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# 'What Colour are You?': FBI Counter-Intelligence and the Targeting of White Hate and Black Extremist Groups in the 1960s

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‘What Colour are You?’: FBI Counter-Intelligence and the Targeting of White Hate and Black  
Extremist Groups in the 1960s

by

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## *Abstract*

From 1954 until 1972, the Federal Bureau of Investigations operated a sustained counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) against subversive organizations including Black Extremist groups like the Black Panther Party and White Hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. With a mandate to neutralize the activities and minimize the risk of violence posed by the targeted organizations, COINTELPRO was one of the largest and most invasive domestic counter-intelligence programs ever run in the United States.

Considering the size and breath of targets identified by COINTELPRO, this study examines the extent to which the Bureau demonstrated differential behaviour when targeting Black Extremist groups versus White Hate groups and explores why such differential behaviour existed. Based upon an analysis of COINTELPRO documents, the results suggest that despite having the same mandate to neutralize threats posed by subversive organizations, the interpretation of neutralization was distinctly different for White Hate groups versus Black Extremism. In COINTELPRO-White Hate operations, the neutralization of threat was achieved through controlling and containing the activities of the target organization. In COINTELPRO-Black Extremism operations, however, neutralization was achieved through eliminating the target organization. This fundamental difference in how Bureau agents interpreted their mandate naturally created a difference in operational methods and outcomes that are also addressed in this study.

Explaining the differential behaviour by the Bureau lies in understanding the relationship between the targeted organizations, the purpose of COINTELPRO as a program, and the political orientation of the Bureau during this time period. While Black Extremist organizations such as the Black Panther Party firmly fit within the established image of subversive organizations due to

their political orientation, White Hate organizations like the Klan did not, and as a result, were never considered as substantial a threat within the Bureau. This ambivalence towards the political orientation of White Hate organizations yielded COINTELPRO operations that not only failed to fully neutralize the threat posed by these groups, but allowed alternate, and potentially more dangerous, White Hate organizations to flourish well beyond the cancellation of COINTELPRO in 1972.

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent research by the author, Katelyn Stieva.

*To my Family-*

*Thank you for your constant love and support.*

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## *List of Abbreviations*

A&T	North Carolina Agriculture and Technology College
AAUO	Afro-American Unity Organization
ACK	Association of Carolina Klans
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AGK	Association of Georgia Klans
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
ANP	American Nazi Party
BPP	Black Panther Party
CKKKK	Confederate Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
COINTELPRO	Counter-Intelligence Program
CWP	Communist Workers Party
DID	Domestic Intelligence Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GAPP	Greensboro Association for Poor People
GID	General Intelligence Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
GPD	Greensboro Police Department
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
LHM	Letterhead Memo (a document sent by the Bureau)
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
NCCF	National Committee to Combat Fascism
NCKKKK	North Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
NSC	National Security Council
RA	Resident Agencies
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee
SOG	Seat of Government (Administration and Senior Leadership of the Bureau)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UKA	United Klans of America, Inc.
U.S. Klan	United States Klans, Inc.
URF	United Racist Front
WVO	Worker's Viewpoint Organization



History is not just the stuff that happens by accident. We are the products of the history that our ancestors chose- if we're white. If we are Black, we are the product of the history that our ancestors most likely did not choose. Yet, here we all are together, the products of that set of choices and we have to understand that in order to escape from it.

Dr. Kevin Gannon, *13<sup>th</sup>*

## *Introduction*

### *Understanding COINTELPRO and Its Targets*

In December 1968, an official at the Federal Bureau of Investigation proposed a press release entitled "The Black Klan" as part of the ongoing FBI efforts to disrupt the activities of White Hate groups and Black Power groups. One statement from the proposed release reads:

The Klan is on the rise again. Once more we are haunted by the spectre of night riders, only this time the color of the skin beneath the sheets has been changed from white to black...so, once again we listen to the haunting refrain of the Klan thrusting its repugnant image in our faces. But this time it is a "black klan" that is emerging. Instead of "White Power" cries, we hear "Black Power, Kill Whitey" and "get rid of the pig".<sup>1</sup>

To anyone unfamiliar with the work of the Bureau in the 1960s, and their expansive counter-intelligence programs, this comparison between "White Power" and "Black Power" seems a bit odd, and out of place considering how history remembers these movements and the organizations associated with them. Portrayed as polar opposites in the 1960s battle for Civil Rights, both White Hate and Black Power are movements largely associated with violence and explicit racism. As a result of this legacy, both have become marginalized in modern political discourse, and relegated to discussions of their historical past.

However, despite the Bureau's confidence when they wrote in 1968 "our country will not be run by white or black extremists and in the foreseeable future, the black klan will also disappear from our midst, leaving the same bad taste that the white Klan left", both White Power and Black Power have remained a part of the American political

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<sup>1</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 172, 12/17/68.

landscape since the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Tracing the roots of these movements is not simple, as both emerged as responses to economic, social and political upheaval in the United States, and it is important to recognize that, though both are often understood in the context of the Civil Rights era, both also have causes that pre-date the Civil Rights movement.<sup>3</sup> Understood within the context of Civil Rights, the majority of academics would argue that the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision was the impetus for the rise of these political movements. Both White Hate and Black Power are considered reactionary in nature, with White Hate reacting to the *Brown* decision and the federal government's orders to desegregate schools without haste. Black Power, on the other hand, was a reaction to the failure of state governments to not only desegregate schools but also the failure of the peaceful Civil Rights activism to gain significant traction and results by the mid-1960s even in the face of legislative victories such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act.<sup>4</sup>

Defining exactly what activities constituted a representation of White Power and Black Power, and who belonged to such movements is difficult in some cases, as every academic holds their own definition of what these social movements were, and what

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<sup>2</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 175, 12/17/68.

<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the origins of White and Black Power pre-dating the 1960s Civil Rights movement falls within the body of scholarship known as the Long Civil Rights Movement, which originates with historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. This approach to understanding Civil Rights history is gaining more attention in recent years, and for a fuller understanding of the Long Civil Rights Movement approach, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past", *Journal of American History* (2005), 1233-1263.

<sup>4</sup> The origins of the phrase "White Power" are hard to trace in academic literature. A more common term used to describe the mass mobilization of whites in response to *Brown* is mass resistance. For summaries of the white response to the *Brown* decision and the origins of mass resistance, see Clive Webb, ed. *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), and James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Meanwhile, for a discussion of the transition away from peaceful Civil Rights activism towards Black Power, see Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006, Third Edition*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), and Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power and the Meredith March Against Fear*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).

goals they sought to achieve. While many of the finer details are still debated, there is a general consensus among historians that the primary actor in the White Hate movement during the 1960s was the Ku Klux Klan, particularly in the American South. At the head of the largest Klan organization at the time was Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton, whose United Klans of America, INC (UKA) was connected to the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham Alabama and the murder of Civil Rights activist Viola Liuzzo in 1965. In addition to the UKA, there were many other Klan groups across the country responsible for countless acts of violence and intimidation against Civil Rights activists. Similarly, there is also academic consensus about the primary actors of the Black Power movement. Originating with Stokely Carmichael, and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Power soon became to be the rally cry of the Black Panther Party, which is where Black Power gained much of its militant legacy. Unlike White Power, which was imbedded with rhetoric of white supremacy and white rights, the meaning of Black Power was more complicated. According to one of its early proponents, Floyd McKissick, Black Power did not translate to white exclusion, but rather focused on uniting all oppressed people in the struggle towards equality.<sup>5</sup> However, critics of the Black Power movement would argue that at its core, Black Power was no better than white supremacy as it elevated one race above the other and was founded upon the exclusion of people simply due to the colour of their skin.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As quoted in Marable, 92. McKissick, the first Black student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Law School, would later go on to lead the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), leading the organization towards a more radical rhetoric.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, 306-307. This was the position taken by many within the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), including Roy Wilkins who served as the organization's Executive Director from 1955 until 1977. Wilkins expressed these views in his own writings; see Sondra K. Wilson, editor, *In Search of*

Within an environment that saw both White Power and Black Power fighting for public attention and political gains, the resultant clash of ideologies drew the attention of the President and those in the federal intelligence and law enforcement community, all of whom understood that some form of intervention was essential in order to rein in the violence and civil unrest gripping much of the nation. The responsibility for finding and implementing the government's response fell to the FBI, which elected to build upon previous counter-intelligence programs (COINTELPRO) in order to control and hopefully eliminate the violence and tension created by the existence of Black Power and White Power organizations. As a result, the Bureau launched COINTELPRO-White Hate in the fall of 1964 and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism in the summer of 1967.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the size and scope of COINTELPRO, it is relatively unknown by most except those who were involved, and scholars who study its legacy. Established in 1956 and shut down in 1971, COINTELPRO was designed to “expose, disrupt, and neutralize” any organization who appeared to pose a threat in American society.<sup>8</sup> The definition of what actually constituted a threat to the United States was left deliberately vague throughout COINTELPRO’s lifetime.<sup>9</sup> The

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*Democracy: The NAACP Writings of Names Weldon Johnson, Walter White and Roy Wilkins, 1920-1977*, (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1999) for excerpts of Wilkins writing on the subject.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to recognize that all COINTELPRO mandates were initiated individual of each other, which partially explains the three-year time gap between White Hate and Black Extremism. While the issue of violence perpetrated by White Hate and Black Extremist groups were undoubtedly exacerbated by the existents of the other group, COINTELPRO-White Hate and Black Extremism were launched individual in response to the growing threat that each group represented. In the case of Black Extremism, the Black Power movement which inspired organization such as the Black Panthers did no move to the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement until 1965-1966, and the Panthers were not founded as a national organization until 1967.

<sup>8</sup> See several different program introductions, such as FBI-White Hate part 1, pgs. 4-8, 9/2/64, and FBI-Black Extremism part 1, pgs. 3-5, 8/25/67.

<sup>9</sup> The constructions of threats in COINTELPRO operations will be addressed further on in this study, though the lack of consistency and formal structure does make it difficult to address specifically the process of threat construction as it depended greatly on the organization in question, and the broader political context surrounding the Bureau at the time. In the final report of the Church Committee, the Commission pointed to the vagueness of definitions as a key problem with COINTELPRO as it allowed the mandates to expand with almost no boundaries. See Select Committee to Study Government Operations Book II: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (26 April 1976), pgs. 47-48.

lack of a formal structure guiding the decision-making process as to new COINTELPRO mandates combined with the broad directive upon its creation, the Bureau was free to expand COINTELPRO to include dozens of organizations under specific mandates such as COINTELPRO-New Left, COINTELPRO- Socialist Workers Party, in addition to COINTELPRO-White Hate, and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, and to explore and expand the range of tactics they used against these organizations. That the FBI surveilled and attempted to destroy Black Power groups like the Panthers surprises relatively few, but what is more surprising is the extent to which the Bureau went to destroy and eliminate White Hate groups, specifically the Klan.

By the very nature of a counter-intelligence program, the activities of COINTELPRO remained hidden during its years of activity and even for some time after it was revealed to the public in 1971 by an information breach.<sup>10</sup> It was not until 1975-1976, during hearings for the Senate Commissioned Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (the Church Committee) that the full scope of COINTELPRO was revealed. In its final report, the Church Committee condemned COINTELPRO and its methods, concluding:

Many of the techniques used would be intolerable in a democratic society even if all the targets had been involved in violent activity, but COINTELPRO went far beyond that. The unexpressed major premise of the program was that a law

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<sup>10</sup> In what is a remarkable story, a team of eight individuals, calling themselves The Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI, infiltrated an FBI resident office in Media, which is just outside of Philadelphia, and stole thousands of documents. They then released them to the press over a span of several weeks. Public outcry over the information contained in those leaked documents was so great that COINTELPRO was cancelled shortly after. The 8 individuals involved, none of whom were employed by the Bureau or any other law enforcement organization, were never found, and only revealed themselves after the statute of limitations passed on their case; they never faced charges. For a full discussion of this event, see Betty Medsger, *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI*, (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

enforcement agency has the duty to do whatever is necessary to combat perceived threats to the existing social and political order.<sup>11</sup>

As revealing as this Senate Committee report is, it does leave many questions unanswered concerning COINTELPRO. Questions such as the efficacy of different counter-intelligence methods, the frequency of operations, and the extent to which the Bureau relied on local law enforcement have lingered since COINTELPRO was cancelled and have been the subject of several academic studies since the 1980s. However, one question that remains understudied and largely unanswered is the relationship between different COINTELPRO mandates, for example, what was the relationship between COINTELPRO-New Left and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism considering that the organizations targeted under these mandates shared many goals and often partnered together to achieve them? Given that COINTELPRO operated during the Civil Rights Era, and in the midst of great upheaval in race relations in the United States, a more provocative question might be to consider the relationship between COINTELPRO-White Hate and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism. This line of inquiry is made more intriguing when one considers that the Bureau during the Hoover era was heralded by many as a bastion for white conservatism, and often engaged in smear campaigns against Civil Rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr., and Viola Liuzzo.<sup>12</sup>

Focusing in on this relationship between the COINTELPRO White Hate and Black Extremism mandates, this study asks whether or not the nature and methods of FBI counter-

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<sup>11</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, United State Senate Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, (23 April 1976), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Both of these cases are well-established in the historical record, and in the case of Viola Liuzzo, who was murdered by Klan members, Hoover actually went on the record with press accusing Liuzzo of being a drug addict and committing adultery with Black men during her time in Alabama while her husband and children were at home in Detroit.

intelligence work shifted when directed towards White Hate versus Black Extremist groups and considers why such differential treatment may or may not have existed.

In selecting and answering this question, the hope is to cast light on an otherwise understudied subject area. While COINTELPRO is emerging as a focus for academics seeking to understand the role of federal agencies in mass domestic surveillance, rarely have academics focused on COINTELPRO as a tool for understanding the racial dimensions of counter-intelligence and surveillance programs.<sup>13</sup> Therefore selecting COINTELPRO-White Hate rather than COINTELPRO-New Left was a deliberate choice, as the New Left and Black Extremist organizations targeted under COINTELPRO forged a strong relationship, and frequently worked together. Furthermore, New Left organizations welcomed Blacks, Hispanics, and Puerto Ricans into their ranks, so in order to isolate the issue of race within the research it was essential to pick COINTELPRO mandates that ensured a clear racial division. Organizations targeted under COINTELPRO-White Hate, such as the klan, did not allow non-whites into their ranks, and similarly, organizations such as the Black Panther Party, identified under COINTELPRO-Black Extremism did not allow non-Blacks in their organizations.<sup>14</sup>

As the klan is primary organization identified under COINTELPRO-White Hate, there does need to be a clarify note about the usage of ‘klan’ throughout this study. Typically, in academic works, ‘klan’ is capitalized, as a reference to the Ku Klux Klan a unified organization. While this may be appropriate when discussing the original Ku Klux Klan from the late 19th century, and its revival in the 1920s, it does not fit with the klan of the 1960s and 1970s. At this

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<sup>13</sup> In recent years, scholarship focusing on the racial bias within the American criminal justice system has seen a resurgence, though most of the literature focus heavily on the issue of state and community level law enforcement, rather than on the federal law enforcement agencies such as the Bureau.

<sup>14</sup> There are a few exceptions to this general statement as there are documented examples of Blacks joining the Klan, though their motivations are somewhat hard to discern and there are not enough examples to cause issue when discussing the racial divide that existed between the Klan and Black Panther organizations.



time, the Ku Klux Klan was less of a unified organization but rather a broad social movement comprised of dozens of organizations employing the word "klan" in their name and evoking the imagery of the original Ku Klux Klan.<sup>15</sup> While many of these organizations possessed similar beliefs, and pursued similar actions, they were all independent. They had their own organizational and leadership structure, they financed their operations independently, and they had their own rules and codes of conduct which set them apart from other klan organizations. And though they may have helped each other with specific operations, or by sharing information, they also competed against each other for membership and spaces in which to operate. This becomes important moving forward in this study.

Due to the number of klan organizations operating during this period in history and recognizing that a unified "Klan" did not exist in the United States, klan will not be capitalized as with past studies. Instead, specific klan organizations will be capitalized, such as the United Klans of America or the North Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, as they represent formal organizations. In all other situations, when talking about klan groups as a collective, or when discussing the actions and beliefs of many individuals belonging to a klan organization, klan will not be capitalized.

## **Literature Review**

The secondary literature that informs this study is both very broad, but also very shallow in many ways. The literature is broad in the sense that there are multiple fields of study that come into play when discussing COINTELPRO, White Hate, and Black Extremism; drawing from the fields of Civil Rights history, African American history, Southern history, as well as

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<sup>15</sup> For example, the original COINTELPRO-White Hate mandate named seventeen different organizations, all with different versions of the Ku Klux Klan worked into their name. See FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 5, 9/2/64.

literature associated with race and ethnicity studies, understanding social movements, and law enforcement, intelligence and surveillance studies, there are plenty of places to look for information. However, that information can be limited in its application, or very general in the context in which it is being used. This is particularly the case of literature pertaining to COINTELPRO itself. While the program is mentioned in many of the major American history textbooks, it is only in passing and is usually presented alongside a discussion of dissident groups, such as the Black Panthers, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Students for a Democratic Society.

However, there are several authors who have dedicated significant time to writing on COINTELPRO specifically, and those texts are worth reviewing in light of the questions at hand. One of the first studies on COINTELPRO ever published was Nelson Blackstock's book *COINTELPRO: the FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom*. Published in 1976, approximately a year after the Senate Committee report was made public, this book consolidated much of that report into one study that highlighted the use of often illegal, and sometimes violent, tactics by the FBI in their pursuit of "dangerous organizations". Ultimately Blackstock presents a case that the FBI had a distinct political agenda in ending leftist organizations who posed a threat to the "everyday" structure of American society and sought to limit their political freedoms to the point that they were incapable of action. While Blackstock's study is an interesting one, especially considering how soon after the cancellation of COINTELPRO the book was published, it does need to be treated carefully. Blackstock writes with a distinct bias towards the left, setting up his argument as the "big bad FBI" versus the poor vulnerable leftist social movements. Furthermore, he did not have access to the same number of sources from the COINTELPRO files that contemporary scholars have, so he was working from a very limited sample of documents in

writing his book. Nevertheless, Blackstock's book is still an important contribution to our modern understanding of COINTELPRO and its legacy.

