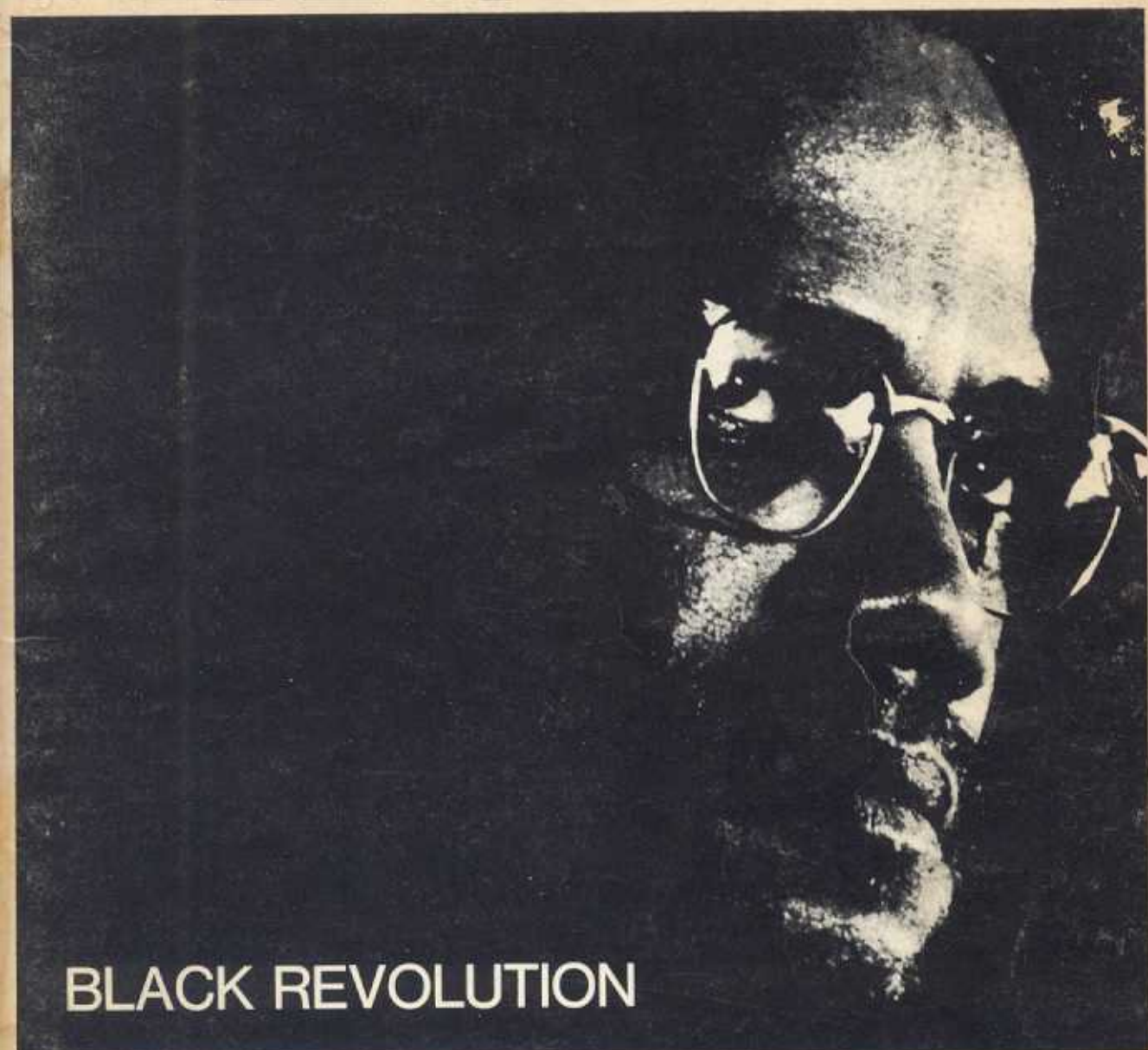


THE **BLACK** SCHOLAR



BLACK REVOLUTION

CARMICHAEL
DU BOIS
GETHERS
LA RUE
SAXE
WHITE
WILLIAMS

ROBERT F WILLIAMS

BLACK SCHOLAR: *You were away in exile for quite a long time. Though we were always aware of your presence and impact on the black liberation movement and your persistent promise to return to this country, it still must have taken more than ordinary courage to come back. Why did you come back to the United States?*

