more balanced view, "King Speaks at Frogmore Conference," appeared in *The State* (Columbia), 14 March 1964.

14 Gibson, "SCLC Leaders Get Briefed, Primed for Rights Battle."

15 Gibson, "Dateline Columbia: Frogmore Agenda Presages Trouble."

16 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going: *Where Do We Go From Here* and the Traumas of the Post-Selma Movement," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* LXXV:4 (Winter 1991), 719–22; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 337–443; Fairclough, 193–276.

17 Executive Staff Meeting Minutes, 26–28 August 1965; and King, Memorandum to Executive Staff, n.d. but late August or early September 1965, King Papers, Series I: Primary Correspondence, Subseries 2: SCLC Administrative Records, 1957–1968 (Box 32, Folder 9: Executive Staff Papers).

18 "King, Staff At Frogmore," *The State*, 14 September 1965; "Southern Rights Tactics Seen Usable in the North," *ibid.*, 15 September 1965; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 446–47.

19 "Southern Rights Tactics Seen Usable in the North."

20 Joan Baez, *And a Voice to Sing With: A Memoir* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 107. Though some details of Baez's account are garbled, with a reference to King's church in "Memphis" instead of Atlanta, and a reference to a "hotel room" instead of a room in Gantt Cottage at Penn Center, its portrayal of King's mood at the retreat rings true.

21 Quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 429.

22 Quoted in Adam Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," *Phylon* XLV:1 (March 1984), 26.

23 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 720–21; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 428–30, 436–39, 444–46; Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," 24–26; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 271–74.

24 Quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 457. See also

ibid., 431–58; Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 722; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 283–86.

25 Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 461–72; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 288–92.

26 Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 473–89; Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 723–24; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 309–22.

27 Quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 492.

28 Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 492–530; Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 722–23; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 295–307.

29 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 724.

30 *Ibid.*, 725–26.

31 *Ibid.*, 736.

32 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 726 and n. 14; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 324. In November 1992 King's heirs brought a lawsuit against a Beverly Hills auction house which offered the outline for sale and received a bid for \$38,500. The King estate claimed that the manuscript had been stolen and sued for its return and \$5 million in punitive damages. The bid, and the lawsuit, were still pending when this publication went to press. See David Streitfeld, "MLK Heirs Sue Over Document; Speech Outline Up for Auction Was Stolen, Family Claims," *Washington Post*, 7 November 1992, and "Suit delays auction of King's notes," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 November 1992.

33 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 726.

34 King, "Dr. King's Speech, Frogmore 11/14/66," Speech to SCLC Staff, 14 November 1966, SCLC Papers, Series IV: Records of the Executive Director's Office, 1957–1970, Subseries 3: Administrative Records of Andrew J. Young (Box 49, Folder 12), 1–2.

35 *Ibid.*, 3–6.

36 *Ibid.*, 7.

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38 *Ibid.*, 11–12.

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40 *Ibid.*, 18.

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42 *Ibid.*, 22.

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- 56 Garrow, "Where Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Going," 727–36; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 539–45, 567–68; King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), passim.
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- 61 Ibid., 232–33.
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- 64 Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 552–57; Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 337–41; Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the War in Vietnam," 29–31.
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