Another author who has written several texts on COINTELPRO is historian Ivan Greenberg, who has published several books and articles on the relationship between surveillance and dissent. His 2010 book *The Dangers of Dissent: the FBI and Civil Liberties since 1965* and his 2013 follow-up study *Surveillance in America: Critical Analysis of the FBI, 1920 to the Present*, examine the concept of "political policing" throughout American history. With particular emphasis on the FBI, Greenberg discusses the different ways the Bureau and the American government used surveillance for specific political purposes and sought to shape the current political conditions surrounding the implementation of COINTELPRO. He also seeks to explain how COINTELPRO, both the political and operational aspects of the program, inadvertently helped with the creation of the culture and norms for future intelligence and counter-intelligence work in the United States.

What both Blackstock and Greensburg do in their texts is establish the principles of COINTELPRO and its legacy without actually examining a specific mandate or organization targeted under a COINTELPRO mandate. This is useful in helping a reader who is seeking to understand the broad context under which COINTELPRO was created, implemented, and cancelled, and the legacy of COINTELPRO in the American intelligence system. However, if one wants to understand how COINTELPRO was used in practice, they would have to consider the works of scholars such as Ward Churchill, Jim Vander Wall, David Cunningham, and John Drabble. Some of these authors study COINTELPRO through a single case analysis, considering how the Bureau interacted with one or two organizations, while others establish a multiple case study, examining COINTELPRO practices across a range of mandates.

Without question, the COINTELPRO target which has received the most academic attention is Black Extremism, and while this mandate covered a number of organizations, the Black Panther Party was the primary target, facing over two hundred and thirty authorized COINTELPRO actions.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the relationship between the Black Panthers and COINTELPRO is so well established, the majority of studies that focus on the Panthers naturally include a chapter on COINTELPRO as if it is simply an accepted part of the Panthers' history.<sup>17</sup> However, there are a few studies that focus solely on the relationship between COINTELPRO and the Panthers at their core. Ward Churchill is especially known for his writing on the Panthers and COINTELPRO, and he has published several works, usually in collaboration with Jim Vander Wall.<sup>18</sup> Like Blackstock, Churchill and Vander Wall write from an unabashedly leftist position, and are highly critical of Hoover, the FBI director during the COINTELPRO era, as they argue COINTELPRO was of his own political making and driven by his desire to repress freedoms and ideologies that challenged his own. This is an interesting approach which is not commonly found in the other scholarship of the Panthers, as it removes much of the agency and responsibility away from the Panthers and shifts it directly unto the Bureau, as opposed to

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<sup>16</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, United State Senate Vol. 3 (April 1976), pg. 188.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr, *Black Against the Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles; University of California Press, 2013); Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*, (Tuscaloosa, AB; the University of Alabama Press, 2007) and David Hilliard, editor, *The Black Panther Party: Service to the People Programs*, (Albuquerque, US; University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, (Cambridge, MA; South Edge Press, 2002a); Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's secret War against Dissent in the United States*, (Cambridge, MA; South Edge Press, 2002b); Churchill, "To Disrupt, Discredit and Destroy: The FBI's Secret War against the Black Panther Party" in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy*, edited by Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, (New York, London; Routledge, 2001).

presenting an argument in which both the FBI and Panthers share agency and responsibility for actions during the COINTELPRO era.<sup>19</sup>

Compared to the number of texts dedicated to COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, there are very few studies that consider COINTELPRO-White Hate with the same level of detail. The lack of sources has several possible explanations: first, as hinted at earlier, COINTELPRO-White Hate is a much lesser-known part of the Bureau's program, and many academics are generally ignorant as to its existence. Second, among many academics who are aware of COINTELPRO-White hate, there is a notion that it was somewhat of a "token" program, designed to appease political figures and the general public who saw the Bureau as ignoring Klan violence. In such a perspective, COINTELPRO-White Hate does not deserve academic study as it was not a true expression of counter-intelligence work, nor did the organizations targeted through this program suffer to the same fate as other organizations targeted through COINTELPRO.<sup>20</sup> Third, the collection of documents and available information pertaining to the Klan and COINTELPRO is significantly less than other COINTELPRO mandates and organizations. As a result of these circumstances, only a handful of authors have seriously address COINTELPRO-White Hate in an academic study.

Of the academics who have written solely on COINTELPRO-White Hate, historian John Drabble has written the most, beginning with his 1996 doctoral dissertation, followed by several

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<sup>19</sup> Studies that place a more balanced understanding of the role of Panther violence within the organization include Curtis J. Austin, *Up against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas press, 2006); Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Jama Lazerow, Yohuru Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, (London: Duke University Press, 2006)/

<sup>20</sup> The idea is frequently propagated by Ward Churchill and argued against by both John Drabble and David Cunningham. The work of all three scholars will be addressed below.

articles and book chapters all dedicated to the relationship between the Klan and the Bureau.<sup>21</sup> Drabble's work addresses several aspects of this relationship, though one of his more interesting pieces is an article entitled "To Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The FBI, COINTELPRO-White Hate, and Political Discourse, 1964-1971", in which he discusses the role the Bureau had in creating a Southern political discourse that was hostile to the messages of the Klan, thus contributing to the decline of the Klan in southern states. He followed this study with several others that consider the cases of individual states, such as Alabama and Mississippi. As opposed to the highly negative characterisation of COINTELPRO in discussion of the Black Panthers, Drabble presents a relatively positive view of COINTELPRO, setting up an interesting discussion of the legacy of the Bureau's efforts moving forward. Furthermore, Drabble emphasises not only how COINTELPRO functioned to target violent organizations, but also how the inclusion of White Hate Groups within COINTELPRO established a broader understanding amongst the general public around the issue of political subversion or radical ideologies. This transformation, Drabble argues, contributed to the "nazification" of the political far right, and the trend away from mainstream white supremacist ideologies.<sup>22</sup> Drabble's arguments add an interesting element when considering the long-term effects of COINTELPRO on the modern political landscape of the United States and the current orientation of federal law enforcement agencies.

While the majority of authors writing on COINTELPRO chose to focus on only one of the mandates, there is one author in particular, David Cunningham, whose work on

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<sup>21</sup> John Drabble, "To Ensure Domestic Tranquility: the FBI, COINTELPRO-White Hate, and Political Discourse, 1964-1971", *Journal of American Studies* 38:3, (August 2004), 297-328; "The FBI, COINTELPRO-White Hate, and the Decline of Ku Klux Klan Organization in Alabama", *Alabama Review* 61:1, (January 2008), 3-47; "The FBI, COINTELPRO-White Hate, and the Decline of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in Mississippi, 1964-1971", *Journal of Mississippi History* 66:4, (Winter 2004).

<sup>22</sup> See Drabble, (2004); John Drabble, "From White Supremacy to White Power: The FBI, COINTELPRO-White Hate and the Nazification of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s", *American Studies* 48:3, (2007): 59-50.

COINTELPRO directly compare more than one COINTELPRO mandate for the purpose of understanding how the Bureau organized and operated COINTELPRO against different targets, and how the Bureau's position differed depending on their target. Most of Cunningham's work focuses on a comparison between COINTELPRO-White Hate Group and the New Left. In a 2003 article, Cunningham compares governmental response, both state and federal, to the New Left and the Klan through the lens of COINTELPRO, demonstrating that despite academic expectations, COINTELPRO-White Hate was not a token program and comparatively received just as much attention and resources within the Bureau as any other COINTELPRO mandate.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, he addresses the issue of ideological similarities that often existed between the agents assigned to COINTELPRO-White Hate and their targets in klan organizations. As a result of these ideological similarities, he argues that COINTELPRO-White Hate actually developed one of the most comprehensive and reliable informant systems in modern counter-intelligence history.<sup>24</sup>

Cunningham's work comparing COINTELPRO-White Hate and the New Left culminated in a 2004 book, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* which directly compares the whole of White Hate and New Left files. In this book Cunningham not only provides a useful matrix for understanding FBI documents from the COINTELPRO files, but more importantly he demonstrates that the Bureau had separate goals for COINTELPRO-White Hate versus New Left. The evidence, he argues, suggests that the point of the New Left program was as it was stated--to disrupt, neutralize, and otherwise destroy their selected targets. Meanwhile, the point of the White Hate program was not to destroy the

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<sup>23</sup> See David Cunningham, "Understanding State Responses to Left- versus Right-Wing Threats: The FBI's Repression of the New Left and the Ku Klux Klan", *Social Science History* 27:3 (2003): 237-70.

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham (2003), 364.

organizations but rather to control them, especially in cases when organizations were not overtly violent in nature.<sup>25</sup> Cunningham points to a number of interesting questions raised by his conclusion including the causes of this difference; among his explanations, he explores the possibility of political bias existing within the Bureau, especially under Hoover, as well as the potential disconnect that existed between the intentions of the senior leadership in the Bureau stationed in Washington, and the agents stationed at various field offices who were responsible for operationalizing the mandates designed by the senior leadership.

The implications of Cunningham's assertion also speak to other arguments he later made in a 2009 article on the presence of political ambiguity among local and federal law enforcement, and how that influenced COINTELPRO-White Hate.<sup>26</sup> In this article, he examines political ambiguity, defined as the outcome of "a mismatch between organizational culture and organizational goals" within the context of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the FBI field office located in Charlotte, demonstrating in the case of the latter that a shared political ideology tempered the actions taken by federal agents assigned to COINTELPRO-White Hate.<sup>27</sup> While the violence of klan activities continued to draw the attention of the FBI, and demanded a response, agents were less concerned with fully neutralizing their targets but rather simply sought an end to the violence, contrary to the expressed purpose of COINTELPRO mandates.<sup>28</sup> Cunningham also notes, however, that the ideological overlap that contributed to political ambiguity among agents had a dual effect within COINTELPRO-White Hate: in many ways, it meant that agents did not pursue all possible avenues to neutralize their target, resulting

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<sup>25</sup> Cunningham (2004), 133-145.

<sup>26</sup> See David Cunningham, "Ambivalence and Control: State Action Against Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan", *Qualitative Sociology* 32, (2009): 355-377.

<sup>27</sup> Cunningham (2009), 356.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham (2009), 374.



in less effective counter-intelligence operations, but a shared ideology also meant that Bureau agents were highly effective at recruiting informants, meaning that that Bureau had better access to klan groups than any other organization targeted under a COINTELPRO mandate.<sup>29</sup> This paradox is one element that makes COINTELPRO-White Hate so unique and perhaps more difficult to address in academic works than other COINTELPRO mandates.

What emerges from an examination of the academic literature of COINTELPRO, including work from Cunningham, Churchill and Vander Wall, Drabble, and Blackstock is that the characterization of COINTELPRO is complicated, and largely divided by how each author interprets the goal of COINTELPRO. Only Cunningham has made a concerted effort to cross-examine COINTELPRO mandates in order to understand how these different mandates compared. All other authors seem to be content to simply consider one program, which inherently is not a problem. These studies, however, are designed primarily to reveal something about the organizations targeted under a COINTELPRO mandate, and their relationship to the Bureau. Cunningham's work and the study being undertaken here have a different purpose in mind-to understand the Bureau better, and what COINTELPRO can reveal about counter-intelligence work in the United States both during the Civil Rights Movement, but also the legacy of counter-intelligence work moving forward from COINTELPRO. But it is also important to emphasise that though different in its purpose, this study is grounded in those briefly reviewed here, and as well as others that were not. This research does not seek to directly challenge any of the findings of other studies, though it may do so inadvertently. Ultimately, it seeks to build upon these studies and add to the collective understanding of not only

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<sup>29</sup> Cunningham (2009), 374-375.

organizations like the Black Panthers or the Klan but add to the understanding of COINTELPRO and its legacy of well.

### **Understanding Counter-intelligence and the FBI's Organizational Culture**

In order to truly understand COINTELPRO documents and what they can tell us about how the Bureau orchestrated its counter-intelligence programs, it is crucial to understand the organizational structure of the Bureau, and how COINTELPRO functioned, but it is also worth clarifying what the Bureau meant when it employed the term "counter-intelligence" during this era.

In his book *The Origins of FBI Counterintelligence*, retired FBI Special Agent Raymond Batvinis traces the origins of modern Bureau counter-intelligence to the years predating the Second World War. In this period, the Bureau of Intelligence (BOI), renamed the Federal Bureau of Intelligence in 1935, expanded from a sub-department within the Department of Justice to one of the first true civilian counter-espionage and counter-intelligence organizations in the United States. Throughout his study, Batvinis defines counter-intelligence as “the relentless effort of a government to identify, penetrate, and ultimately neutralize the activities of a foreign intelligence service that is attempting to acquire critical political, military, industrial, financial, and economic assets.”<sup>30</sup> Though Batvinis writes mostly about counter-intelligence work prior to the 1960s, his definition reflects the main tenets of counter-intelligence work under-taken by the FBI during the COINTELPRO period. One important allowance to make when using Batvinis' definition is that COINTELPRO mandates largely focused on American citizens. Under COINTELPRO, the emphasis placed on foreign powers was replaced instead by the notion of internal subversive,

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<sup>30</sup> Batvinis, 2.

which was determined by the extent to which an organization or individual held political ideologies and pursued actions that could be seen as contrary or threatening to the political or economic well-being of the United States. This became primary determinant of counter-intelligence targets. Domestic groups, regardless of their connection to foreign powers, were still capable of holding subversive beliefs, and therefore could become targets of counter-intelligence operations<sup>31</sup>

In the post-Second World War era, the fear of subversion was largely connected to the fear of communism, and that is where the story of the COINTELPRO mandates begins. Though the Bureau was investigating groups suspected of being subversive due to their communist leanings as early as the mid-1930s, it was not until the 1950s that the Bureau began a sustained campaign against these groups.<sup>32</sup> Driven by the McCarthyism of the early Cold War era, the National Security Council, on 8 March 1956, granted the Bureau permission to institute the first designated counter-intelligence program: COINTELPRO-CPUSA (Communist Party, U.S.A).<sup>33</sup> Along with the approval of the program, the NSC also approved a range of appropriate methods of counter-intelligence work, which included everything from electronic surveillance, anonymous letter campaigns, safecracking, undercover infiltration operations, provoking disharmony between rival groups, and many others.<sup>34</sup>

William Sullivan, a key architect of COINTELPRO and personal friend of Hoover, recalled after his retirement that while fear of the Communist Party was one driver behind

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<sup>31</sup> It is also worth noting that in the case of specific organizations targeted under COINTELPRO attempts were made at establishing international chapters. For example, numerous Black Panther leaders made trips to Algeria in the late 1960s and into the 1970s and attempted to form expansion BPP chapters there. Furthermore, when Eldridge Cleaver fled the United States in 1968, he was a welcome guest of the government in Cuba and spent several years as a fugitive in Cuba, Algeria and France.

<sup>32</sup> See Batvinis for a full discussion on how mild surveillance in the 1930s evolved into one of the largest counter-intelligence projects undertaken by any American law enforcement and intelligence agency.

<sup>33</sup> David, 31.

<sup>34</sup> David, 33.

seeking permission to begin a counter-intelligence program, Hoover was also seeking broad approval from Congress and the NSC for future counter-intelligence programs to target subversive groups. Once Hoover obtained this broad approval, future counter-intelligence efforts would not have to be approved individually but could be worked into the pre-existing structure.<sup>35</sup> This is a particularly interesting arrangement, as counter-intelligence and tracking subversion are two activities typically separated by America intelligence organizations. However, COINTELPRO-CPUSA established the basis for a program where counter-intelligence work and tracking subversion were conflated without major problem due to the breadth and vagueness of the mandate approved by the NSC. When the need arose to target other organizations under a counter-intelligence mandates, extending COINTELPRO became the simplest way to do so, even if the aims of counter-intelligence work gave way to a heavier focus on tracking and eliminating subversion, as was the case with both COINTELPRO-White Hate and Black Extremism. In fact, COINTELPRO-CPUSA was the only COINTELPRO mandate initiated through and with the permission of Congress or the NSC; all others were initiated by the Bureau, though most were done so upon the recommendation of either the President or the Attorney General.<sup>36</sup>

Within the literature on the history of the Bureau and on COINTELPRO specifically, the role of Hoover is always a point of contention as there are those who credit him with the creation of the modern FBI and herald him a hero who saved America's domestic intelligence services, and there are those who demonise him as nothing more than a dictator who used the Bureau as his own personal vehicle for political gain. Despite this conflicting legacy, his role in the

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<sup>35</sup> As cited in Davis, 31-32.

<sup>36</sup> In total, there were five COINTELPRO mandates. The Communist Party, USA was the first, initiated in 1956. A program against the Socialist Workers Party began in 1961, the White Hate Group program began in 1964, Black Nationalist Hate Groups began in 1967, and the New Left came under investigation in 1968.

transforming the Bureau is undeniable. When he was appointed the Director of the BOI in May 1924, it employed only four hundred and forty Special Agents, and six hundred and fifty employees total.<sup>37</sup> With Hoover at the helm, by the mid-1960s the Bureau employed over eight thousand agents across nine separate divisions, and operated fifty-five Field Offices and over five hundred and thirty Resident Agencies.<sup>38</sup> At the time of his death in May 1972, Hoover was only eight days short of a full forty-eight years of service as Director of the Bureau.<sup>39</sup> However, Hoover was only one man and he was surrounded by a team who helped issue in these changes to the Bureau. Similarly, there was a team of agents responsible for COINTELPRO, and despite what the academic literature might suggest, Hoover was far from the only individual responsible for running counter-intelligence operations as COINTELPRO was much more than just a reiteration of Hoover's political beliefs and biases.