WILLIAMS: Well, you see, the problem is that I didn't leave on my own. I was forced out of the country. I would still have been in the South, because we had quite a movement going there. But the most positive aspect of my return to a racist America could probably be called an opportunity to demonstrate the extent of the black man's commitment to our ever widening struggle for liberation. I hope to set an example that will serve notice that in face of white supremacy, terror, unjust and cruel imprisonment and threats of cold-blooded and savage death, the black man can no longer be intimidated. I hope to bring home the point that the day has gone forever when the bullying white man can frighten the black man out of existence. He has the power to assassinate but not to intimidate.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *So you did not come back expecting justice in American courts. We remember your appeal in 1969 on behalf of "Afro-American militants who refuse to sell out and who cannot be intimidated" and in opposition to the "vicious campaign*

to destroy effective and potential ghetto leaders" such as Max Stanford, Huey Newton, Rap Brown, LeRoi Jones, Martin Sostre, Herman Ferguson, Cleveland Sellers, John Kenyatta and Lee Otis Johnson. You urged that black Americans must be inspired to display the same determination in safeguarding the human and civil rights of our oppressed people as white racists are to legally lynch us. You knew about the legalistic repression of black leaders.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I did. I knew that a mad dog can always be expected to act like a mad dog. So it is time to cast away illusions about peace, justice, democracy and the redemptive potential of the savage racists. Actions speak louder than words. The black and the weak are always victims of the white and the strong. Thus, John Bull's (England's) sterile words of censure against a minority of white squatters and poachers on the black man's soil of Africa are quite in contrast to his "law and order" enforced by bullet and bayonet in, say, tiny and independence-loving Anguilla. But then, the contrast hinges on the difference between black and white and the tyrannical nature of white power. Like father, like son, that's the way it is with John Bull and Uncle Sam, and as far as the black man is concerned, he has no legal or human rights that white terror is bound to respect. So, what we have is a living lesson in black and white contrast! It is excessive asininity for black people

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS, author of *Negroes With Guns*, is known internationally in the black liberation struggle. In 1961, trumped up charges of kidnapping were brought against Williams, who received political asylum with his wife and two sons, first in Cuba, then China and Tanzania. During his exile, Williams continued his revolutionary activity with broadcasts and as publisher of *The Crusader*, a monthly newsletter. Williams returned to the United States a few months ago. The Committee to Aid in the Defense of Robert Williams, Box 666, Detroit, Michigan 48206, has been formed for his legal defense. This interview was recorded on April 23, 1970.

to expect justice in a hostile white jungle society.

In the first place, I am not now a criminal, I have never been a criminal, and the only times that I have ever been in jail were because of my fight for justice. It's a matter of justice. The false charges against me were not motivated by criminal activity on my part, but stemmed from political and racial persecution. I have as much right, or more, to live in America as Nixon, and no amount of intimidation can force me to abdicate this inalienable right. So, it's not a matter of justice. It's a matter of trying to lynch a black man and trying to white-wash it and make it look good. And I don't know of any appeal to reason that's ever been able to really save a black man when the white mob has been really set on lynching him.

Occasionally, a black man might be justly set free, or justly not prosecuted. But that's just occasionally, and it's an exception rather than a rule. It's something like gambling; and justice should be constant and expected, and not a thing of chance. In fact, in my chance, my case, even if they turned me loose, it wouldn't be justice. Not only am I not guilty of any crime; I've already gone through all of this harassment, and I've been handicapped in many ways, had my life disrupted. They can't give me justice now for what they've already done.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Before we get on with all*

the things they did to you, and your long, hard struggle to return—as well as what changes you have noticed now that you are back—would you tell us about the movement you had in North Carolina that upset the white power structure so?

WILLIAMS: Well, by now I have one charge for trying to get integration and another charge for trying to get separation. But at that time, I was fighting for integration. I was the local president of the NAACP down in Union County, North Carolina. We had a long series of struggles with the white power structure for the six years I was president. You see, all the while I had advocated a policy of armed self-defense. Also, I had been a candidate for mayor. Now, that's not considered very much now, but in those days they didn't even do that in Northern towns. Besides, we had our own militia.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *When was that?*

WILLIAMS: As far back as 1957, when we spent the summer in foxholes behind sandbags. We had steel helmets. We had obtained gas masks. And we had a better communication system than they have now. In fact, we had better organized self-defense forces than they have now. This was too much for the white power structure. They felt they had to make an example of me.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Still, we remember you saying once that "violence and turmoil*

without strategy and meaningful goals and objectives amount to fruitless energy" inasmuch as the oppressor is organized and knows what he wants. What were you and your forces fighting for in 1957 and around the time of the Montgomery bus boycott?

WILLIAMS: First, we had started to fight for an end to *all* forms of racial discrimination. But we came out with a ten-point program which included all of what the passive resistance movement was asking for, such as access to food facilities, buses and public toilets. We asked that the white racists abolish all discrimination in the educational system. We asked for fair employment. We asked for equal rights to receive welfare aid from the Welfare Department, and equal Aid to Dependent Children. This also is not considered as anything outstanding now, but in much of the South then, they didn't give aid to black people; it was reserved for whites only. We fought for the right of black people to have this. We had to fight for the right of women to have support for their children, even when their husbands were in prison.

We also fought against brutality, and we tried to raise the standard of living for black people. Also, we tried to eradicate race discrimination in medical facilities. This antagonized the power structure no end, and it went all the way to Washington.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Could you tell us about one of the cases that went to Washington?*

WILLIAMS: Well, on one occasion we stopped an urban renewal program.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *That far back?*

WILLIAMS: Yes, we got a dose of urban renewal early, when it first came out. They came through the community where we lived, part of the black community, the section where 90 per cent of the black people or more owned their own homes. Some had homes worth as much as thirty-five thousand dollars in terms of what money meant there then. On the other hand, there was another section of the black community where they didn't even

have indoor toilets. The urban renewal bypassed the houses that didn't have indoor toilets and went through the community with the \$35,000 homes. These they condemned for urban renewal. You see, this also was where the political strength of the black community and the militancy and the voters were and where they could afford and had the guns.