The responsibility for overseeing COINTELPRO operations fell to the Intelligence Division, one the nine separate divisions within the Bureau, and in particular, with two sub-departments within the Intelligence Divisions: Domestic Intelligence Division (DID), and the General Investigations Divisions (GID). Prior to the beginning of a counter-intelligence program, responsibility for investigating and tracking these organization and their activities fell to the General Investigation Division (GID). It is important to understand the relationship between the DID and the GID, as both were involved in investigating organizations that fell under a COINTELPRO mandate though for separate purposes. The GID typically dealt with criminal issues, for example, bombings, murders, civil rights offences, theft, etc., and sought prosecution

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<sup>37</sup> Darrell J. Kozlowski, "The FBI" in Richard J. Samuels, ed., *Encyclopedia of United States National Security, Vol. I* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 252.

<sup>38</sup> Cunningham, *There is Something Happening Here*, 83; Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 153.

<sup>39</sup> Appointed by President Coolidge on 10 May 1924, he served under 8 presidents and 16 Attorney Generals. He died on 2 May 1972 at the age of 77. Following his death, new rules concerning term limits and age limits were imposed for future Directors.

in such cases while the DID handled issues of espionage and subversion, focusing on disrupting and neutralizing threats through intelligence gathering and informants.<sup>40</sup> That being said, the DID, on occasion, did collect intelligence and pursue criminal prosecutions that would otherwise be handled by the GID in their counter-intelligence efforts. As a rule, though, each Bureau division maintained their own separate interest in the groups identified under COINTELPRO mandates, at least at the institutional level. In the field, the divisions between the GID and the DID's tasks were not as clearly defined as agents could be assigned to investigate a crime that would fall under the GID mandate, even though the individual who committed the crime belonged to an organization targeted under a COINTELPRO mandate. In such cases, an agent's investigation and findings would contribute both to prosecution for a crime but would often also be recorded as part of COINTELPRO operations.<sup>41</sup>

Leadership within the Bureau was organized into a strict hierarchical structure. At the top of this hierarchy was the Director and, under the Director, there was the Associate Director, and two Deputy Associate Directors. They were followed by nine Assistant Directors, each of whom was assigned to one of the Bureau's divisions. Together, these thirteen individuals formed the Executive leadership of the Bureau. The Assistant Directors had, in turn, a series of deputy directors and high-ranking aids who also assisted in managing the departments.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, within each division, there were subdivisions, all which had their own directors and associate directors.<sup>43</sup> A few individuals from the COINTELPRO era worth noting include Clyde Tolson, who served as Hoover's Associate Director for over forty years, William Sullivan who served as

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<sup>40</sup> The difference between the two Divisions is demonstrating in a 30 July 1964 memo from Associate Director Clyde Tolson to James H. Gale, Assistant to the Director. See FBI-White Hate part 1, pgs. 12-16, 7/30/64.

<sup>41</sup> Keller, 74-75.

<sup>42</sup> Cunningham, 81-82.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix for organizational charts of the Bureau at this time.

the Assistant Director of the Intelligence Division from 1961 until 1971, at which point he was replaced by Charles D. Brennan, a former Deputy Assistant under Sullivan. Within the Intelligence Division, the DID was run by director Fred Baumgardner for the duration of the COINTELPRO era, and the GID by Alex Rosen.

The executive leadership largely worked out of the FBI headquarters in Washington D.C., known in the Bureau as the Seat of Government offices (SOG). Because of this, they were largely separate from the operations and agents who worked in the field offices. Each field office was overseen by a Special Agents in Charge (SAC), and their Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC). Below these two figures were squad leaders, usually veteran agents, who led their own teams of agents. Each squad had a special focus ranging from criminal investigations to electronic surveillance, though agents would frequently rotate between squad assignments to ensure they gained experience for any assignment they might be asked to complete. Due to the large territorial areas field offices often had to cover, the Bureau also operated resident agencies (RAs), which were smaller offices located in secondary cities often isolated from a central field office.<sup>44</sup> Agents at these RAs reported to squad leaders in the main field office regarding any investigations or activities.<sup>45</sup> In this system the SACs served as the crucial link between the field offices and the SOG in Washington D.C.

In theory, the idea was that the SACs in the field and the Assistant Directors at the SOG would have complete administrative and operational control over the activities in their respective offices or divisions. This would yield a system of accountability and stability within the Bureau.

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<sup>44</sup> At the end of the 1960s, the Bureau operated more than five hundred and thirty RAs throughout the country. When the burglary that would reveal COINTELPRO to the public took place in March 1972 at a RA in Media Pennsylvania, Hoover closed over one hundred and thirty RA offices, which had significantly less security than central field offices. Additionally, the RA offices that remained open were all fitted with security cameras and heightened security measures.

<sup>45</sup> Cunningham, 85-86.

In practice, however, this was impossible given the sheer amount of work that took place in a field office and division in the course of a day. For the SACs, they were expected to read, if not write, all major reports and communications to the SOG, which was a significant amount of paperwork considering that in 1960, for example, the Charlotte Field Office had eighty-one agents and was handling over eight hundred cases.<sup>46</sup> And for the Assistant Directors, they too were responsible for handling any requests from field offices pertaining to their respective division, as well as the operations of their own division. After his retirement, Sullivan confessed that he would often delegate decision-making to his assistants in an effort to keep up with the case load, resulting in some situations where operations were approved without his or the Director's knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

That reports and paperwork were often produced by other agents and simply approved by their superiors is important to remember when considering COINTELPRO documents throughout this study. Just because a document bears Hoover's signature or states it was from the office of the Director does not mean that Hoover read or even knew what the document contained, challenging the notion that COINTELPRO was solely orchestrated by Hoover. Rather, the process of suggesting and obtaining permission for counter-intelligence related activities was more nebulous and could involve multiple people. As such, it is worth exploring the process of how COINTELPRO operated within the field offices in order to understand how targets were identified, intelligence was gathered, and operations approved.

When a field office was identified for participation in a COINTELPRO mandate, as not all field offices participated in all counter-intelligence programs, a squad of agents was selected to handle matters related to COINTELPRO in addition to their other investigative

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<sup>46</sup> "FBI Charlotte Filed Office-History" FBI archives.

<sup>47</sup> Cunningham, 82.



responsibilities.<sup>48</sup> As such, COINTELPRO usually accounted for only a small portion of an agent's workload. The squad leader would report directly to the SAC, who in turn reported to William Sullivan at the DID. The responsibilities of SACs in offices with COINTELPRO mandates included monthly or quarterly summaries of the targeted organizations, reports of any potential organizations to be included in the program, and, of course, suggestions for counter-intelligence activities to neutralize their targets. Often times, memos containing suggested counter-intelligence activities would be returned to the SAC from the SOG requesting more information or revisions to make the activity more effective.<sup>49</sup> It was not uncommon for a single suggested operation to undergo several revisions before being approved, and once it was approved and carried out, the SAC was also responsible for providing outcomes and feedback for operational learning purposes.<sup>50</sup> Through this process of communication from the SACs to Sullivan, Hoover or another member of the executive leadership, it ensured that no operation was ever undertaken without someone in a position of leadership having approved the operation, at least in theory.

While it was not just Hoover responsible for running COINTELPRO, the group of individuals with executive authority in COINTELPRO remained small but consistent. With that in mind, it is important to also consider that the Bureau had a distinct organizational culture that had a bearing on COINTELPRO operations. Under Hoover, agents in the Bureau were expected to always conduct themselves with decorum. Self-discipline, procedure, accountability, and a willingness to put the Bureau before anything else were stressed to all agents during their

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<sup>48</sup> Here again it is possible to see the interplay between responsibilities falling under the GID criminal investigation mandate and the DID intelligence mandate.

<sup>49</sup> Examples of this can be found throughout the FBI-White hate file pertaining to suggestions made by the Charlotte Field Office. See a series of memos from FBI-White Hate part 12, pgs. 14-23, 10/1970.

<sup>50</sup> Cunningham, 86-87.

mandatory training. If agents failed the Bureau for some reason, they were quick to be punished with a letter of censure from the Director's office, a suspension of pay, or even a transfer to another office.<sup>51</sup> According to Jack Levine, as former FBI agent, the strict system of punishment established by Hoover created an environment where agents were so afraid of facing discipline they often did not take actions or risks connected to their cases in an effort to avoid making a mistake and facing censure.<sup>52</sup> These sentiments are echoed by former agent William Turner, who wrote "it was not uncommon to see veteran agents slip out the back door at the sound of the bank robbery alarm rather than risk a bungle in that type of fast-paced investigation."<sup>53</sup>

In addition to the emphasis on proper behaviour and procedure of agents, Hoover's emphasis of the public image of the FBI also contributed to a unique organizational culture. Causing the Bureau public humiliation or negative press was grounds for immediate dismissal as one young agent found out when his car was broken into and his FBI handbook was stolen. The handbook was later recovered by the police and returned to the agent, however the Bureau saw this as a great failure as they had to rely on another law enforcement agency to protect their property. The agent was promptly asked to resign.<sup>54</sup> While it is difficult to assess if this hypersensitivity to public critique significantly limited the types of activities the Bureau pursued, it did have an effect on the establishment of certain COINTELPRO mandates.

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<sup>51</sup> Former FBI Special Agent William Turned talks about all three forms of punishment in his book about his time at the Bureau under Hoover. He also talks about the types of activities that could yield a letter or censure or some other form of discipline including improperly filed reports, not logging enough over-time hours, requesting a transfer to another department, filing complaints against superior agents, or more trivial offenses such as not falling into one's appropriate weight class which was the Bureau's primary indication of physical fitness, or wearing clothing that was "too worn out" or had an improper fit. Furthermore, if a lower-ranked agent made a mistake, agents on his squad and his superiors would also face censure for failing to correct the mistake before it was noticed.

<sup>52</sup> As cited in Cook, 16-17.

<sup>53</sup> Turner, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Turner, 231-232.

The decision to investigate an organization or individual under a COINTELPRO mandate originated with the executive leadership at the Bureau, and they would disseminate lists of targets to various field offices when a new counter-intelligence program was initiated, and periodically throughout their duration to ensure that any new organizations were not missed. When identifying a new counter-intelligence program, the primary concern of the Bureau was the issue of subversion and the extent to which the organizations in question stood opposed to the government and policies of the United States, both in ideology and in practice. Because subversion was so closely tied to Communism within the American ideological perspective, the majority of COINTELPRO mandates made an effort to connect the organizations in question to the Communist Party in some way, regardless of if such a connection existed. This is most blatant when considering the origins of COINTELPRO-White Hate. In a July 1964 memo between Associate Director Clyde Tolson and Assistant Director James Gale, they discuss the creation of a COINTELPRO-White Hate Group mandate, and the argument was made that with the "increased interest in the racial question" demonstrated by the Communist Party, white hate groups had developed political beliefs and engaged in activities that are "inimical to the Constitution as [were] the viewpoints of the Communist Party".<sup>55</sup> Though the memo does note that white hate groups were not controlled by a foreign power, unlike the Communist Party, it ultimately highlights that white hate groups represent a subversive threat that could not go unchecked due to the possibility of increased relationships between communism and white hate groups.

This logic is immensely flawed, and completely ignores the anti-communist rhetoric found throughout 1950s klan organizations. Nevertheless, by 1964, the level of violence

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<sup>55</sup> See FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 12, 7/30/64.

perpetrated by white hate groups in the South had reached a point that it could not be ignored, and the Bureau was facing significant criticism from the public and Presidential administration for their long-standing ambivalence towards racially motivated violence, necessitating a Bureau response. While the GID had the power to investigate individual cases, if the Bureau wanted to institute a long-standing program to fully neutralize these groups and avoid further public scrutiny, the issued needed to be transferred to the DID, which specialized in issues of subversion and espionage.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it follows that the Bureau needed to establish white hate groups as subversive, though these groups failed to meet the normal idea of what a subversive organization was. This helps explain why the Bureau, despite its politically conservative leanings and indifference towards the Civil Rights movement, ended up targeting white hate groups like the Klan, who they otherwise might have silently backed, or simply left alone.

Not all decisions concerning COINTELPRO mandates were influenced by fear of public scrutiny to the degree that COINTELPRO-White Hate Groups was, though sensitivity to public scrutiny was a critical element of the Bureau's culture that cannot be completely ignored throughout the COINTELPRO era. Similarly, the severity of discipline and the fear of censure instilled in the field agents is also an important element of the Bureau culture that undoubtedly impacted decisions made in the field by agents assigned to COINTELPRO mandates. It is important to remember that COINTELPRO operations took place within a structure based on accountability that emphasised communication and procedure, and one that punished agents severely for perceived or real mistakes. As this study moves forward to examine both the COINTELPRO-White Hate Groups and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism mandates, the influence of this culture at the Bureau will become apparent in both programs, and its effects

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<sup>56</sup> Cunningham, 87-88.

explored when considering COINTELPRO operations against the Klan and the Black Panther Party.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

In keeping with the goal of this research, a case study which allows for a direct comparative analysis between racialized mandates will be conducted. Several factors aid in limiting the scale and scope of this project. The research question is designed as a comparative analysis and must allow for the examination of both White Hate and Black Extremist groups. Furthermore, to ensure that the comparative analysis is as rigorous as possible, both cases under analysis need to be centered in the same geographic region, as well as contemporaries of one another. These factors are important because the extent of FBI involvement in COINTELPRO was not unanimous across the country. While almost all field offices were involved in the COINTELPRO-Black Extremism program, only seventeen were involved in COINTELPRO-White hate, most of which were located in the South. Recognizing that regional context influenced the presence of both White Hate and Black Extremist organizations, having case studies in two different localities would not provide an equal base for the case analysis. Additionally, the political environment of the 1960s was not static, so keeping the years of activity as close as possible for the two cases studies is also crucial. With these conditions in mind, North Carolina from 1964 to 1971 will serve as the focus of this analysis.

The selection of North Carolina for this study rests on several factors. In the early 1960s, North Carolina heralded itself as “the most progressive Southern state”, supporting moderate reformist programs and desegregation policies, and compared to other southern states, was

indeed progressive.<sup>57</sup> And yet, despite this seemingly forward-thinking nature, or perhaps because of it, by 1967, the state boasted more dues-paying klan members than any other state north or south.<sup>58</sup> The sharp increase of klan membership and activity in the state prompted increased attention from law enforcement both locally, and federally in the form of COINTELPRO activity. The success of COINTELPRO activity against klan organizations in the state is conveyed in a memo found in the COINTELPRO records dated September 1969.<sup>59</sup> Despite the successes boasted about in this memo, COINTELPRO continued to engage with klan organizations until the cancellation of the COINTELPRO mandate in 1971; even then, pockets of klan activities could still be found across the state, though it is important to recognize that activity had significantly decreased since its peak in 1967.

In addition to having a highly active klan presence, North Carolina was also home to a highly active African-American community and several Black Power organizations, including the first Black Panther Party chapters in a southern state. Although the North Carolina Panthers were not officially incorporated into the national organization until 1971, the predecessor organization, the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF), was active in the state as early as 1968. The relationship between the Panthers and the NCCF is important to understand: following a weekend convention event that included members of the Panthers, the Students for Democratic Society, the Student Non-violence Coordinating Committee, the decision was made to launch NCCF chapters as a “stepping-stone” organization for potential Panther or SDS

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<sup>57</sup> The "most progressive Southern State" is a well-established moniker for North Carolina, originating as early as 1900 with North Carolina state governor Charles Aycock. It was used by several subsequent political figures including Governor Terry Sanford (in office 1961-1964) in a report he published in 1964 addressing the racial question within North Carolina. It was also used by V.O. Keys, Jr. in his 1949 hallmark political study *Southern Politics in State and Nation* to describe the general political atmosphere in North Carolina.

<sup>58</sup> The estimates range between 10,000 and 12,000 members across 200 local klaverns. This represented over 50% of UKA membership in Southern states. David Cunningham, *Klansville, USA: The Rise and Fall of Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*, (New York; Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>59</sup> COINTELPRO-White Hate, section 1 pg. 178

chapters. In reality, most of the NCCF chapters would become Panther chapters, that employed the same political agenda as the Panthers, and received direct support from the national headquarters in Oakland.

Predating the creation of the NCCF and the eventual formation of a Panther chapter, there were two separate attempts to create Panther chapters, both directed by students and centered on university campuses. In both cases, these attempts failed largely due to police and FBI involvement.<sup>60</sup> Whether considering these early attempts, or the later more successful NCCF, the Black Power movement in North Carolina was subject to intense FBI activity. In fact, some of the most comprehensive records available from the era pertain to the Black Panther Party in North Carolina and its formation. These documents concern not only FBI involvement with the Black Power movement during the COINTELPRO mandates but continue past the cancellation of the program in 1971 as the Panther chapter remained highly active in the state.<sup>61</sup>

The existence of a contemporary klan organization and Panther chapter, both of which were targeted and struggled under a COINTELPRO mandate, contribute in making North Carolina a strong case study when seeking to understand how federal counter-intelligence interacted with different racialized organizations. Under each of the two COINTELPRO mandates identified for this study, there is an organization that stands out in the context of North Carolina: the Black Panther Party/National Committee to Combat Fascism, and the Ku Klux Klan, and as these were the only major organizations identified in the COINTELPRO documents, they will each be the focus when discussing the respective COINTELPRO mandate.

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin R. Friedman, "Picking up where Robert F. Williams Left Off: The Winston-Salem Branch of the Black Panther Party" in *Comrades: A local history of the Black Panther Party*, edited by Judson F. Jeffries, (Bloomington, Indianapolis; Indiana University Press, 2007), 51, 55-57,

<sup>61</sup> A study comparing records pre- and post-cancellation has never been done, and therefore, this study cannot speak to the continuity of methods and behaviour pre- and post-cancellation based on these documents. However, what the existence of these documents does demonstrate is that counter-intelligence remained a central to the FBI even after COINTELPRO was cancelled.

In order to understand how the Bureau's behaviour shifted depending on their target, each COINTELPRO mandate will be analyzed separately in order to demonstrate the nature of Bureau activity. Based upon document records from COINTELPRO, emphasis will be given to demonstrating and understanding the actions of field agents, the construction of COINTELPRO operations, the influence of the Bureau's organizational culture, and the efficacy of the COINTELPRO mandate in achieving its goal.

As mentioned, this analysis relies heavily on primary source material available from the COINTELPRO records. In light of this, the documents in question require a bit of longer discussion. Following the 1975 Church Committee review, and released under the Freedom of Information Act, documents from COINTELPRO began undergoing the declassification process; thus far, thousands of documents have been declassified, and are readily available through the FBI's archiving system for public use. These documents are divided into their respective mandates, with the addition of six other document groups that pertain to a certain organization and a certain FBI field office. For example, there is an FBI-Charlotte Office file that contains a concentration of documents concerning the Charlotte, North Carolina office and their actions against the Black Panther Party. This file, in addition to the files pertaining to White Hate and Black Extremism, form the basis for the primary document pool used in this research.

The documents one can expect to find in these files varies, though there are several general classifications. The most common type of document is an airtel or teletype between a field office and the SOG Washington D.C.; both of these document types served the primarily purpose of requesting and reporting information, with the major difference being that teletypes are informal reports concerning ongoing events and are usually reserved for urgent changes in conditions. Teletypes are usually less polished and often contain unverified information which is



confirmed or denied in a later report. Meanwhile, airtels are a formal report that has been verified and sent to the SOG in Washington D.C, and to other field offices which might benefit from the material they contained.<sup>62</sup> Another category of documents one might find in these records is a monthly report, which contains a summary of activities taken by the Bureau or the organizations under surveillance, financial matters, upcoming events, and other information that might be useful for their investigation. The final type of document that appears with regularity is a formal intelligence report, which is a summary of an investigation into one specific event or individual under surveillance.<sup>63</sup>

For the purpose of this study, the most important information that the COINTELPRO records can provide is descriptions of tactics the Bureau used in their targeting of individuals or groups. The majority of FBI activity can be divided into two major categories: production and dissemination of print propaganda and direct contact. These categories, in turn, can be broken down into small groups to reflect specific trends in FBI activity. For example, there were several types of print propaganda used by the Bureau, depending on their intended audience and the message they wish to spread. One scenario that might play out is the Bureau would print cards or letters pretending to be the Black Panthers and would send threats to rival organizations or community members to discredit Black Panther leadership and create inter-group tension.<sup>64</sup> Even under the second category of direct contact there is a division in activities; while the discussion around direct contact is dominated by a discussion concerning informants, an equally important part of this discussion is activities such as line-tapping, physically surveilling a location,

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<sup>62</sup> Often times in these documents, a Letterhead Memo (LHM) is attached which contains either a detailed description of events, or a summary or recommendation of actions.

<sup>63</sup> While there are several other types of documents that appear, for instance, memorandums between department heads within the Bureau, there four document types represent the most common that will be used in this analysis.

<sup>64</sup> Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall label this type of activity as “Black Propaganda” as opposed to “Gray Propaganda”, which they suggested involved the Bureau passing disinformation and false news stories to local press in order to create negative public opinions, and further discredit the intended target. see *Agents of Repression*, 42-44.

following targeted individuals, and been present when local law enforcement clashed with organizations under surveillance.<sup>65</sup>

While the type of document, and the information contained within varies, there are limits that exist with these documents, both concerning the documents themselves and the ways in which they can be used. The first, and most obvious, limitation is that certain information is redacted, and some pages have been removed from the record altogether. The primary reason for redaction of information is to protect informants and agents who were still alive when the documents were declassified, and while some information has been re-released since the documents were originally declassified, the majority of that information still remains inaccessible. One fact that does help mitigate this redaction of information is that this study does not rely on being able to identify the names of informants or agents involved, simply their actions which are quite often excluded from the redaction process. Additionally, even without the names of informants, the number of informants and the fact that certain activities and conclusions were drawn based upon the word of an informant is of equal importance when discussing FBI activity.

Another consideration when using these documents is that some of the information is unverifiable. As another scholar using these sources points out, reporting agents could easily exaggerate threats in order to justify Bureau activity, or to create the illusion that a city was a bigger hot-bed of activity than it was in reality.<sup>66</sup> It is also possible that certain information is omitted from these reports, either because the issue in question was handled by local law

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<sup>65</sup> Here it is important to note that while violence certainly does play a role in the relationship between COINTELPRO and its subjects, particularly the Panthers, it was not built into the COINTELPRO mandates nor was it often advocated as the best course of action. Violence between the Bureau and their subjects was often avoided at all costs, which makes acts of violence very unique in the historical record. Most of the violence that the Bureau reported on was between local law enforcement and subjects, or two different organizations under surveillance.

<sup>66</sup> Wendy Brame and Thomas Shiver, "Surveillance and Social Control: The FBI's Handling of the Black Panther Party in North Carolina", *Crime, Law and Social Change* 59 (2013), 504.

enforcement and therefore did not require reporting or because the activity at the time seemed inconsequential, though it ended up being much more important than anticipated. Furthermore, information that would reflect poorly on Bureau agents would be omitted due to the fact that specific Bureau activities were illegal and recording such illegalities would have been a serious error in judgement.<sup>67</sup> The issues of exaggeration or under-reporting are also difficult to mitigate, though one way in which this study does seek to do so is by corroborating events and activities recorded in FBI documents with other primary sources such as the Senate Committee reports, reports from Standing Committee of the House Committee for Un-American Activities, and newspapers.<sup>68</sup> When those primary sources are not available, the study will try to corroborate details with secondary texts that draw upon different primary source material, such as interviews or legal documents. In a case when there is a discrepancy between two accounts found in the source material, efforts will be made to present both cases with as much supporting evidence as possible. While COINTELPRO records do form the primary basis for the source material in this study, every effort will be made to ensure that the information is correct, and accurately reflects the activities of the Bureau in the cases in question.

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<sup>67</sup> Keep in mind that President Johnson signed the Freedom of Information Act in July 1966, and it became fully enacted in July 1967. For the first time, private citizens and politicians could request segments of previously classified FBI files. Though the Bureau fought against releasing their records, they were unable to protect all information, and they had to prepare for the reality that they might not be able to protect all their data. Even still, the Bureau still fights to protect its data, and when it is released, it is heavily redacted compared to records from other intelligence organizations. Ivan Greenberg makes the point that as of 2006, the Bureau claimed to have more than 4.5 billion pages of documents in its records, only 6 million of which had been released under the FOIA. Furthermore, in 2009 the Bureau reported only having 2 billion pages on record, so the question is what happened to that other 2.5 billion pages? While there is no formal evidence to suggest that the Bureau is destroying records, it is a possibility that cannot be ignored all together.

<sup>68</sup> A note of the House Committee for Un-American Activities—in late 1968, they launched a series of investigations into Klan members in North Carolina, during which FBI agents were called to testify and a certain amount of information from the Bureau's investigation into the Klan was made public. Newspapers that will be used include several of North Carolina's state-wide and local newspapers, as well as the weekly publication of the Black Panther Party.

With these limitations in mind, it is also important to clarify the distribution of documents from across the state which does not present a major issue in the study. In North Carolina, the only field office was located in Charlotte, and though there were a handful of resident agencies across the state, including ones in Greensboro and in Raleigh, all documents concerning FBI activities in the state flowed through the Charlotte office, as per Bureau regulations. Additionally, COINTELPRO records were kept as a reflection of the activities of the organizations under investigation regardless of if they were rural or urban, in the eastern parts of the state or western. There are a few trends among the activities of the groups in question; Black Extremism and manifestation of Black Power were largely centered in urban centres, particularly those with college campuses, while White Hate groups were almost exclusively located in the central and eastern parts of the state.<sup>69</sup> These trends, however, have little bearing on access to documents from the COINTELPRO era and say more about the organizations themselves rather than the Bureau.

Before moving forward with this study, there is one more element concerning methodology that needs to be addressed. The fact is that very few individuals who lend their voice to discussions involving race and federal policing and security represent an unbiased, neutral point of view. In the face of what can be a highly charged discussion, it can be tempting to simply discard material and ideas that do not fit with one's own; in the present research, this is particularly true of material pertaining to the White Hate and the Klan, as its white supremacist ideology typically garners a visceral reaction from most sectors of society. As this study progresses, it is not the goal to condone nor condemn the activities of either White Hate or Black

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<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of the ties between urban communities and black power, see William Friedman (2007) "Picking up where Robert F. Williams Left Off" in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, edited by Judson L. Jeffries. And for a discussion on the geographic distribution of the Klan, see David Cunningham (2013) *Klansville, USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*.

Extremist organizations; to do so would cast a moral judgement that would be out of place in what is largely a historical analysis. Instead, this study will take each organization at face value, considering their ideology and practices only in relation to their identification as a national security threat, and therefore, a target under COINTELPRO.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***North Carolina's Black Power Movement and COINTELPRO Operations***

The prevalence of white supremacy and increased influence of the Klan in the late 1960s in North Carolina resulted in political conditions perfect for the rise of a more militant Black activism than had previously been present, so that by 1968, three separate attempts had been made at establishing a Black Panther Party chapter in the state. While the Panthers would not establish a chapter in North Carolina until 1970, the Black Power movement still found a significant following among local populations. However, reflecting the national trend, more traditional Civil Rights methods would have to fail before Black Power experienced its time in the spotlight.

North Carolina's history of Black activism is well established, with isolated protests occurring as early as the 1940s, and increasing in frequency during the 1950s as the fallout of 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was felt across the North and the South. The start of a new decade brought a new wave of Civil Rights protests to North Carolina, beginning with the Greensboro sit-ins in February 1960. According to one author, this now infamous event was the starting point on a road that would lead not only to the Selma March, but that also paved the way for the Black Power movement across the nation.<sup>1</sup> While the truth of this statement is yet undecided in the historical record, there is no question in the North Carolinian context, the Greensboro sit-ins did pave the road for Black Power in the state, with Civil Rights activism beginning in Greensboro and spreading to several other metropolises before the decade was out.

Launched by four students from the Agricultural and Technical College (A&T), the Greensboro sit-ins quickly inspired similar sit-ins across North Carolina and neighbouring states.

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<sup>1</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 99.

Though these protests did result in gains such as the desegregation of lunch counters, they had little effect on the deep-seated prejudice and resistance to change still found among much of North Carolina's white population, regardless of class or social standing. However, the sit-ins had two other longer-term effects that would go on to become significant in the story of Civil Rights and Black Power in the state. First, it instilled in the youth of North Carolina a deep desire for activism and change and, moving forward, the primary actors of Black Power in the state were college-aged men and women.<sup>2</sup> This holds true not only for Greensboro, but also subsequent Black Power movements in Charlotte and Winston-Salem.<sup>3</sup> Second, the Greensboro sit-ins demonstrated that if change was going to occur, Blacks would need to force that change.<sup>4</sup> A 1964 report filed by North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford proves this point; entitled *North Carolina and the Negro*, the report concludes that the majority of desegregation in the state came about as a result of Black initiatives and protests.<sup>5</sup>

While there was plenty of Black activism to address in Greensboro, it was not until 1968 that a more militant type of activism resembling a Black Power movement emerged. Once again, most of the activism was connected to school campuses, both high schools and colleges. According to one author, "A&T [was] perhaps the most radical Black campus in the state...", and it was A&T student Eric Brown who began the first serious attempt to form a Black Panther Party chapter in North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> Brown had some previous experience with the Panthers, whom

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Friedman, "Picking up Where Robert F. Williams Left Off: The Winston-Salem Branch of the Black Panther Party" in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, edited by Judson F. Jefferies, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 48-49.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, leaders in these towns often credit the student movements in Greensboro for sparking their interest in Black Power and activism

<sup>4</sup> This is a fact that is also embedded in the generation of the time based on knowing their own history. IN the mid 1950s, an NAACP leader, Robert F. Williams, began stocking pilling equipment and weapons for a Black militia in response to increased Klan violence in the state. While his efforts and radical rhetoric lost him his place in the NAACP, Klan activity, when faced with the possibility of a Black militia, did diminish in the area. Friedman, 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> As cited in Friedman, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Friedman, 50-51.

he had met and worked with during his school breaks at home in New York City. Because of his connections to the New York City Panthers, Brown invited Harold Avant, a Panther active both in New York and New Jersey, to come to Greensboro and assist in organizing a new chapter.<sup>7</sup> While the student body was active prior to Avant's arrival in early 1969, Avant provided key organizational leadership which took the sporadic protests and expressions of anger and directed them into a recognizable organization that by June 1969, neared thirty members.<sup>8</sup> Though it is worth noting that along with his organizational ability and leadership, Avant also brought a more violent and militant rhetoric to Greensboro as well. Not only did Avant frequently advocate methods of tracking law enforcement and the use of firearms against police, he also provided training sessions on how to properly detonate explosives and how to pick proper targets for bombings to ensure maximum damage.<sup>9</sup> Despite his violent rhetoric, Avant was rarely found at the scenes of violent activities, and was never arrested, leading many to suspect him of being an agent provocateur and an informant for the Bureau, though the truth behind this claim remains to be seen.<sup>10</sup>

In early December 1968, just before Avant's arrival, Stokely Carmichael was invited to speak at the A&T campus, and in the days following his appearance the student body initiated a boycott of classes. This resulted in a series of clashes with local law enforcement, and the suspension of Eric Brown, who was blamed for orchestrating these events.<sup>11</sup> In February 1969, as a follow-up to the boycott, and in part to protest the suspension of Brown, Black students led by activist Nelson Johnson occupied the administration buildings on campus. This event

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<sup>7</sup> Friedman, 51; FBI-Charlotte part 1, 117-118, 2/7/69.

<sup>8</sup> Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980*, (London: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Fergus, 10-101.

<sup>10</sup> Fergus, 101.

<sup>11</sup> Friedman, 51.



remained peaceful, with the College's administration leading a negotiation to address the student's concerns.<sup>12</sup> However, it did not take long for violence to become an issue for Black Power activists in Greensboro.

In the weeks and months following the February occupation, activists clashed with police on several occasions, beginning with clashes at a Malcom X memorial service organized by the Greensboro Association for Poor People (GAPP), of which Nelson Johnson was a part. Police blocked the side-walks leading to the building where the memorial was to take place, causing attendees to force their way through to reach the memorial service. Furthermore, a tear gas canister was set off, and while police claim it was an accident, others insist that it was done to provoke a response from the Black community.<sup>13</sup> While further violence was avoided in this case, the same could not be said a few weeks later when police and students clashed as mostly Black cafeteria staff at the A&T campus went on strike to protest their wages. Over twenty-five hundred students boycotted the cafeteria and walked off campus in a show of solidarity; the subsequent demonstration led students to the home of the A&T President, where the police attempted to keep students away from the house. As more students flooded the area, they began throwing rocks and bottles, and the police responded with gunfire, though it is unclear who exactly threw the first stone or fired the first shot, as it were. Following the events at the President's home, some students took to vandalizing property in order to express their frustration over the police response. In this group of students was Eric Brown, who damaged and stole merchandise from Sid's Curb Market, a small convenience store near the campus. Brown was eventually arrested and charged in the incident.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chafe, 257-258.

<sup>13</sup> Chafe, 258.

<sup>14</sup> Brown was charged with theft, vandalism and inciting a riot, and was sentenced to between two and six years in prison. Fergus, 100.

The incidents over the workers' strike and subsequent demonstrations represent the first time Black activists and police had traded violence in Greensboro; the next major clash would result in the death of one student, Willie Graves. In early May 1969, students at Dudley High School, an all Black school in Greensboro, walked out in protest over the administration's decision to ban a student from running for a position in student government. The individual in question was Claude Barnes, who was banned due to his connection to GAPP and Black radicalism. Barnes, along with hundreds of his classmates, walked out of school and maintained their boycott for over two weeks, at which point frustration with the lack of response from the school caused tempers to boil over. Students began to throw bottles and rocks at the building, and at the police; police responded by using tear gas to subdue the crowd, even going as far as to beat some students with billy-clubs when tear gas did not work.

As the riots at Dudley High School were brought under control, students at A&T began to act in solidarity with their younger counter-parts. Faced with rioting at both the high school and across the A&T campus, police were overwhelmed. With A&T student Willie Graves already lying dead due to gunshot wounds, a state of emergency was soon declared, and the National Guard mobilized to address the rioting at A&T. With the campus closed the following day, the National Guard and local law enforcement swept the campus, and, at finding a mostly empty and quiet campus, they took to shooting walls and doors out of frustration.<sup>15</sup>

While the Dudley High School incident was by no means that last expression of Black Power in Greensboro, it was not the final time police and protestors would clash in the city. However, over the summer of 1969, events did slow down as Eric Brown was convicted on charges related to the Sid's Curb Market event, and Nelson Johnson of GAPP was convicted on

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<sup>15</sup> Friedman, 53.

chargers related to the Dudley High School riots. Meanwhile, Harold Avant, suspected of being a FBI informant, disappeared and never returned to North Carolina.<sup>16</sup>

There are a few interesting things to take away from this overview of events in Greensboro that will be echoed both in the cases of Charlotte and Winston-Salem, and their respective experiences with Black Power and activism. The first is the beginnings of what journalist and author Gail Sheehy describes as “Panthermania”—the constant fixation and paranoia surrounding the BPP, especially in law enforcement.<sup>17</sup> This manifested itself in many ways in Greensboro. For example, there was the tendency of police to over-deploy officers to events connected to Black Power. In response to the Malcolm X memorial hosted by GAPP—an event that did not include any sort of planned demonstration—nine police cruisers appeared on location, followed shortly by a bus with armed reinforcements.<sup>18</sup> Another way panthermania manifested was in how law enforcement, both local and federal, applied the label of “Panther”. Despite that fact that FBI records acknowledge that as of 21 May 1969 a charter establishing a North Carolina branch of the BPP had not been issued by the Panther’s national headquarters, there was a persistence by law enforce to label any activity associated with Black Power or Black militancy as being the product of direct Black Panther involvement.<sup>19</sup> The reason for this insistence is multifaceted, and beyond the scope of what is required here, however, the result of this fixation on the Panthers meant that any and all events connected to men like Brown and Johnson were immediately flagged and heavily surveilled.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the FBI often forwarded intelligence reports to the Greensboro police without proper verification, which

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<sup>16</sup> Fergus, 101.