Well, it so happens that about this time, when President Eisenhower was visiting India as the guest of Nehru, he made a big pronouncement there that he and the United States wanted all of the people of Asia to have decent housing and food. We saw this as an opportunity and sent a telegram to Prime Minister Nehru (who had been a guest of the NAACP and knew what it meant) and asked him to please convey the message to Mr. Eisenhower. We signed it as the NAACP.

We expected, somewhat apprehensively, that Mr. Eisenhower would go into his theories to call it a fraud. And we expected him to really jump us when he got back. But a strange thing happened. When Eisenhower came back to this country, he personally called an Afro-American named Dr. Snowden, who was working in housing, and asked him to contact me and to assure us that he was just as interested in our homes as in the people of Asia, and to rest assured that there wouldn't be any urban renewal in that community until the law had been fully complied with. He said to let him know if I had any problem. Actually, it was carried in the press, the *Afroamerican*. He had made a special call from the White House. That stopped the urban renewal program dead in its tracks.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What ever happened to it?*

WILLIAMS: That's been over ten years ago, and it just bogged down and was finished in its tracks. But the local officials have never forgiven me for that. We were always embarrassing them. We had invited students, exchange students from Japan and Britain, and correspondence journalists from overseas. We invited them into the

community and gave them tours, taking them into the homes of the poverty-stricken people so that they could see how the black people live in America. This also became a source of embarrassment to the United States that they never forgot. Plus, we had armed people, and we had a lot of clashes.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *That was prior to the college student non-violent sit-in movement, which most people know to have originated in your state, North Carolina. But most don't know that you anticipated the sit-in movement.*

WILLIAMS: The sit-ins started across the country with the students in 1960, and we had started as far back as 1957. Then, too, we were demanding more than the breakdown of barriers to Jim Crow public facilities, as we said earlier.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *It's apparent why they would try to frame and lynch you. But how did you manage to get away?*

WILLIAMS: Well, at that time I went through Canada; from the United States to Canada; and through Mexico into Cuba. Add to that the fact that not only did I leave North Carolina; they had an all-points alarm issued by the FBI. And they had told the local people. In fact, they had them waiting at the courthouse, a mob waiting for me, thinking it would be a matter of hours before the great FBI would catch me and return me to that town. Of course, if they had been waiting there at the courthouse until now, they would have been dead. It was also a source of embarrassment to the FBI. Not only that, they were running all over the country searching homes, contacting people I knew all over the country. They had assigned five hundred FBI men. I had been in Cuba for quite a while. In fact, the reason I decided to let them know I was in Cuba was that a lot of my friends were saying that I should tell them I was in Cuba so that they would stop coming to their homes and hounding them.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *You were in Cuba about*

five years, then left for China. Why did you leave Cuba?

WILLIAMS: Well, I had some political differences with the party. And as a result, I left and went to China. There wasn't any hostility, or any personal feelings. The whole thing had to do with black nationalism. We had differences on the race problem in the United States. The Party maintained that it was strictly a class issue and that once the class problem had been solved through a socialist administration, racism would be abolished. I think racism encompasses more than just class struggle. I believe now that it is a part of the American way of life. It's a part of American psychology and the mentality of America; and a change in the system will not abolish racism. As a result, I was told that they couldn't support black nationalism. But they always treated me quite well, even up to the time I left. As an individual, everything possible was done to make my life comfortable. Still, I couldn't see any need of being in exile if I couldn't conduct some type of struggle. So I left Cuba and went into China.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *But even when you were in Cuba, you were trying to return to the United States to conduct that struggle.*

WILLIAMS: Yes; I had told the Cuban officials when I first went to Cuba that I would return as soon as I possibly could. Actually, I made an effort to return to the States in 1965. But the State Department refused to give me a travel document. And at that time, they had just issued passports to all of the Communist Party leaders who were under indictment, including Gus Hall. The Supreme Court had handed down a decision that no American citizen can be denied a passport. I discovered that there was a difference in their attitude toward Communists and black nationalists. I was a black nationalist, so it was impossible at that time for me to get any kind of travel document from the United States.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *How did you finally make it back?*

WILLIAMS: I lived in China for three years after that. Anyway, I left China on the way to the United States and stopped in Africa, so that from Tanzania I would be able to obtain a travel document. I had some difficulty there, in getting permission from the U. S. Treasury Department to bring my personal effects into the country. I was told at the U. S. Embassy that they might not want me in the United States. When I asked them why, they said that I was too hot. I told them that that was their problem.

In the beginning, they didn't want me in Tanzania, and had put pressure on the Tanzanian government to force me out. But I stayed there for six months, and when they discovered that I didn't want to stay in Tanzania but was on my way to the United States, they said that I could stay in Tanzania as long as I wanted to.