<sup>17</sup> As cited in Friedman, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Chafe, 258.

<sup>19</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 1, pg. 40, 5/23/69; Chafe, 260; Friedman, 53; Fergus, 100.

<sup>20</sup> Friedman, 53.

occasionally resulted in local law enforcement taking action they otherwise might not have taken, and even in cases where local law enforcement did not act upon federal intelligence, reports from the Bureau likely contributed to the deteriorating relationship and lack of trust between law enforcement and Black Power advocates in Greensboro.<sup>21</sup>

These trends seen in Greensboro—the over deployment of force and the application of the Panther label to anyone belonging to the Black Power movement—are also characteristic of the behaviour by the FBI and local law enforcement in Charlotte, which experienced its own explosion of Black Power and activism in the late 1960s. Events in Charlotte revolved largely around the Afro-American Unity Organization (AAUO), which was established by Ben Chavis and Jerome Johnson towards the end of 1968. The goal of the AAUO was to form a Panther chapter in North Carolina, and the organization was set up accordingly, mirroring the Panther's leadership structure, political platform, rhetoric, and image.<sup>22</sup> By December 1968, Chavis had established contact with the Panthers' national headquarters, and was working on collecting the necessary three-hundred dollar entrance fee.<sup>23</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the actions of the AAUO were immediately noticed by local law enforcement and the FBI, and both began tracking their activities with rigor.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the AAUO was able to raise the necessary funds to apply for a Black Panther charter, however they never received a charter due to the nation-wide purge and leadership crisis occurring in the Black

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<sup>21</sup> William Chafe describes one case where local law enforcement officers were advised by federal intelligence reports that a Black radical had planned to bomb several targets, including police vehicles and public buildings. This report was dated just before the riots at Dudley High School, which may help explain the severity of police response and the decision of the Governor to issue a state of emergency and deploy National Guard troops. Chafe, 260-261.

<sup>22</sup> Friedman, 54.

<sup>23</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 1, pg. 132, 12/16/68; Friedman, 54.

<sup>24</sup> For example, one FBI memorandum dated 19 May 1969 notes that the AAUO was organizing a small rally on private property. The memo is copied not only to the FBI Field Office in Washington D.C. and the Director (which was standard practice), but also noted that “local and state authorities cognizant” and “Military and secret service were advised”. Furthermore, a stamp on the bottom of the memo recommends forwarding the information to the White House and the Attorney General. See FBI-Charlotte part 1, pgs. 64-65, 5/19/69.

Panther Party.<sup>25</sup> Undeterred by the lack of an official charter, the AAUO continued its operations, including several protest events such as replacing the flags on the University of North Carolina's campus with black flags, and rallies at local high schools to protest the inequality of fund distribution to Black education.<sup>26</sup>

The first significant altercation between law enforcement and the AAUO occurred in May 1969, following a raid of AAUO's central offices which resulted in the arrest of two AAUO members for firearms violations.<sup>27</sup> According to FBI documentation, the raid was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and the Internal Revenue Service, with no participation by FBI agents; the AAUO disagreed, claiming that FBI Special Agent Dean Paarman was crucial in the planning and execution of the raid.<sup>28</sup> With the assistance of lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the AAUO filed restraining orders against unspecified agents from all agencies involved (FBI, ATF, and IRS), as well as local law enforcement. A civil case was opened in June 1969, and Paarman was interviewed concerning his role in the raid. Paarman denied being involved, a statement that was reinforced by a memo from the FBI Director's office.<sup>29</sup> The case was eventually dismissed over a year later without any result.

While the civil case lingered in the court system, the AAUO ran into more serious problems that would mark the end of the AAUO, and their efforts to establish a Panther chapter in Charlotte. On 3 August 1969, nine members of the AAUO were involved in an altercation

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<sup>25</sup> There was significant disagreement between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver as to the correct way to respond police interference and what was best for the Black community. Newton advocated a community focus, emphasising services that aided community development and self-sustainability while Cleaver advocated for more militant response, and a unified response from all oppressed people, which isolated him among those who felt he was neglecting the Black community. The breakdown in their relationship is well-established in the academic literature.

<sup>26</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 2, pg. 7, 7/24/69; Friedman, 54-55.

<sup>27</sup> Friedman, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Friedman, 55.

<sup>29</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 6, pgs. 64-66, 6/4/69.

with white teenagers. While the exact details are unclear, reports indicate that the white teens yelled racial slurs at the AAUO members, who responded by brandishing weapons and firing shots at the teens. No serious injuries were sustained, and nine members of the AAUO were arrested and charged with creating public terror and fire-arms violations.

While the events of 3 August were detrimental to the AAUO's image and standing as a potential Panther chapter, the events of mid-August proved to be the undoing of the AAUO. The night of 16 August 1969, AAUO members James Black and James Prather were caught stalking a restaurant delivery van by the restaurant's owners, Otis Blackmon and his son, Otis James Blackmon. An initial argument between the two parties resulted in Prather being stabbed, though the injury was not serious. A few hours later Black and Prather returned with reinforcements, several of whom carried firearms; the Blackmons were prepared for their reappearance, having also armed themselves. Shots were exchanged, and several people suffered gunshot and stabbing wounds, including a bystander.

While only one AAUO member faced serious legal repercussions (James Black was arrested and charged with assault with a deadly weapon), the Panthers in Oakland were highly concerned none-the-less. Aiming to avoid shouldering the blame for the events in Charlotte, the headquarters in Oakland published an article in the 13 September edition of their newspaper denouncing the AAUO for their foolish actions.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, several days later, Panther Bobby Lee, of the Chicago chapter, spoke at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte; during his speech, he called the shootout unnecessary and harmful to Panthers across the country. The AAUO disbanded completely by the end of September 1969.

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<sup>30</sup> The article is entitled "Panthers, Pigs and Fools", and represented the final piece of communication between the hopeful Panthers in North Carolina and the national headquarters in Oakland. As cited in Fergus, 98.

After two failed attempts at establishing a Panther chapter in North Carolina, and with the national organization in crisis throughout 1968 and 1969, it seemed unlikely that the Panthers would ever establish themselves in the North Carolina. Activists and Panther sympathizers, however, were determined as Winston-Salem emerged as another hot-bed for Black Power activism. As with Greensboro and Charlotte, the majority of those involved in Winston-Salem's Black Power movement were college aged, but unlike their counter-parts, they acted with more restraint. The Organization of Black Liberation, established in late 1968 and led by Nelson Malloy and Robert Greer, focused largely on community service projects, a central tenant of the Panther organization, and limited their violent rhetoric, particularly concerning gun violence. Through this careful regulation of activities and hard work, the group received a charter from the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF) in October 1969.<sup>31</sup>

Less than a month after receiving their charter, the NCCF in Winston-Salem launched a Free Breakfast for Children program, which was their first and longest running community service project.<sup>32</sup> As was the case with breakfast programs across the country, the Winston-Salem program attracted the attention of the FBI and local law enforcement. In an interview with historian Benjamin Friedman, Larry Little, a founding member of the NCCF in Winston-Salem, recalls "Within the breakfast program the police would follow our van as we picked up kids [to]

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<sup>31</sup> The NCCF emerged as an organization out of the 1969 National Revolutionary Conference for a United Front Against Fascism, an event co-sponsored by several groups including the Panthers. Gaining an NCCF charter was a common step that many hopeful Panther chapters took before officially receiving their Panther charter. Even after Panther charters were granted, the NCCF and Panthers would often share resources and even office spaces. As a result of the close relationship between the two organizations, law enforcement often classified the NCCF as a shell organization for the Panthers, and treated NCCF members as if they were Panthers. FBI-Charlotte part 4, pg. 33, 10/2/69.

<sup>32</sup> Their efforts in establishing this program were recognized in the 22 November 1969 edition of *The Black Panther*, in an article entitled "Free Breakfast Program N.C."

bring them to the office. And we would blow the horn...and the police would arrest the party members for unnecessary use of the horn.”<sup>33</sup>

Besides their breakfast program, the NCCF in Winston-Salem used community housing practices as their primary method of outreach. It is important to note that support for the NCCF was far from unanimous, particularly as they began to advocate a more militant stance on self defense. The use of housing as a focal point helped to moderate this change in rhetoric, and generated a fair bit of public interest, which the NCCF capitalized on by organizing a large rally in early May 1970. It was at this rally that Larry Little emerged as the future leader of the Black Power movement in Winston-Salem, and by mid June 1970 Little had taken over leadership of the NCCF chapter.

The change of leadership was significant; unlike the previous leader, Robert Greer, Larry Little did not have a job outside of working for the organization. Little was also significantly younger, at only twenty years old when he took the leadership. Under his guidance, local issues became the organization’s central focus, and non-violent action was the order of the day.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps one of the best examples of the type of activism Little advocated and organized was the boycott of the A&P grocery store located in a predominately Black community. In a lengthy article in *The Black Panther*, Little explained that Sara Alford, a Black woman, suffered a serious injury when she reached into a display barrel that contained broken glass. The owner of the store refused to provide any medical compensation, and a civil suit was dismissed in the municipal courts. Until the A&P store agreed to pay for Alford’s medical treatment and lost wages, as well as providind donations to the NCCF breakfast program, a boycott was organized, with the majority of the community participating. Little concluded his *Panther* article by stating

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<sup>33</sup> As cited in Friedman, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Friedman, 63-64.



“Either you make the A&P relevant to the needs of the Black community or GET OUT.”  
(original emphasis).<sup>35</sup>

With this increase in community activism, and a noticeable decrease in violent activity, the FBI began using more subtle tactics against the NCCF. Additionally, law enforcement did little to hide the fact that they were tracking NCCF members, resorting to such tactics as shining flashlights through windows at night and openly surveilling the NCCF offices. Perhaps the most common tactic used against the NCCF was the orchestrating of evictions, both from office spaces and personal residences. The reasons for evictions varied, sometimes it was due to a failure to pay rent (even if rent was received), and other times it was because the landlords were informed that their tenants were NCCF or Panther members, and sometimes it had to do with the presence of weaponry kept on premise. Whatever the reason, every eviction gave federal and local law enforcement the opportunity to search the premise and confiscate any material they deemed illegal or dangerous. To illustrate the severity of this problem, over a four-day period in February 1971, two groups of NCCF members were evicted from personal residences, and a third group faced eviction but was ultimately allowed to stay. In total, between November 1970 and March 1971, the NCCF office was forced to move five times.<sup>36</sup> Though these evictions usually resulted in only minor outbreaks of violence and rarely led to arrests, there is one notable exception from February 1971. The so-called “High Point Raid” resulted in a major stand-off with police, with NCCF and police members exchanging heavy fire before police used tear gas, forcing the NCCF members to surrender. A year later, three NCCF members were convicted on

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<sup>35</sup> Larry Little, “We Will Run the Capitalists out of Our Communities”, *The Black Panther*, 20 June 1970, pg. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Friedman, 70.

charges of assault with a deadly weapon and intent to kill; they were each sentenced to ten years in prison.<sup>37</sup>

Evictions continued to be a problem for members of the NCCF, and the start of 1971 brought with it the start of a new legal challenge that would follow the NCCF members for over a year. According to FBI and police records, a meat truck belonging to the Chatham Meat Company was stolen on 12 January and was shortly recovered by the owner after they found it parked outside the NCCF headquarters. A search warrant for the house was issued, resulting in a stand-off between police and the NCCF members in the home, and while the ensuing shoot-out did not result in any injuries, a fire did occur in the house. Two NCCF members were arrested that night in relation to the theft, and a week later, on 19 January, two more were arrested on charges connected to the theft.<sup>38</sup> The NCCF viewed the events of 12 January differently. In an interview, Larry Little argued that the FBI orchestrated the theft using an informant to not only find the new headquarters building, but also using the informant to tell the NCCF members that the meat company was donating food to their breakfast program, which explains why no NCCF member questioned why the truck was parked out front.<sup>39</sup>

While the charges against the NCCF members lingered in the court system for over a year, the fall-out of the fire and the theft, as well as the continued evictions, created financial setbacks that limited the ability of the NCCF to expand its community service programs. Any expansions to their programs were modest, with services like pest control and transportation for prison visits being made available to local community members. The biggest additions to their programs were the introduction of sickle-cell anemia tests funded by the NCCF, and the

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<sup>37</sup> Friedman, 70-71.

<sup>38</sup> This second set of arrests included Larry Little, who despite not even being at the headquarters on 12 January, was allegedly identified by a NCCF informer as the individual who drove the truck to the building.

<sup>39</sup> As cited in Friedman, 69.

introduction of an ambulance service. In June 1971, the group had begun the process of refurbishing a hearse to use as an ambulance, and members of the NCCF enrolled in emergency medical technician classes at a local community college; by the end of the summer, the ambulance service was ready for community use.<sup>40</sup>

The goal of introducing these new community services was two-fold for the NCCF. First, they were at a critical juncture as to their survival in the community. The High Point shoot-out and the violence surrounding the meat truck theft had created a lot of bad press for the chapter, and they were seeking to improve their image and standing in the community. Second, and more importantly, they were seeking to highlight the racial bias that existed in the distribution of services in Winston-Salem. By providing services to community members that they did not otherwise receive, or could not afford, the NCCF made itself relevant and, in some cases, essential to the growth and well-being of the Black community in Winston-Salem.

Concerning the legal challenges facing the NCCF, they did win a moderate victory during the case against Little over his involvement in the meat truck theft from January 1971. In the lead-up to the trial in September of the same year, the NCCF won a significant legal victory when a superior court judge agreed with Little's lawyer that he could not receive a fair trial in the district he was being tried in due to the disparity of between potential Black and white jurors. As a result, the trial was moved to a different district, and in 1973, the three NCCF members still facing charges plead no contest and were sentenced accordingly.

The NCCF in Winston-Salem remained active for several more years beyond 1972. In part this was due to the cancellation of COINTELPRO in May 1971 and the death of Hoover a

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<sup>40</sup> This service would go on to be the most successful endeavour organized by the NCCF in Winston-Salem, so much so that by 1973, they had received enough donations that they bought several other vehicles and operated a fleet of emergency medical vehicles and crews.

year later in May 1972. While the organization still faced police harassment and surveillance after these dates, it was less obtrusive. Additionally, violent confrontations between the NCCF and law enforcement decreased, resulting in fewer legal challenges, which boosted the groups finances as they did not have to constantly worry about paying bail or legal fees. Two factors contributed to the end of the NCCF in Winston-Salem in 1976. The first was that many of the NCCF leaders, including Larry Little, wished to pursue political careers outside the bounds of the NCCF organization, and second, the Black Panther Party was slowly collapsing at the national level, recalling all branches to Oakland to consolidate power. Unwilling to move, most members in Winston-Salem chose to simply let the branch die a natural death.

The legacy of Black Power in North Carolina is hard to deny and is perhaps best summed up by Larry Little. When asked about what was the NCCF's most significant contribution to the Civil Rights and Black Power movement, he suggested that it was instilling the Black community with the pride, desire, and tools necessary to stand up and defend themselves and their rights.<sup>41</sup> While he was speaking to the conditions in Winston-Salem, Little's point holds true for expressions of Black Power across North Carolina. Activists in all three cities-Charlotte, Greensboro and Winston-Salem-looked around them and decided that the changes they wanted to happen were not going to happen unless they took more forceful action than advocated by the "traditional" Civil Rights movement. This, of course, means that Black Power has a very complicated legacy. For all the good these organizations achieved through things like community service programs, they were also violent. As historian Benjamin Friedman writes, "The use of the gun as a symbol of liberation is a double-edged sword."<sup>42</sup> He goes on to point out that in the case of Charlotte, undisciplined violence was directly responsible for their failure as a potential

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<sup>41</sup> As cited in Friedman, 80-81.

<sup>42</sup> Friedman, 81.

Panther chapter. This complicated relationship with violence, and the legacy of empowerment are both important facts to keep in mind as we now turn to the analysis of COINTELPRO, and how it factors into the story of Black Power and extremism in North Carolina.

### **Charlotte Field Office: COINTELPRO operations against the Black Panthers<sup>43</sup>**

The declassified records from the Charlotte Field Office that pertain to the Black Panther Party in the state are some of the most comprehensive COINTELPRO records available to the public. In most cases relating to declassified COINTELPRO documents, they are collected and catalogued by subject (New Left, White Hate, Black Extremism, etc.) with no further efforts to organize them by field office or chronology; however, due to the volume of documents available from the Charlotte office and their investigation into matters of Black Extremism, these documents have been separated out into one unified collection pertaining to Black Extremism in North Carolina.<sup>44</sup>

The Black Extremism-Charlotte file is divided up into 34 sub-files all in PDF format. The total file contains 2,977 pages, divided into over 725 documents, which range from one-page memorandums to very lengthy intelligence reports.<sup>45</sup> In going through these records, 585 documents were identified as containing substantial information relative to the research question

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<sup>43</sup> Given the amount of identifying information that is available for each document, and the public accessibility of the documents, it is important to make clear how these documents will be referenced moving forward. When a document is identified, the citation will appear as follows: the file name (FBI-Charlotte for example), number of the PDF part, the page number within the PDF, date on the document. This is the same format that will be used when discussing the FBI-White Hate files as well.