So, I got to England on the way back to the United States and was pulled out of the line in Customs and Immigration in the airport in London. First, these two men came up and flashed their identification. Said they were policemen and that they wanted to talk.

We went in the immigration room, where they said they were going to search me and my luggage. I asked them why was this necessary, and they said it was because my FBI, "because *your* FBI has informed us that you're carrying firearms and ammunition to the United States."

I asked them how many firearms and how much ammunition can you carry in a suitcase. So they started to search me. They took out my fountain pen and held it to my face and said they were going to open it and that if it exploded, I would be the first one to be killed.

They were rather nervous about it, and evidently believed what they had been told. Then they went through all of my luggage. Since they didn't find anything, they called the Immigration Airport Police. After they finished, another group came in — the Metropolitan Police — and went through the same procedure. When

they finished, another group came, and said it was the Criminal Investigation Department.

Through all of that, I was asking them what did they have to do with it, inasmuch as I was in flight to another country. Also, the British Embassy in Tanzania had told me I wouldn't need a visa in transit. Still, they kept me there for three hours, late in the afternoon, with different ones searching me and trying to decide what they were going to do.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What did they decide to do?*

WILLIAMS: Finally, they said they didn't have any place for me to stay that night (my flight wasn't due out until 10 o'clock the next day). That was the only flight daily from London to Detroit. Then they said that because they didn't have any place for me to stay, I would have to go to Pentonville.

When we arrived at this place, about 14 miles across London, I told the man, "This looks like a prison." He said that it was. I asked him: "What about my leaving on the plane tomorrow morning?" He said: "You stand about as much chance missing that plane as the Queen of England" (meaning that he wanted me out of England).

But the next day, when the time came for me to leave, nobody at all came to pick me up. I lay in this prison incommunicado for three days.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *How did you finally get word out?*

WILLIAMS: It happened that a young African was in there. He was being released one day when I was waiting in the reception room in hopes that somebody would come and get me. But they never did show.

Anyway, this young man was coming out of prison, and the warden asked him if he had all of his personal belongings he had checked in, and he said no. What was he missing? "A Mao book" (talking about

a little red book of quotations from Chairman Mao).

The man became indignant and reached under the desk and got the book and threw it up on the counter. Then he pointed to me, and said: "There is one of your buddies from China. He's a Maoist, too." Of course, he meant this in a sarcastic way. But he didn't know that that let me know that this was a reliable brother.

So I turned to the African and asked him if he was going out. He said yes. I asked him if he would tell the people in the black community that I had been taken off a plane to the United States and was being held incommunicado. He said he would. So I told him my name and where I was going. At that point, they tried to push him out of the room past me and close the door. I put my foot in the door.

Then the warden told the guards to take him back and lock him up. He was saying, as they were taking him away: "Don't worry, brother; I'm going to tell it as soon as I get out."

BLACK SCHOLAR: *How long did they keep him in?*

WILLIAMS: I really don't know. But the next day the news had gotten out. That was when a group came to see me in prison—a sister and two young brothers. They came in and said they represented the Black Panthers of England. Then they turned to the warden, who was standing with them, and said: "We're going to free our brother, either peacefully or with force. It's up to you to decide."

This shook the man, and I myself was a bit surprised, because I didn't know they had a Black Panther organization in Britain. Least of all, that they were so militant and outspoken. It turned out that they had also contacted other black groups and the outspoken faction of the Asian population; also the British Civil Liberties Union and some other white liberals.

All of these groups started demonstrations. But in the meantime, I had gone on a hunger strike, which I maintained for five

days. Because I didn't announce that I was on a hunger strike, they didn't take the first two days seriously. They merely brought in the food and I didn't eat it. I didn't eat and I didn't drink any water.

So, on the third day, they got worried because I hadn't taken any fluid. They moved me out of the prison into the hospital and brought in two doctors to examine me. The doctors said, well, a person could make it without food for many days, but not without water.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Most persons who go on hunger strikes take some kind of fluids. Why did you decide to drink no water?*

WILLIAMS: Well, I never believed in this passive idea of a hunger strike. I have always assumed that if a person went on a hunger strike, that meant everything. Later I found out from the British officials that that was why they became so alarmed.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What did they do when they became alarmed?*

WILLIAMS: First, they sent a prison chaplain to see me, and he asked if my refusal to eat was due to religious belief. I told him, no, it was due to principle. I also told him that I remembered reading about how they had taken black people into captivity as slaves—how his forefathers took my forefathers into captivity. And they fed them. They fed them just enough to keep them alive. And also they subjugated them. But I couldn't understand how a man could stay alive under captivity. So I told him that he and the rulers of Britain might be the same as their forefathers, but I am not the same as my forefathers. I told them that they couldn't take me into captivity like a beast in a cage; that they would either have to kill me or set me free. They would eventually have a dead body on their hands in any case, because I wasn't going to submit to their captivity.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What charges had they lodged against you to justify or rationalize imprisonment?*

WILLIAMS: They had openly admitted that they didn't have any charges against me, therefore no reason to confine me. I told them and the chaplain that I didn't see anything humane about taking away a man's freedom, without reason for deprivation, and then pretending to be merciful to the point of bringing him food. If your opinion of him is such as to cause you to deprive him of his liberty, then you should be willing to deprive him of his life—without cause.

This had them a little shaken up. So I told the chaplain that I didn't want anything from England, that England didn't owe me a thing, but my freedom. And they couldn't take my freedom away and give me something else.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Aside from your hunger strike, what finally made them give in, or give up, on keeping you in captivity?*

WILLIAMS: Well, the blacks (West Indians, blacks who were born in Britain, and the Africans) were demonstrating around the jail and at TWA, with whom I had a ticket to Detroit. Also with them were Asians and white liberals. The demonstrations were very big, and they started each night. You could hear them through the walls, over the walls and into the jail.

So the warden came in and said the reason they were holding me imprisoned was because TWA had refused to fly me out of Britain. I replied that I had already paid for the ticket, that they could have denied me the right to fly at the point of origin, but could not stop me in mid-flight and dump me in a foreign land unless I had done something to warrant it. They didn't have any charges against me, and when they sold me the ticket that was a contract. So I told him that he had better get in touch with TWA and tell them that it's going to cost them a million dollars.

Finally, that afternoon, two representatives came from TWA. I told them the same thing, and demanded that they read that section of the code relating to the

protection of the passenger, since they had read one protecting the carrier. They became rather nervous and left.

Then, on the fourth day, they came in the late afternoon about five o'clock and said that I was leaving. I asked them how could I be leaving when the plane left at ten in the morning. At the airport they finally told me I was being sent on a flight to Cairo. I said Cairo, where? They said Cairo, Egypt. I told them I had just passed through Cairo and had no need to go back; that my ticket was paid for and called for the fact that I was being transported to Detroit, Michigan. They repeated that TWA was afraid to carry me out. I asked why, and they said that TWA was afraid I would hijack the plane and endanger their passengers. I told them I had already been every place that people hijack planes to.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *As a matter of fact, you once issued a statement from China to black Americans, stating that: "Aircraft hijacking should be discontinued among black militants."*

WILLIAMS: I remember. Plus, where I wanted to go I already had a ticket to; so it wouldn't make sense for me to hijack a plane to Detroit. Anyway, I asked them if they weren't afraid I would hijack the plane to Cairo, since I didn't want to go there, to get to Detroit, where I wanted to go. While they were debating it, one of the service trucks rammed the airplane out on the field and the airplane was delayed. So they took me back to prison.

The following day, the fifth day, they brought me back again to the airport. I asked them where was I going, and they said Cairo. I then asked them if they had brought the undertaker. They wanted to know what the undertaker had to do with it, and I said because he was the only one who would be able to put me on that plane to Cairo.

He informed me that he was under orders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to use force if necessary. I explained that

force could get my body on the plane, but not me. They had lined up about fourteen policemen along the hall, while the man came over to repeat his orders to use force. on the table, and asked if he was ready to on the table, asking if he was ready to start. He looked at me and he looked at the other men, and I told him once more that he would have to kill me in London to get me on that plane.

So they went out into the corridor for a caucus. Then he made a phone call and came back and said they wouldn't have to use force if I would agree to go back to prison. I said I had been in prison all during my stay in England, so they took me back.

Then the doctor and the priest came back again and asked me if I would please accept some juice. They even suggested that the church could supply the juice and my food, so I wouldn't have to accept it from the prison. I replied that the church couldn't feed me in a British prison.

Finally, on the sixth day, they came and told me: "You are leaving." I asked them where to and they said to Detroit. I asked them how, and they said they would take me on a ship. The shipping line had agreed to take me. I told them I had an aircraft ticket and wasn't going on a ship. So then they said, well, if you agree to let the CIA escort you (some man in the Embassy from the CIA in London). I told them, no, I would not submit to any American arrest on foreign soil; Americans didn't have any jurisdiction over me there. So, finally, they said that TWA had agreed to provide a private plane which would fly me to Detroit with my lawyer. By now, people were demonstrating at the U.S. Embassy as well, and some of the Black Panthers of England had broken into the Embassy grounds and threatened the American officials.

Well, the next morning, because the people were planning a big demonstration at the airport at the time I was to leave, they drove me straight up to the plane, skirting around the airport. They had my

lawyer waiting there, and another black man unknown to me in African dress. He started shaking my hand as I came up and introduced himself and followed me on the plane. Later, he said he was a vice president of TWA, and began to explain that TWA was the most liberal airline, with more blacks working for them, including black stewardesses and one or two black pilots, a record he called progressive. He said he hoped I would be considerate of TWA, and I replied that I didn't see where their policy was considerate of me.