<sup>44</sup> Currently, there is no information as to why so many documents from North Carolina and the Charlotte office were available compared to other field offices and given that there has yet to be a significant study based on these documents, it seems unlikely that they were previously released for academic purposes.

<sup>45</sup> The longest document, for example, is an intelligence report from 28 January 1971, and is 185 pages in length. See FBI-Charlotte files, part 22 pg. 3, 1/28/71. Other documents contain less than two lines of text.

at hand.<sup>46</sup> Of those documents identified, 334 were produced by the Charlotte Field Office, 182 were produced by the San Francisco Field Office which was responsible for tracking the Panther's national headquarters in Oakland, 31 by the FBI Headquarters (listed as Director in the documents), and 48 by other sources.<sup>47</sup> The earliest document catalogued for this research is dated 29 October 1968, and the last document is dated 5 April 1976, though the overwhelming majority (527 of 585) of the documents were produced between 1969 and 1972.<sup>48</sup>

In order to categorize these documents in a way that lends itself to the research at hand, the content of each document was considered and then the document was sorted into one of three categories depending upon the purpose of the document and the information it contained. The document categories are: monthly intelligence reports, special intelligence reports, and activity reports.<sup>49</sup> Each of these categories will be looked at separately, as each type of document offers a unique look at the nature of FBI counter-intelligence and the methods used by the Bureau.

### *Monthly Intelligence Reports*

These reports, filed on a monthly basis as suggested by their name, are primarily summaries of Black Panther activity in the state, as well as known Panther residences,

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<sup>46</sup> Several factors were taken into account when deciding on which documents to catalogue for this research. The issues of legibility and the extent to which the document had been redacted are the two biggest reasons a document would be excluded from this study. If the document could be accurately read, it was discarded to avoid reader bias when attempting to interpret the information. Similarly, if the unredacted information was not sufficient to create a clear understanding of the subject matter being discussed in the document, it too was discarded.

<sup>47</sup> Such as other field offices (Atlanta, New York, Newark, etc.) or the Attorney General's Office. There were also a number of intelligence reports that were co-produced by Field Offices which are included in this number, as well as several documents where the sender's and recipient's names were redacted.

<sup>48</sup> A year by year breakdown is as follows: 1968: three documents, 1969: eighty-eight documents, 1970: one hundred and forty documents, 1971: two-hundred and ten documents, 1972: eighty documents, 1973: nineteen documents, 1974: fourteen documents, 1975: twenty-one documents, 1976: one document.

<sup>49</sup> Some documents were listed as belonging to two categories, often times due to the fact that a report from the FBI Charlotte office would contain summaries of several different events and activities taking place in North Carolina at any given point in time. In those cases, the document was added to all appropriate categories, and a note was made that the document was included in several categories.

membership numbers, status of leadership, public appearance, and other relevant information. Additionally, included in this category are summaries of the financial status of the BPP in North Carolina; these were also filed monthly.<sup>50</sup> Monthly and financial summaries provide perhaps the broadest view of the relationship between the FBI and the Panthers, as they reveal the extent to which the Bureau was aware of the Panthers. These reports do not contain the level of detail found in special intelligence reports or day-to-day airtel communications, but they still manage to provide a summary of the entire Panther chapter in a couple of pages. The ability to provide intelligence across several different metrics (such as membership, residences and public appearances) on a consistent month to month basis points to a level of dedication to the job on behalf of the agents assigned to COINTELPRO, particularly considering these monthly summaries were a required report in addition to all their other work.

These monthly summaries and financial reports provide insight into several elements of COINTELPRO, such as methods of intelligence gathering, counter-intelligence actions, and the relationship between field offices and local law enforcement; however, that is not the only information that can be gleaned from these documents. What these reports do exceptionally well is reveal the priorities of COINTELPRO and the investigation into the Panthers. If one looks back to the original purpose of COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, the program was designed to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, and otherwise neutralize” any Black Extremist group; that original airtel establishing COINTELPRO-Black Extremism continues on to read “the activities of all such groups...must be followed on a continuous basis so we [the Bureau] will be in a position to

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<sup>50</sup> The monthly summaries available begin in February 1970 and continue until March 1975, the only entry missing from this time period is a monthly summary from April 1971. It should be noted that in April 1973, the Bureau switched from monthly summaries to quarterly summaries. As a result, there are a total of forty-five monthly and quarterly summaries available. Financial status reports found less frequently in the FBI documents, with twenty-five summaries beginning in August 1970 and continue until March 1973. Financial status reports beginning in April 1973 were included with the quarterly summaries, thus rendering a separate financial report unnecessary.

promptly take advantage of all opportunities for counter-intelligence.”<sup>51</sup> Requiring monthly summaries from field offices was simply the Bureau ensuring that they would be in a position to act whenever they felt it was necessary.

Each month, every field office investigating the Black Panthers needed to be able to provide a summary of how many Panthers were active in the area, who was in charge of those Panthers, where these Panthers resided, what the Panthers were doing, how they were funding their activities, and when those activities were going to take place. In essence, each monthly and financial summary had to answer “who, what, when, where and how”. Without knowing that basic information, the Bureau would have been woefully unprepared to act in many circumstances.

Furthermore, the information gathered not only prepared the Bureau to act on counter-intelligence opportunities when they arose, they had a second, and perhaps, unintentional use: they could present opportunities for counter-intelligence. It has already been established that the field offices generated significant amounts of data, and it is not unreasonable to assume that some of that information was overlooked or simply ignored at the time because it was not deemed important enough to warrant action when it was recorded. However, monthly summaries, particularly the section of the report that discussed factionalism within the group and the activities taken by the Panthers in the past month served as the perfect place to record and track the progress of an event without creating a dedicated counter-intelligence operation.

Take, for example, the Charlotte monthly report from July 1971 which includes a section concerning factionalism in the North Carolina Panthers. It notes that former Panther Lilly Ruth Jones was kicked out of the local chapter, in part for her support of Eldridge Cleaver as leader of

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<sup>51</sup> FBI-Black Extremism part 1, pgs. 3-5, 8/25/67.



the national Panthers organization which put her at odds with the rest of the Carolina Panthers who remained loyal to Huey Newton. After her expulsion from the local Party chapter, she expressed interest and was working on establishing a rival chapter in the area.<sup>52</sup> The report does not say much else concerning her efforts, but the next several monthly summaries contain information concerning the possibility of a “Cleaver-faction” organization in North Carolina, and in the October 1971 summary it is noted that an underground group supporting Cleaver had moved into an undisclosed office location in North Carolina.<sup>53</sup> The possibility of factionalism among the Carolina Panthers along the Cleaver/Newton divide never prompted a formal counter-intelligence action, and only appears in a three other documents from the FBI-Charlotte file.<sup>54</sup> Without the monthly summary, there would be no way of knowing that attempts were made by individuals to start a Cleaver-faction group. Additionally, prior to the July 1971 monthly summary, the issue of factionalism was not included in monthly summaries; however, once it became an issue in July 1971, it became a part of all subsequent monthly reports. This is just one example of how the monthly summaries tracked issues not otherwise reported on, and how monthly summaries changed and adapted over time depending on the local context.

In addition to monthly summaries, field offices were required to provide report of financial standing, and while these were filed separately until April 1973, they really functioned as an extension of monthly summaries. They began with a summarization of known Panther residences, and then provided a summary of the source of income, followed by expenses, and a final statement as to the financial standing and how that affected operations; this last section was

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<sup>52</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 38-40, 7/7/71.

<sup>53</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 27, pgs. 30-33, 10/4/71.

<sup>54</sup> For other mentions see, FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 8-10, 3/3/7 which mentions Larry Little’s support of Newton. FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 14-15, 8/13/71, which also just confirms Little’s support of Newton, and FBI-Charlotte part 34, pgs. 82-86, 1/15/73 which reports that Little might be considering switching his support to Cleaver, but that other Carolina Panthers were not in agreement.

usually based upon information provided by unnamed informants. The purpose of these financial reports was not to provide possible counter-intelligence opportunities, but, once again, they had the added benefit of giving the Bureau the opportunity to track and anticipate future events. For example, in every financial summary from the year 1972, the rent being paid by the Panthers for their headquarters building is listed, as well as the fact that they were consistently behind in rent payments. This, combined with the Carolina Panthers' history of eviction, allowed the Bureau to make certain assumptions about where and when the Panthers might face their next eviction.<sup>55</sup>

There is no shortage of information available through the monthly summaries and financial reports included in the FBI-Charlotte file and reading through those documents provides an enticing glance into the relationship between the Charlotte Field Office and the Panther chapter operating in Winston Salem. Through the continuous efforts to document the names of Panther leadership, the addresses of headquarters and residencies, newspaper sales, and rent payments, light is not only shed on the operations of the Panthers, but the Bureau also revealed something about itself—it demonstrated clearly that its priority was to gather so much information that it was prepared for any action that Panthers might take, or any opportunity that might present itself. With a broad mandate to use almost any means necessary to disrupt, discredit or destroy Black Extremist groups, nothing was too small to be documented and nothing was left to chance. Monthly summaries were one way in which the Bureau ensured its field offices remained diligent and active in their investigation, and the Charlotte Field Office was no exception.

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<sup>55</sup> For the financial summaries from 1972, see FBI-Charlotte part 31, pgs. 40-42, 2/18/72; FBI-Charlotte part 31, pgs. 29-31, 3/21/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs. 94-96, 4/19/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs.77-79, 5/19/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs. 60-63, 6/20/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs. 33-35, 7/20/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs. 14-17, 8/21/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs.1-4, 9/20/74; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 84-87, 10/17/72; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 41-44, 11/17/72; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs.25-58, 11/19/72; FBI-Charlotte part 34, pgs. 79-81, 1/19/73.

*Special Intelligence Reports*

As their title suggests, these documents contain intelligence pertaining to non-standard activities and events connected to the Black Panther Party. Rallies, protests, guest-speakers, police confrontations, community survival events—these are all examples of events that were addressed in special intelligence reports. The length of these reports varied, as does the period of time covered in a report. Some only covered an investigation period of a week or two, while other investigations lasted several months. As with monthly intelligence reports, these special reports contain insight into multiple elements of COINTELPRO, but just as monthly intelligence reports highlight one specific element of COINTELPRO that might not be as clear in other types of documents, so too do the special intelligence reports. In this case, the documents reveal the scope and ambitious nature of COINTELPRO objectives concerning the Black Panther, and a few of the ways COINTELPRO agents sought to damage or discredit the Panthers in North Carolina. Moreover, they also speak to the culture of COINTELPRO, which demonstrated a level of operational conservatism, reflecting a risk-adverse approach to counter-intelligence work.

The most interesting collection of documents that demonstrate this fact are a series of reports which bear the subject-heading “Racial Matters-Seditious Conspiracy, Smith Act of 1940” and compile evidence of revolutionary intent and actions committed by the Panthers.<sup>56</sup> There are seven self-contained intelligence reports pertaining to a specific period of investigation in addition to ten other reports containing information about specific individuals or

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<sup>56</sup> Briefly, the Smith Act of 1940, or the Alien Registration Act, was passed in June 1940 and made it a criminal offense to advocate violence towards, or the overthrowing of the United States government. It may come as no surprise that Director Hoover was personally involved in the lobbying process for the Bill and was responsible for establishing the authority of federal agencies to use the Smith Act as part of their investigations into domestic espionage and “fifth column” organizations.

circumstances.<sup>57</sup> The seven self-contained reports represent some of the longest and most comprehensive summaries of Black Panther beliefs, motivations and propaganda found in the FBI-Charlotte file with the shortest report totaling thirty pages and the longest totally one hundred and seventy four.

Each of these reports was divided into five sections. Section I, *Revolutionary Programs and Policies as Expressed by Black Panther Party Leaders* consisted mostly of summaries of speeches given by various Panther leaders, especially when that leader was visiting from another Panther chapter. For example, the report filed on 28 May 1970 contains a transcript from a guest lecture delivered on 3 May 1970 by Brother Daruba, who was visiting from the New York Panthers. Part of his speech addressed Black men in uniform, urging them to “Stay in the army and off your captain and your colonel and your generals.”<sup>58</sup> It is interesting to note that on 26 May 1970, a request was sent to the Charlotte Field Office to investigate increased Panther activity and recruitment attempts at Fort Bragg, a major military installation approximately two hours away from Winston-Salem.<sup>59</sup>

Section II of these reports, *Acts in Furtherance of the Revolutionary Programs or Policies*, would summarize violent activities perpetrated or reported by the Panthers in the community; this section would often be accompanied by copies of newspapers articles, both from local papers as well as *The Black Panther* as is the case with the report filed on 3 September 1970. This particular report covered the period from 25 July until 27 August 1970 and included a description of the burning of the Winston-Salem Police Department Mobile Precinct

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<sup>57</sup> The seven self-contained reports can be found at: FBI-Charlotte part 13, pg. 70-part 14, pg. 20, 5/28/70; FBI-Charlotte, part 16, pgs. 36-98, 8/5/70; FBI-Charlotte part 15, pgs. 62-98, 9/3/70; FBI-Charlotte part 18, pgs. 30-55; 10/26/70; FBI-Charlotte part 17, pgs. 41-77, 11/25/70; FBI-Charlotte part 22, pgs.3- part 23, pgs. 87, 1/22/71; FBI-Charlotte part 26, pgs. 3-42; 4/22/71.

<sup>58</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 13, pg. 76-77, 5/28/70.

<sup>59</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 14, pg. 71, 5/26/70.

Trailer. The trailer, which was located in a predominately Black community popular among Black Panther members, was burnt on 20 August. In connection with this act of vandalism, the report referenced two different articles from the Panther newspaper; the first, from 18 July 1970 and the second, from 28 August 1970, argued that the Panthers, though innocent, fully expected to be blamed and harassed by the Police in relation to this act of vandalism.<sup>60</sup> While this is only one example, reports would often contain descriptions of multiple events. The report filed on 22 January 1971 describes eight different incidents from its reporting period, which was approximately two months.<sup>61</sup>

Section III of these report was dedicated to *Teaching of the Revolutionary Program*. Typically one of the shorter sections in the reports filed by the Charlotte Field Office, this section contained information about any political education classes being offered by the local Panther chapter, or the liberation schools, which were a part of a community service program targeted towards youth and offered during the summer. Generally, the information provided on these events included the names of the Panthers leading the event and a brief description of the curriculum being taught, as well as an estimate of attendance rates.<sup>62</sup> Section IV, *Documents Urging the Revolutionary Programs*, included no external intelligence gathered by field agents, but rather included a list and reproductions of leaflets, pamphlets, fliers, and news articles that advocated revolutionary activities such as rallies, workshops or classes, or self-defence instructions.<sup>63</sup> Finally, Section V, *Evidence of National Unity*, was dedicated to providing evidence of support between Panther chapters at the national level, or local cooperation between

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<sup>60</sup> “Pigs of Winston-Salem Model City Police Precinct are Attempting to Win the Sympathy of the People”, *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (18 July 1970), pg. 15; “Community Pig Precinct Fire-Bombed in Winston-Salem”, *The Black Panther*, vol. 5, no. 9, (29 August 1970), pg. 3; FBI-Charlotte part 15, pg. 66-67, 9/3/70.

<sup>61</sup> FBI-Charlotte, part 22, pg. 3, part 23, pgs. 50-52, 1/22/71.

<sup>62</sup> See the Special Intelligence report filed on 5 August 1970 for an example. FBI-Charlotte, part 16, pgs. 46-51; 8/5/70.

<sup>63</sup> For examples, see FBI-Charlotte, part 16, pgs. 52-73, 8/5/70; FBI-Charlotte, part 18, pgs. 42-44, 10/26/70.

Panther chapters and other organizations. This was consistently the shortest section in these reports, often noting simply that Winston-Salem Panthers had received a certain number of newspapers or leaflets from the Oakland chapter, and, on occasion, that individuals were travelling between different chapters.<sup>64</sup>

As scholars Wendy Brame and Thomas Shriver note in their research concerning these Smith Act reports, they very rarely contain new or unique intelligence, but rather, they pull together previously established intelligence in support of prosecution under the Smith Act.<sup>65</sup> Attempting to prosecute an individual or an organization under the Smith Act was a highly ambitious task, and had relatively little legal precedence, especially when the targets of the prosecution were American citizens. The legislative authority of the Smith Act allowed the government to indict and, in some cases, deport aliens (non-citizens) suspected of treason or foreign espionage, as well as requiring all aliens entering the United States to register.<sup>66</sup> Against the political backdrop of anti-communism and McCarthyism in the 1940s and 1950s, the Smith Act was used as a tool against foreign espionage, and while many of those indicted under the Smith Act were American citizens, the majority were immigrants suspected of being Communist subversives. By the 1960s, several Smith Act cases had appeared before the Supreme Court and were ruled unconstitutional largely because the relationship between holding to a certain political ideology and advocating treason was too ill-defined. Despite the lack of legal precedence, and multiple legal challenges facing the Smith Act, the Charlotte office continued to launch these special investigations and continued to reply to requests from the Attorney General's office for

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<sup>64</sup> See FBI-Charlotte part 23, pgs. 77-82, 1/22/71; FBI-Charlotte part 17, pgs. 58-61, 11/25/70; FBI-Charlotte part 18, pg. 45, 10/26/70.

<sup>65</sup> Wendy Brame and Thomas Shriver, "Surveillance and social control: The FBI's Handling of the Black Panther Party in North Carolina", *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2013), 508-509.

<sup>66</sup> The text of the Smith Act 1940 is available online through the Library of Congress.

information on individuals.<sup>67</sup> The effort required to compile these reports, given the unlikelihood of an indictment, indicates just how ambitious the goals of COINTELPRO were, and provides an ideal of how many ways the Bureau sought to achieve their goals of discrediting and destroying the Panthers.