With nobody on the plane (it flew a special route across the North Pole), they said the trip (with full regular staff on the plane) was costing them twenty thousand dollars worth of services for a five hundred dollar ticket. I said that was their hard luck. But they brought us on in.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What happened when you got back to the United States?*

WILLIAMS: I was met at the airport in Detroit by the FBI, arrested and taken to the Federal Building for fingerprinting. While the FBI man was fingerprinting my right hand, another man came up and slipped a subpoena in my left. He said he was a U.S. Marshal and this was a subpoena from the Eastland Committee, the Internal Security Committee. After I left court, I had to go and set bond and then I got a subpoena to Washington. It took three of them before I was forced to go down there. It wasn't a federal offense, but the FBI had gotten into it because they were trying to help the North Carolina officials. They said I was a fugitive from justice—a fugitive from injustice.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Yes, we noticed in the Detroit Free Press this morning that some college students at the Earth Day protest here at Michigan State yesterday called Governor Millikan a "racist pig" because he agreed to extradite you to face kidnapping charges in North Carolina.*

WILLIAMS: You see, like the rest of the power structure, it was more than they can digest—the fact that I not only left

the United States, but went from Canada, Mexico and Cuba, to China and also Vietnam, through the Soviet Union. Their idea, their feeling, is that a nigger not only was able to escape, but he went abroad. And abroad I was treated like I might have been the head of state, the head of the United States. In fact, I was able to go places their people couldn't go.

As a result of this, all of the reactionaries in the government developed an intense hatred for me. Everything that happened in this country while I was abroad they blamed on me. They claimed I was involved somehow in Watts, the incident there, in Detroit, and in Harlem; in most of the uprisings in this country, according to J. Edgar Hoover.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *How do you suppose that the uprisings in Watts, Harlem, Detroit, Newark and the like began?*

WILLIAMS: These things came out of the community. I think they were spontaneous. I learned about them through the newspapers. Also, they had many conspiracies going—the so-called Statue of Liberty plot, the so-called plot on Roy Wilkins and all of these people. I learned about it through the newspapers like other people.

But they still always kept this up, because of their hatred, and because they wanted to try to tie the black movement up with the Communist movement abroad. This is another reason I wanted to come home; it's knocked the blocks out from under J. Edgar Hoover and much of his efforts to link the black movement in this country with the international Communist movement. So now they don't have me as a link to try to push this further.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *We remember reading a copy of a so-called secret FBI report about two years ago (which generally didn't seem very current at the time—or accurate before that) where there appeared to be a kind of fixation on you as an "extremist."*

WILLIAMS: It is traditional Americanism for the white racist power structure to brand all who work uncompromisingly for black lib-

eration and social justice as extremists. There can be no such thing as "extreme" methods employed against a beastly oppressor in a noble enterprise, undertaken on behalf of social justice and the liberation of wretched slaves. America was founded on the extreme belief that cut-throats, prostitutes, criminals and social scum from Europe had a right to slaughter and massacre an indigenous people in a white crusade of extending "Christian civilization." America even has the audacity to piously refer to these original land grabbers and thug killers as "blue bloods." This is really the extreme of extremism.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Right on. Many of the things you were doing in the 1950's—then regarded as extreme—have now grown popular, among blacks at least. Since you've returned, what changes have you noticed?*

WILLIAMS: There have been some changes, but they are mixed, like a chart with ups and downs, zigs and zags, some things slightly better, some worse. At best, it is a patchwork progress—if you can call it progress at all. I don't think anything has really helped the great masses of black people.

The greatest change has been in the attitudes of blacks, particularly the so-called black bourgeoisie. Many of them have become more conscious of what's going on—they've been forced to—and are more willing to identify with our people. More race pride is especially apparent among our youth, more co-operation and more militancy.

When I left, there was a big nonviolent, pacifist movement. I was just the opposite of that. Of course I believe in pacifist and passive tactics when these things can be fruitful; I believe in any method that will work. But I don't believe that a man should subject himself passively to the violence of oppressors and of tyrants without a violent response in the effort to defend himself. Most people believed that way—or so they said—but they merely whispered it and cowered under, they said, for fear of losing white liberal funds. So

in those days they condemned me; including, to my surprise, a lot of today's most outspoken advocates of self defense.

Back then the going thing was what the white man had told them: to turn the other cheek and appeal to the conscience of the white oppressor. I knew that you couldn't do that; you can't appeal to the conscience of a beast, when you're dealing with savages and brutes and tyrants. So this is one major thing that I see. And it is a change that has influenced the black bourgeoisie and the power structure, though the power structure lately has become even more repressive. But in some ways the fact that the black man was no longer passive and would fight caused the power structure to give more attention to the black man.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What has been the outcome of this new black awakening, set against increased white oppression, for the black liberation movement?*

WILLIAMS: Well, in the wake of the uprisings, the black man had the power structure pretty much on the run—had he been well enough organized and persistent in his goals (really understood what he wanted and pressed hard for it), but I think that we lost the initiative.

As a result, we are entering dangerous times when the government is seizing the initiative, planning apparently to use repression rather than eliminate the social ills causing the conflict. More and more rights are being taken away and more and more rights given to the police. This is leading to a police state in which a black man is going to be on the bottom rung of the ladder. This is all in the name of "law and order" for the sake of "peace in the streets." These are very difficult and crucial times that we are facing, as the repression is going to grow sharper.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What can black people do to prepare for and offset this increasing repression?*

WILLIAMS: One thing, I've noticed too much bickering, too much conflict, among

our people. I think this is an outgrowth of the new militancy which too often condemns the so-called Uncle Tom without trying to win him over. The Uncle Tom today may be the militant tomorrow. This is no time for superficial divisions among us. The cause of our survival dictates that we unite all of our people and ask aid from wherever we can get it. Those who wrap themselves in the raiment of self-righteous political sages and arrogantly proclaim themselves the true believers and saints of purity are the antithesis of social progress and transformation. There are many shades in the spectrum of color. To limit one's scope of perception simply to black and white is to become a victim of stupidity. We must also guard against being erroneously swayed by the Fabian histrionics of put-up black Marxists whose political line just so happens to coincide with the politics of the CIA.

At this historic juncture in our struggle for survival, human rights and self-determination, progressive black nationalism offers the greatest hope for unity of purpose. Progressive black nationalism is anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly capitalist and anti-racist. It stresses deliverance from both the white man's tyranny and his paternalism, and it can be a powerful cohesive factor that motivates our people in a common cause towards a common goal.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Is it possible to have any forms of co-operative struggle with other oppressed groups?*

WILLIAMS: Yes, it is essential for us to co-operate with and solicit support from other sectors of the deprived, but to relinquish our right to act in our own best interest for survival and well-being is criminal default on our part. We must collectively be ourselves. We collectively must lead ourselves. We must collectively advance ourselves. We must collectively preserve ourselves and must collectively respect and love ourselves. Without concerted action, our cause is lost.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *You mentioned that pro-*

gressive black nationalism is, among other things, anti-monopoly capitalism. What do you think about so-called black capitalism?

WILLIAMS: It's one of the things creating disunity and is a part of the establishment's effort to recognize the leaders of certain groups. No doubt, black capitalism and minority enterprise will grease the potbellies of a selected few tokens, but the vast majority of our people will remain the victims of vicious and cruel Americanism. In fact, beginning with the Reconstruction Era, there was ushered in a new hope for the so-called emancipated black slaves of America. Infantile black capitalism was encouraged. The power structure promised equality before the law, black suffrage and equitable participation in American society. The brevity of that new mood of democracy should be a tragic lesson of history. The American record speaks for itself. Is it any more righteous now than it was then when those celebrated, "liberty-loving" racist gentlemen hypocritically fashioned the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Capitalism is ruthless, cunning, swash-buckling, murderous and cut-throat. To expect black capitalism and minority enterprise to be dished out on a gold-plated serving platter is tantamount to hoping to lay claim to the mythological pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *After that, it would be superfluous to ask you about Nixon's new policy of "benign neglect." But let's go back to the matter of unification for a moment. What can we do towards achieving unification?*

WILLIAMS: Well, the first thing is that people who have a common destiny must develop a common outlook and common solutions to problems. We hear a lot of talk about "black revolutionaries"; but as black revolutionaries, our first task must be to revolutionize ourselves, transform ourselves. That is the most difficult task of a revolutionary because, otherwise, a revolutionary can't bring about change. Revolution means change. But no change can be brought

about by a person until he has changed himself, is transformed inwardly. Also, the change in others can have some influence on ours. So, the biggest thing I see is selfishness. We've got to fight selfishness, ego. And we've got to fight it to the point that we'll stop feeling that we've got to have the final word; that if we don't have the final word, then let everything go down the drain and be destroyed.

We also have got to stop feeling that we've just got to be the leader, that if I am not leader, then we don't need one.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *This seems to be the problem in Africa, too.*

WILLIAMS: Yes, there are far too many states in Africa—little vest pockets. Africa has been Balkanized. The African people are fond of each other and can get along, but the leaders are the ones who, in conjunction with the imperialists, are responsible for the condition. All of them will say that they want African unity and to create a united Africa. Then each one feels that he should be the leader of a united Africa.

That's also how I see our movement in the United States. Instead of devoting ourselves to our salvation, everybody talks about unity and wants unity, but the leaders do not want unity, or a united front, unless it's under their direction.

That's also one of the reasons why I have come back into the country. I don't feel like it's necessary for me to be a leader or to lead somebody. And I've made no effort. In fact, I've tried to get out of as much leadership as possible. I think we have to start some place. So, if all of us start setting that example, the sooner we can get down to what needs to be done.

We also need to have more communication, more exchanges, to talk and discuss our problems. Forget about who the leader is and get down to the problem. The idea is that we must be willing to fit in wherever we can, wherever we will, wherever we're needed, wherever the situation dictates. If we don't reach that stage, we'll never make it. The situation will work out

the leadership. I think we need collective leadership, anyway.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Speaking of the need to have more communication and the parallel problems of egotism in Africa and Afro-America, what about the problem of communication between blacks on the two continents? We remember your thousand-mile-plus motorcycle ride across some of the most rugged terrain in Africa.*