If prosecution under the Smith Act represented a highly ambitious task and the final goal of COINTELPRO, a much more pragmatic goal demonstrated by the same special intelligence reports was the hope of collecting information on firearms violations, which in turn might lead to legal action against the Panthers. While the FBI-Charlotte file does not indicate whether the information collected by the Charlotte Field Office was ever used in the prosecution of a Panther, notes on the acquisition and ownership of firearms appeared in several intelligence reports and other documents beginning as early as May 1969 and continuing as late as April 1976.

Unlike the Smith Act intelligence reports, which are limited to the Panthers group in Winston-Salem, there are few of the intelligence reports which address firearms ownership and the Black Power groups both in Greensboro and Charlotte. A report filed on 23 May 1969 provided a summary of the Black Extremist organizations in Charlotte and Greensboro, as well as the fledgling organization in Winston-Salem that had yet to really establish itself.<sup>68</sup> In relation to Charlotte and the AAUO, it noted that members were observed carrying both small caliber pistols and shotguns; it also mentioned that individuals were buying clothing like hunting jackets specifically designed to carry more ammunition on their persons.<sup>69</sup> Similar comments were made about the group operating in Greensboro, including that leaders there wished to acquire sub-machine guns but had been unable to do so. The report also indicated that Panthers had taken to

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<sup>67</sup> For reports responding the Attorney General's office, see FBI-Charlotte part 7, pgs. 62-65, 1/6/70; FBI-Charlotte part 6, pgs. 15-20, 5/6/70.

<sup>68</sup> For the full report, see FBI-Charlotte part 1, pgs.22-63, 5/23/69.

<sup>69</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 1, pgs. 32-33, 5/25/69.

issuing threats to local businesses who refused to provide them with donations, promising to return armed to receive their donations.<sup>70</sup>

Compared to Charlotte and Greensboro, the section of the 23 May report on Winston-Salem noted that there was no information to report on firearms or weapons violations.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, nothing to report became a common phrase in reference to Winston-Salem and the acquisition of firearms, especially by 1972, when the Panthers in Winston-Salem began making a concerted effort to improve their image and focus on community service programs. An intelligence report filed in June 1972 indicated that both the headquarters building and all known “pads” (places of residence and headquarters) had ceased the posting of armed guards and did not possess any sort of fortification in the form of sandbags or wire mesh over the windows. Furthermore, no weapons were being stored at the headquarters building at this time.<sup>72</sup> Reports filed in October 1972, April 1973, and April and September 1974 contained similar comments concerning the Panthers’ attempts to improve their image.<sup>73</sup>

These observations from 1972 onward indicated a significant change in Panther behaviour, considering a series of reports from September, October, and November 1970, and January, February, March, and June 1971 all contained information concerning weapons caches and the fortification of Panther residences, though it is noted in several of these reports that the Panthers had not been found in violation of any gun laws.<sup>74</sup> Yet, the behaviour of the Special Agents observing and collecting this data did not change despite the fact that the Panthers in

<sup>70</sup> FBI-Charlotte, part 1, pgs. 45-46, 5/23/69.

<sup>71</sup> FBI-Charlotte, part 1, pgs. 55-56, 5/23/69.

<sup>72</sup> FBI-Charlotte, part 30, pg. 40-43, 6/29/72.

<sup>73</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 79-82, 10/20/72; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 61-78, 10/31/72; FBI-Charlotte part 34, pg. 55, 4/14/73; FBI-Charlotte part 33, pg. 75, 4/2/74; FBI-Charlotte part 33, pg. 38, 9/30/74.

<sup>74</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 15, pgs. 30-31, 9/24/70; FBI-Charlotte part 17, pg.96-part 18, pgs. 2-3; 10/5/70; FBI-Charlotte part 14, pgs. 14-17, 11/4/70; FBI-Charlotte part 19, pg. 80, 1/12/71; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 22-26, 2/4/71; FBI-Charlotte part 24, pgs. 54-57, 3/8/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pg. 82, 6/3/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 56-57, 6/29/71.



Winston-Salem started carrying fewer fire-arms, and were becoming less violent—Bureau agents continued to gather the same information and treat the Panthers as a highly dangerous and armed organization. There are several possible explanations for the lack of behaviour changes exhibited by Bureau agents, the most likely was that they were simply following orders when collecting that data, and not doing so would indicate a breach of procedure.<sup>75</sup> However, the lack of behaviour change given that their target organization was evolving indicates something interesting about the nature of COINTELPRO—that while ambitious and driven, it was also uniquely risk adverse, which resulted in a situation where the abundance of intelligence gathered on the Panthers translated to operational conservatism and a limited range of counter-intelligence activities against the Panthers.

When the Panthers in Winston-Salem recognized that violence was not going to work, they began focusing more on community service projects and abandoned their image of armed revolution. COINTELPRO agents recognized this shift in behaviour, but they did nothing to explore new ways of disrupting Panther activity. In the face of a less violent, community focused Panther organization, repressive or violent actions on behalf of the Bureau might have yielded undesirable outcomes such as a return to their more violent Panther rhetoric and activities, or the exposure of an agent provocateur. Additionally, the Bureau viewed the Panthers as an unpredictable organization, and were not likely convinced by this new “peaceful” Panther group, and by not changing their behaviour, the agents in the Charlotte office maintained a level of

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<sup>75</sup> There are several examples within the Charlotte file of situations where the FBI Headquarters would issue warnings or reprimands to the Charlotte Field Offices for failure to file a report correctly, incomplete or incorrect data, failure to comply with counter-intelligence handbook and reference guide, or sloppy presentation. See FBI-Charlotte part 1, pg. 109, 3/27/69; FBI-Charlotte part 7, pgs. 37-38, 2/5/70; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 20-21, 2/17/71; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 83-84, 2/2/71; FBI-Charlotte part 32, pg. 84, 1/27/75.

operational readiness in case the Panthers resorted back to their more militant approach and behaviour.

One final consideration that likely factored into the decision to not drastically change operational behaviour was the security of COINTELPRO, both locally and nationally. While the Panthers in North Carolina and across the nation were aware they were under surveillance from law enforcement, the full extent of COINTELPRO operations was still a tightly kept secret. If the Charlotte Field Office drastically changed their behaviour, they might have aroused suspicions of the local Panthers, and could have attracted a much larger audience through new attention.<sup>76</sup> By not changing their behaviour in response to a more sedate Panther group, the Charlotte office ensured continuity in their own behaviour that helped protect the covert nature of COINTELPRO operations, and allowed them to pursue their ambitious program designed to fully destroy the Panthers in North Carolina.

### *Activity Reports*

The final and most nebulous category of documents, activity reports, serve as a testament to the sheer amount of information gathered, and the time spent by Bureau agents at Charlotte Field Office on the Black Panthers. Contained within these documents is information on the everyday activities and functions of the Panthers, such as shipments and sales of the BPP newspaper, travel plans of BPP members, phone call logs between the Panthers in Winston-Salem and the headquarters in Oakland, donations received for community programs, updates on court cases, public speaking events, and the list goes on. Because these documents record the day

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<sup>76</sup> Violence between the Panthers and law enforcement, especially when law enforcement officers were injured, frequently caught the attention of national news networks, and was highly damaging to the Panthers especially as media outlets usually sided with law enforcement. This remained largely unchanged until COINTELPRO operations were revealed in 1971, and even this did little to redeem the national image of the Panthers.

to day operations of the Panthers, they are also an excellent tool for anyone seeking to understand COINTELPRO as well, and in particular, the methods through which Bureau agents collected all that information on their targets.

Academic literature exploring the different methods and approach employed by COINTELPRO does already exist. Ward Churchill has written several articles detailing the Bureau's favourite tactics, and in a book co-published with Jim Wanderwall, an entire chapter is dedicated to exploring these methods.<sup>77</sup> Churchill and Wanderwall's list is extensive and includes tactics such as eavesdropping, which took place through electronic surveillance using wire taps or recording equipment, but also theft of documents and trailing individual, fake mail campaigns, disinformation campaigns, harassment arrests and falsifying evidence, informants, and in some extreme cases, targeted assassinations.<sup>78</sup> While many of these same tactics were used by the Charlotte Field Office as evident in the documents left behind, attention here will be directed towards a few of the most common methods displayed by the Charlotte office: eavesdropping, the use of informants, and, one that does not appear in Churchill's work-forced evictions.

The Charlotte office used several methods to effectively eavesdrop on members of the local Panther organization, though they would not have been able to do so without the help of the San Francisco Field Office, who through their own surveillance system and informants recorded and transcribed all phone calls to and from the Black Panther national headquarters in Oakland.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Ward Churchill and Jim Vanderwall, "Chapter 2: The COINTELPRO Era" in *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, (Cambridge, MA; South Edge Press, 2002): 37-62.

<sup>78</sup> Churchill and Vanderwall, (2002), 39-53.

<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, none of the documents available indicate whether or not the wire-tapes placed on phone-lines were done through legal means. However, the Church Committee review of domestic intelligence actions does provide some insight into the issuing of warrants for electronic surveillance. The Attorney General from 1965 and 1966, Nicholas Katzenbach, required the Bureau to submit written requests to his office for approval prior to establishing any electronic or microphone surveillance, though privately he told Hoover he would continue to approval all

As a result, there are one hundred and twenty document entries in the Charlotte file that include either transcripts of phone calls between Panthers in North Carolina and in Oakland, or at least a summary of the call provided by an informant within the Oakland headquarters.<sup>80</sup> The content of these phone calls is varied; everyday topics included shipment information for the newspaper, payment of bills, or contact information for a specific individual.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, less common topics included Winston-Salem seeking advice from Oakland concerning arrests or evictions, plans for a guest speakers, or travel information such as the arrival and departure times of flights.<sup>82</sup>

While phone tapping to produce transcripts represented a very traditional way of approaching eavesdropping, the Charlotte Field Office did not limit itself to only traditional approaches when attempting to find out what the Panthers were doing. Non-traditional manners of eavesdropping included taking items out of Panther headquarters following evictions or police raids, providing individuals (mostly informants) with concealed recording devices, and reading the weekly editions of *The Black Panther*. Evidence of all these tactics exists in the Charlotte file. For example, following a raid on the Panther Headquarters in January 1971, local police and the FBI seized equipment and documents from the premise.<sup>83</sup> In February 1971, the Charlotte

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requests as he saw no problem with the programs. His successor, Ramsey Clark (1966-1969) did away with Katzenbach's requirements, and there was no authorization process for electronic surveillance for domestic security purposes during his tenure. Further in the report, it is concluded that warrantless or not, the electronic security programs used by COINTELPRO were unconstitutional and seriously disregarded the Fourth Amendment rights of all those targeted through the program. See Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations, Book II: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (26 April 1976), pgs. 105-106; Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports of Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (23 April 1976), pg. 332.

<sup>80</sup> The first entry of a phone conversation was on 23 April 1969 (FBI-Charlotte part 1, pgs. 87-88, 4/23/69), and the last was on 4 September 1975 (FBI-Charlotte part 32, pg. 28, 9/4/75). The year with the most calls recorded was 1971, with 75 entries, followed by 1970 and 1972, which each has 20 recorded entries.

<sup>81</sup> For some examples see, FBI-Charlotte part 18, pgs. 7-8, 11/6/70; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pg. 30, 2/23/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pg. 45, 7/23/71; FBI-Charlotte part 27, pg. 85, 9/15/71; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pg. 90, 5/4/72.

<sup>82</sup> For some examples, see FBI-Charlotte part 15, pg. 100, 9/3/70; FBI-Charlotte part 19, pgs. 63-65, 1/19/71; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pg. 37, 2/17/71; FBI-Charlotte part 27 pg. 45-46, 10/4/71; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pg. 74, 6/15/72.

<sup>83</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 19, pg. 80- part 20, pgs. 1-2, 1/12/71.

office sent a request to the Director's office for new recording equipment so that they could continue to covertly record public appearances through their "well-placed informants". In cases where recording equipment was not available, the Bureau would borrow recordings from private citizens.<sup>84</sup> A June 1969 report indicates that a redacted individual had lent the Bureau a film recording he made of a AAUO rally in Charlotte, and that he was requesting the immediate return of his recording; the report indicates that copying the film was a priority for the Bureau and that still images of suspected Panthers would be printed based on the footage.<sup>85</sup> Finally, there are several indications that the agents in Charlotte routinely read the Panthers' newspaper, producing summaries and reproductions of articles pertaining to events in Winston-Salem.<sup>86</sup>

Another tactic that is highly prevalent in the Charlotte files is the use of informants, a method that has been alluded to several times already in this study. Informing was quite common in the Black Panthers and was one of the main reasons behind the national purge of members that occurred between January and March 1969, as well as the freeze on issuing charters to new chapters during 1969 and into 1970.<sup>87</sup> The information provided by informants was critical to the Bureau's ongoing efforts to track Panther activity, especially considering the type of information needed for reports like monthly summaries. Membership lists, assignments, newspaper sales, travel plans—none of that information was publicized, and yet it was included in all monthly summaries largely due to informants. Every monthly summary began with the acknowledgment that the information in the report was either provided or confirmed by informants, and the

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<sup>84</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 3, pgs. 53-54, 6/27/69.

<sup>85</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 25, pg. 6, 2/12/71.

<sup>86</sup> For examples, see FBI-Charlotte part 6, pgs. 13-14, 5/13/70; FBI-Charlotte part 16, pgs. 36-96, 8/5/70; FBI-Charlotte part 24, pgs. 41-46, 3/19/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 56-57, 6/29/71; FBI-Charlotte part 31, pgs. 49-50, 2/4/72.

<sup>87</sup> A document from the Charlotte file also indicated that during 1969, groups interested in organizing an affiliated National Committee to Combat Fascism on the east coast were directed to talk to Larry Little in Winston-Salem, as the national leadership was in crisis and a purge of members was ongoing in the Party. See FBI-Charlotte part 10, pgs. 55-56, 11/13/69.

majority of special intelligence reports not only begin with a list of the informants consulted during the investigation process, but after each section of the report, the sources are listed.<sup>88</sup> Names of the informants are always redacted, and, in general, so too are the classification code indicating which informant provided the information.<sup>89</sup> This makes it very difficult to gauge how many informants were active in Winston-Salem at an given time, however it is safe to assume that there were several given the emphasis placed on informants by Hoover and those directing COINTELPRO.

Eavesdropping and informants were both very common practices among COINTELPRO field agents and were important methods of collecting information. However, COINTELPRO was not just about collecting information but also acting upon information to actively disrupt the activities of the Panthers. Surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, reference to such activities is notably missing from the Charlotte file. Perhaps the only example of a consistently recorded activity designed to disrupt the Panthers was evictions. Monthly summaries and intelligence reports indicate that from March 1970 until December 1972, the Panthers had nine different headquarters locations, and ten different apartments for Panther members.<sup>90</sup> That means, on average, the Panthers moved the location of their headquarters every four months and had to find a new place of residence every three months. Most of those moves were due to evictions for

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<sup>88</sup> See FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 61-78, 10/31/72; FBI-Charlotte part 11, pgs. 2-69, 7/31/70.

<sup>89</sup> The classification code for informants was uniform across all COINTELPRO programs and was quite simple. Each field office had a classification code (CH for Charlotte, SF for San Francisco, etc.), which would be followed by the number assigned to each informant. These numbers were assigned chronologically based on when an informant joined the program. As an example, CH-13 would indicate that the informant was the thirtieth informant in the COINTELPRO-Black Extremism program from the Charlotte office.

<sup>90</sup> The monthly summaries that indicate new headquarters or pad locations are: FBI-Charlotte part 6, pgs. 29-30, 5/6/70; FBI-Charlotte part 17, pgs.14-17, 11/4/70; FBI-Charlotte part 20, pgs. 6-9, 12/4/70; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 75-77, 1/4/71; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 22-26, 2/4/71; FBI-Charlotte part 25, pgs. 54-57, 3/8/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 90-92, 5/5/71; FBI-Charlotte part 28, pgs. 38-40, 7/7/71; FBI-Charlotte part 27, pgs. 92-95, 8/6/71; FBI-Charlotte part 31, pgs. 58-61, 1/4/72; FBI-Charlotte part 31, pgs. 45-48, 2/4/72; FBI-Charlotte part 30, pgs. 36, 7/57/72; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 56-59, 11/3/72; FBI-Charlotte part 29, pgs. 21-24, 12/7/72.

failure to pay rent, or at the request of landlords who were not comfortable with Panthers occupying their properties. However, despite the fact that the Charlotte office tracked all these moves, there is no evidence suggesting that they initiated any of the evictions or had a role in persuading landlords to evict their tenants. Instead, they would simply take advantage of eviction proceedings and local police raids connected to evictions when they occurred.

A similar trend emerges when considering the extensive legal troubles that plagued the Winston-Salem Panthers. Unlike in other cities where FBI agents actively worked with local police to harass and arrest Panther members, there are no records indicating that the Charlotte office did the same. The available documents suggest a positive relationship with local law enforcement in that they shared information especially, in the wake of a police raid or confrontation with local Panthers, however that is the extent of the relationship. The Bureau never arrested or contributed evidence for a legal case against a Panther in North Carolina, and in relation to the Winston-Salem group, they never engaged in a stand-off or violent confrontation. It is difficult to know exactly why violence between the Bureau and the Panthers in Winston-Salem was limited, though one likely possibility is that the Bureau agents in Charlotte did not view violence on their behalf as necessary given that local law enforcement, on several occasions, had engaged in violent clashes with the Panthers and were largely responsible for responding to the activities of the Panthers and the legal cases connected with these activities. So once again, while Charlotte Field Office benefited from the legal troubles facing the Panthers, they never initiated those legal troubles.