WILLIAMS: Afro-Americans must make a determined and conscious effort to counteract the imperialist white man's propaganda in Africa. Our people must strive for closer relations with the African people and their devoted leaders. We must exert special effort to spread the truth about Americanism as it relates to black people. More of our people must endeavor to visit Africa and to make contact with the youth. We must stir ourselves on behalf of counteracting the man's well-planned and financed effort to alienate our people. While we concentrate great effort on improving our relations with our African brothers, we should not neglect other sympathizers and potential allies in other countries. We must strive to offset the racist power structure's distorted image of our people and our predicament in savage America. We must become more conscious of the relativity of the black man's problems in America to those of the deprived peoples of the world who are our natural allies. We must give more attention to foreign relations and the winning of friends to our side.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Further, in that connection, there was something you said a while back about accepting aid wherever we can. But today the black movement appears to be in a quandary or dilemma over whether to accept money from white sources or even, on occasion, whether to work for a white institution. What is your view on this matter?*

WILLIAMS: When we can get aid without strings attached, we should accept aid when and wherever we can find it. I don't

think we should become so belligerent and hostile that we say we can't accept aid from whitey, or honky, or whatever they want to call him. I don't think that's a good strategy, and I don't think it's a revolutionary one. If you're trying to win a battle, you must concentrate everything on that battle.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *What about the problem of white allies? That's a much debated issue.*

WILLIAMS: Well, you have to realize that there are all kinds of allies—temporary allies and permanent allies. Some are only going to go so far, and you have to know that. On the other hand, you can neutralize a potential enemy, making him an enemy you won't have to fight. I think we must adopt that attitude and start looking at our problems from there. We've got to brace ourselves for some hard days ahead.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *You failed to comment upon the contention among brothers over whether, when they are employed by a white firm, let alone a government agency, they are "working for the man."*

WILLIAMS: It is erroneous to think that one can isolate oneself completely from institutions of a social and political system that exercises power over the environment in which he resides. Self-imposed and premature isolation, initiated by the oppressed against the organs of a tyrannical establishment, militates against revolutionary movements dedicated to radical change. It is a grave error for militant and just-minded youth to reject struggle-serving opportunities to join the man's government services, police forces, peace corps and vital organs of the power structure. Militants should become acquainted with the methods of the oppressor. Meaningful change can be more thoroughly effectuated by militant pressure from within as well as without. We can obtain valuable know-how from the oppressor. Struggle is not all violence. Effective struggle requires tactics, plans, analysis and a highly sophisticated application of mental aptness. The forces of oppression and tyranny have perfected a

highly articulate system of infiltration for undermining and frustrating the efforts of the oppressed in trying to upset the unjust status quo. To a great extent, the power structure keeps itself informed as to the revolutionary activity of freedom fighters. With the threat of extermination looming menacingly before black Americans, it is pressingly imperative that our people enter the vital organs of the establishment. Infiltrate the man's institutions.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *You frequently refer to youth, and you have long been an idol to many of them on college campuses. For instance, as early as 1967, students at Howard University demanded and got your film, "Robert Williams in Red China," and your book, "Negroes with Guns," placed in the university library against the administration's will. What is your advice to black youth?*

WILLIAMS: There is so much. But aside from what I have been saying—which generally would apply to all age groups—it is imperative that revolutionary youth undergo personal and moral transformation. There is a need for a stringent revolutionary code of moral ethics. Revolutionaries are instruments of righteousness. Violence applied in the pursuit of justice is what distinguishes revolutionary violence from that which is committed by tyrants and villainous thugs. Clean up the ghetto. Stop fratricidal warfare and conflict. Discourage the agents provocateurs, Judases and criminal elements. Prepare for a struggle of survival.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *Speaking of youth, now that black studies have been largely co-opted and corrupted, some have claimed that it is no longer a revolutionary goal. Do we need black studies?*

WILLIAMS: Black studies, yes; but what black studies? Some black studies are no improvement over white studies when racist slanderers of blacks are allowed to select new material that will have the same effect and serve the same purpose as the old. It must be borne in mind that a great

portion of material produced by black intellectuals under the aegis of the white power structure is anti-black and pro-white. White publishers are the most forceful advocates of Americanism.

Black studies yes, but they should be inspiring and uplifting. Such studies should encourage wholesome family ties, morality, dignity, courage, devotion to freedom and high ideals. They should serve to raise the intellectual level of all who participate and should eulogize the good attributes of our people rather than serve as a surreptitious method of propagating intellectual pornography. It is a first magnitude shame that at this late date of our poignant and turbulent sojourn in oppressive America, even some black nationalists still permit white racists to define what constitutes black history, black leadership, black morality, classical black literature, art, music, politics, aspirations, alienation and black capitalism. I think we have had enough of the white man's version of *white* studies. Why accept his version of black studies?

Also, we've got to do more than talk about what is not relevant in black studies and in academic life. We've got to start talking and thinking about what is relevant and what is not relevant in the Movement, particularly insofar as what we discuss and what we plan, what our ambitions are as a people. Also, we have to start thinking along the lines of survival, because the white man is going to be very desperate.

BLACK SCHOLAR: *On survival and the white man, what is your conclusion about the future of this country?*

WILLIAMS: I think the situation is going to get much worse, starting this summer. And I think that somewhere in 1970, the United States will undergo a drastic change. It will never be the same again. It may not be completely destroyed. It may not fall. But it's going to be obvious to everybody by the end of this year that it's on its way out and that something else is going to have to be substituted.