This trend of not initiating actions against the Panthers or exploiting counter-intelligence opportunities is quite startling. When one reconsiders Churchill's list of COINTELPRO methods, the majority designed to disrupt Panther activity required active participation by the

local field office. Eavesdropping and informants, if not exploited correctly, provided the least amount of disruption when compared to false propaganda campaigns, falsifying evidence, or harassing arrests, and yet they are the two most common activities found in the Charlotte file, and there are no records to indicate that they had any significant disrupting effect. It is possible that documents addressing these more aggressive COINTELPRO activities were never declassified as part of the Charlotte file or were removed so as to not incriminate any COINTELPRO agents. However, if one looks at other files pertaining to COINTELPRO-Black Extremism operations in other cities, those records exist in bulk, so it is unlikely that they were uniformly excluded from what is the largest collection of documents pertaining to one city publicly available.

If one accepts this assumption, as is necessary for this analysis to continue, then the activity reports from the Charlotte file reveal that the behaviour of the field agents in Charlotte breaks with the public and academic expectations of the types of activities field agents engaged in. The activity reports discussed here further support the notion of a risk-adverse organization. While the Charlotte Field Office was prepared to act, they did not see the need to act given that local law enforcement was already engaged in aggressive counter-intelligence activities, and, due to the Panthers' extensive financial and legal troubles, the Panther's operations were limited. Even the Bureau's most involved counter-intelligence action—electronic surveillance—was a low-risk activity as there was very little chance that the Bureau would be charged for illegal surveillance, and the Attorney General's office was ready to assist the Bureau in any way possible.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, given that the number of agents dedicated to COINTELPRO operations

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<sup>91</sup> In September 1971, SA David Martin, from the Charlotte office, was subpoenaed in relation to FBI surveillance of the Panthers. He was asked explicitly about electronic surveillance against members of the North Carolina Panthers, and upon the direct instructions from the U.S. Attorney General, he said that he had not engaged in electronic surveillance of the Panthers in question. He was able to answer this way because the wire taps in question were



was limited, not running counter-intelligence actions when none were needed is a practical approach to resource management.

Far from being the constant aggravating and aggressive force that haunted the Panther's every step, as the Bureau is depicted by some Black Panther scholars, the Charlotte Field Office was instead a pragmatic, risk-adverse organization that departed from the expectations of modern academics. Though the legality of some of their activities remains questionable the Charlotte office continued to operate within Bureau procedure and did use several of the methods advocated by the directors of COINTELPRO. The systems of eavesdropping they developed and the process of establishing a strong group of informants should not be discounted when considering the range of methods the Charlotte office used; these were still elaborate undertakings which required diligence from the agents in charge of running the programs.

## **Conclusion**

The information contained in the FBI-Charlotte file presents scholars with an unprecedented look at the operations of the Winston-Salem Black Panther Party and its relationship with COINTELPRO; they also present scholars with a unique opportunity to study COINTELPRO and its operational methods, norms and nature, as well as the institutional culture in which field agents operated. Each type of document contained in the file is useful in its own way, and when considered as a whole, they present a fascinating picture of COINTELPRO operations in North Carolina that both fits within some and challenges some of the established literature on COINTELPRO operations against the Black Panther Party.

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instituted by the San Francisco offices, not Charlotte so he had no hand in establishing the surveillance. For several documents containing to Martin's testimony, see FBI-Charlotte part 27, pg. 64, 9/21/71; FBI-Charlotte part 27, pg. 60, 9/21-71; FBI-Charlotte part 27, pgs. 49-50, 9/27/71; FBI-Charlotte part 27, pg. 51, 9/29/71. For a fuller comment on the approach of the Attorney General towards electron surveillance, see Chapter 2: footnote 79.

Intelligence reports, whether they were filed monthly or intermittently demonstrated the priorities and ambitious goals of the Charlotte Field Office, as well as their dedication to the procedural expectations placed upon them. There was an expectation of regular, routine reports that made it possible to track the Panthers and their activity as consistently as possible. Preparedness to act was a priority and an expectation, and routine reports and information gathering ensured that the Charlotte Field Office met that expectation. In the process of gathering all this routine information, agents were also expected to collect any information that could be used against the Panthers in a destructive manner. Many of the special intelligence reports seek to not only provide such information, but to provide this information in connection with the Smith Act of 1940 aiding the plan to charge Panther members with conspiracy and treason. This plan to prosecute Panthers under the Smith Act is the ultimate expression of the COINTELPRO mandate to destroy their targets—a goal field offices were required to strive to meet, regardless of how unlikely the outcome might be.

The routine and procedure that dictated the type of information the field office included in their reports demonstrates another fact about COINTELPRO, at least in the case of North Carolina—it was risk-adverse and was comfortable with an operationally conservative approach that held to the procedural instructions issued to them by the directors of COINTELPRO. Despite acknowledging that the Winston-Salem Panthers stopped advocating for armed revolt and began actively avoiding confrontation with police by mid-1972, the identification of firearms acquisition, fortifications, weapons and explosive caches remained a part of every special intelligence report and monthly summary filed by the Charlotte Field Office well into 1974. Meanwhile, the expanded community program operated by the Panthers in 1973 received the same amount of attention as the fledgling programs of 1970. This lack of behaviour change could

be explained, in part by the sheer size of COINTELPRO, which did not lend itself to becoming an overtly adaptable program. But it could also be due to an institutional or cultural bias that simply refused to believe that the Panthers could be anything but an armed and violent revolutionary organization that needed to be stopped, regardless of whether or not that was true in every city with an active COINTELPRO mandate. In all likelihood, it is a combination of these two suggestions; however, in the case of Charlotte, the convergence of these two factors resulted in a program that failed to adapt and exploit the changing nature of their target in their pursuit to disrupt and destroy the Panthers.

The nature of COINTELPRO-Black Extremism in the Charlotte Field Office —that it is was driven by procedure, maintained standard priorities every field office was expected to follow, and set ambitious goals for its agents do not stray from the current academic interpretation of COINTELPRO, generally speaking. This is not the case when one looks through the FBI-Charlotte file for indications of the methods or tactics used by the agents in Charlotte against the Panthers. While some of the hallmarks of COINTELPRO such as elaborate eavesdropping operations and extensive use of informants are present, many of the activities that have come to be associated with COINTELPRO cannot be found in the available record.

That the Charlotte Field Office did not engage in aggressive or divisive counter-intelligence operations against the Winston-Salem Panthers is surprising and there are several possible explanations that all point towards an organization, that while driven and ambitious, was also concerned with operational security and sought to minimize any potential risks to its operations. It is very possible that the Charlotte Field Office made a conscious decision to focus on methods of counter-intelligence that were less risky such as eavesdropping and informant development, recognizing that local law enforcement was already engaged in more aggressive

forms of counter-intelligence, and that a positive relationship with local law enforcement could still yield counter-intelligence opportunities. Due to multiple legal issues and the constant moving, the Panthers in Winston-Salem struggled both financially and in terms of recruitment. Until late 1972 and into 1973, it remained a small organization with relatively limited capabilities to engage in activities, both violent and non-violent. Recognizing this, the local field office might have decided that aggressive or blatant counter-intelligence measures were not necessary, and that they could still work towards achieving their operational goals while employing more conservative methods.

Considering that the Charlotte Field Office maintained their risk-adverse behaviour resulting in a level of operational conservatism that largely does not fit with the established norm of COINTELPRO activities, it would be interesting to see how successful Charlotte was in achieving their objectives when compared to other field offices which engaged in more aggressive COINTELPRO operations. While that is an undertaking for another time, what is important to take away from this analysis is that the Charlotte Field Office, in the COINTELPRO-Black Extremist operations, struck a delicate balance that challenges the accepted narrative of COINTELPRO tactics. That is not to say that compared to other field office, the Charlotte office is exonerated of all wrong-doing so often seen in COINTELPRO records. It is important to remember the human impact of COINTELPRO operations, even the seemingly non-harmful activities such as using informants or eavesdropping. In the 25 August 1973 edition of *The Black Panther*, an article on page seven reports that Wilbert Allen of Winston-Salem had recently confessed to working as a police and FBI informant for over six years.<sup>92</sup> Allen had come forward on his own accord, stating he no longer felt comfortable with

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<sup>92</sup> “Tension mounts in Winston-Salem—Police attack 300”, *The Black Panther* Vol. 10, no. 15 (25 August 1973), 7.

the requests of the Bureau and local police, and was not convinced he was acting in the best interests of his community. Subsequent issues of the paper published an exclusive interview Allen did with an unnamed reporter from *The Black Panther*.<sup>93</sup> In his confession, Allen stated that he witnessed and experienced harassment and intimidation at the hands of law enforcement officers and had on numerous occasions provided information that was then mis-interpreted to justify certain police actions. Furthermore, he identified Special Agent Zachery Lowe as his Bureau contact, and that Lowe had requested he investigate local community members including Larry Little.<sup>94</sup> The incident also makes an appearance in FBI-Charlotte files, with two separate reports carrying information about Allen's confession, and stating that according to their files, Allen had never been an informant for the Bureau but was interviewed in connection to incidents of civil unrest.<sup>95</sup>

The gift of historical hindsight lessens the impact of Allen's revelation on modern readers; informants were a well-established part of the Bureau's activities, and Allen was hardly the first, or the last, individual to come forth as a former informant. However, in 1973, his confession rocked the Black community of Winston-Salem. Suddenly, there was a person attached to all the rumors; he was their neighbour and friend, and he had been spying on them for years. Unfortunately, neither *The Black Panther* nor the Charlotte files give any indication of what happened to Allen following his confession. Speculations concerning Allen's fate serve as a reminder that there was a human side of the activities COINTELPRO agents undertook in their attempts to disrupt and destroy the Panthers in Winston-Salem. This is a fact that is often easy to

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<sup>93</sup> "Winston-Salem Police Informer Confesses", *The Black Panther* Vol. 10, no. 16 (1 September 1973), 5; "Winston-Salem Police Informer Confesses: Conclusion", *The Black Panther* Vol. 10, no. 17 (8 September 1973), 6, 17.

<sup>94</sup> "Winston-Salem Police Informer Confesses", *The Black Panther* Vol. 10, no. 16 (1 September 1973), 5; "Winston-Salem Police Informer Confesses: Conclusion", *The Black Panther* Vol. 10, no. 17 (8 September 1973), 6, 17.

<sup>95</sup> FBI-Charlotte part 32, pgs. 26-29, 9/7/73; FBI-Charlotte part 34, pgs. 3-5; 9/28/73.

overlook when reading through the pages of documents left behind in the Charlotte files, especially when the analysis is so focused understanding the nature and methods of COINTELPRO operations, as it was here. This is why it is sometimes important to take a step back and remember that, while the FBI-Charlotte file does reveal some fascinating elements about how operations were run through the Charlotte Field Office, this is only one side of a story, and at its core, whether considering COINTELPRO or the Black Panther, it is a very human story.

### Chapter 3

#### *COINTELPRO-White Hate and Klan organizations in North Carolina*

In his hallmark 1949 study of southern politics, political scientist V.O. Keys, Jr. praised North Carolina for being “energetic and ambitious” and having “a reputation for progressive outlook and action in many phases of life, especially industrial development, education, and race relations.”<sup>1</sup> He goes on

The state has a reputation for fair dealings with its Negro citizens.... Willingness to accept new ideas, sense of community responsibility towards the Negro, feeling of common purpose, and relative prosperity have given North Carolina a more sophisticated politics than exists in most southern states.<sup>2</sup>

The phenomenon Keys identified in 1949—the progressivism and moderation of North Carolina—would come to be describe by the state’s politicians as “the North Carolina Way”. This phrase is still invoked by academics such as David Cunningham and William Chafe as they attempt to describe the political, economic and social conditions that led to a situation where 1960s North Carolina could still be considered the most progressive state in the South, while simultaneously claiming to be the birthplace of the sit-in protest movement and boasting the largest klan population of any state.<sup>3</sup>

Both Cunningham and Chafe offer explanations of how this curious image of progressivism emerged and demonstrate that the progressive politics of the state were inextricably link to a racial order that embodied the notion “separate but equal”. This concept

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<sup>1</sup> V.O. Keys, Jr. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Keys, Jr., 206, 201.

<sup>3</sup> See David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A: The Rise and Fall of the Civil-Rights Era Ku Klux Klan*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Lindley S. Butler, editors, *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Document History*, (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Rob Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

was endorsed and perpetuated by a series of economic policies based in the belief that segregation would allow each race to prosper by eliminating inter-racial comparisons and competition.<sup>4</sup> The first state governor to articulate this notion was Charles Aycock in 1900, and his so-called “march of progress” continued to be referenced by his successors as late as the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> While the conundrum of structural racial segregation and progressive politics is endlessly fascinating, the importance of this conundrum here lies less in understanding how it came to be, but rather in understanding its relationship with white supremacy, and by extension, the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina.

When compared with klan activity in the deep South, the klan in North Carolina lacked the level of violence, terror, and state-sponsorship many have come to associate with the civil-rights era klan. However, that does not mean that North Carolina has been spared a white supremacist presence or violence as the rhetoric of white supremacy and nativism preached by the klan has long resonated with a portion of the state's residents. Paralleling the national trend, klan activity in North Carolina experienced significant revival in the 1920s, followed by a period of decline in the late 1930s and into the 1940s. However, the late 1940s saw the beginning of another revival in klan activity, especially across the South. Samuel Green stands out as one of the key figures in this revival, beginning his Association of Georgia Klans (AGK) in October 1945, and expanding into other states shortly thereafter.<sup>6</sup> By 1948, Green sent Thomas Hamilton to the Carolinas in hopes of expanding the AGK to both North and South Carolina; shortly after,

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<sup>4</sup> Cunningham (2013), 75-77, 82-83; Chafe, 4-10.

<sup>5</sup> Both Luther Hodge, governor from 1954-1961 and Terry Sanford, in office 1961-1965 referenced Aycock in defence of various policies, such as the state's desegregation plan following *Brown v. Board of Education*, and civil rights legislation following the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*. Christensen, 160-163, 186-196.

<sup>6</sup> Chester L. Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and related American Racist and Anti-Semitic Organizations: A History and Analysis*, (Jefferson, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 80-82; Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, (Jefferson, NC, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 19-20, 71.



Hamilton left the AGK and formed his own organization, the Association of Carolina Klans (ACK).<sup>7</sup> While Hamilton's ACK did not gain a wider membership outside of a few communities in the Carolinas, the residents in areas in which the ACK enjoyed support were subject to a sustained campaign of violence. The preferred forms of terror used by the ACK were kidnappings and floggings, which they considered punishment for the victims "moral" infractions.<sup>8</sup> While ACK members had escaped charges on several occasions for their activities, they made a fatal error in late 1951 when they committed a federal offence by transporting two kidnapped individuals across state lines into South Carolina. The FBI soon became involved in the investigation, and approximately a year later, ten ACK members including Hamilton were sentenced to prison while others were ordered to pay fines that collectively totalled over \$15,000.<sup>9</sup> In the following months, over a hundred suspected klansmen were put on trial in North Carolina alone, and new laws were passed that banned "special societies" from wearing masks in public and the burning of crosses on any property without the consent of the property's owner.<sup>10</sup> Approximately a year later, Hamilton, who was still in prison, disbanded the ACK.<sup>11</sup>

Following the collapse of the ACK many thought that klan activity in North Carolina had been put to rest for good, with several local newspapers proclaiming that the KKK was dead in the North Carolina and would never rise again.<sup>12</sup> This, of course, proved to be nothing more than hopeful thinking as in 1954, the Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling putting an end to legal segregation in schools. In the wake of the *Brown* decision, North

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<sup>7</sup> Newton, (2007), 21; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, (New York, London: New Viewpoints, 1976), 337.

<sup>8</sup> Such infractions included illicit sexual relationships between whites and blacks, a white person defending a black's rights, or a black person failing to acknowledge the superiority of a white person. Newton (2007), 21.

<sup>9</sup>Chalmers, 339; Newton (2007), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Cunningham (2013), 30; Chalmers, 339.

<sup>11</sup> Newton (2007), 21; Cunningham (2013), 30.

<sup>12</sup> *The Raleigh News and Observer, Tabor City Tribune* as cited in Cunningham (2013), 30; Quarles, 88.

Carolinian residents who opposed desegregation were quick to act, forming several organizations dedicated to maintaining a segregated racial order. There was, for example, the North Carolina Defenders of States Rights and the States Rights League of North Carolina, both of which focused largely on the right of individual communities and citizens in the debate surrounding desegregation. There was also the Patriots of North Carolina who took the unusual approach of using biology and science to defend segregation, especially in school systems.<sup>13</sup> None of these organization, however, managed to recruit as effectively as klan organizations, and most had disappeared by the end of the 1950s.

Gaining support from former members of the AGK and the ACK as well as other defunct klan organizations, Eldon Edwards formed the U.S. Klans in October 1955, and for the next five years it proved to be one of the best organized klan groups in the country.<sup>14</sup> In 1957, Edwards appointed Thurman Miller as the Grand Dragon of North Carolina, and charged him with organizing supporters in the state into groups, also known as klaverns. While the North Carolina contingent of U.S. Klans remained a small portion of its approximately 15,000 members, it served as a training ground for James Robertson (Bob) Jones, one of the most important figures in the history of the klan in North Carolina.<sup>15</sup>

One of the only major rivals of the U.S. Klans in North Carolina was the North Carolina Knights of the KKK, formed in 1956 by James “Catfish” Cole, following his banishment from the U.S Klans. Cole’s organization, like the U.S Klans, stressed that desegregation would not occur as long as they were around to defend the rights of white folks, and they were not afraid to back up such a message with violence, calling their defence and retribution plan the “Smith and

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<sup>13</sup> Cunningham (2013), 31-32.

<sup>14</sup> Chalmers, 343.

<sup>15</sup> Cunningham (2013), 31.

Wesson Plan”.<sup>16</sup> The North Carolina Knights only survived for a short while, facing significant embarrassment and legal issues following a confrontation with members of the Lumbee Indian Tribe in early January 1958. Cole and others were convicted on charges of attempting to incite a riot in the incident, and newspapers including the *New York Times* ran stories condemning the Klan for its provocation of the Lumbee tribe.<sup>17</sup> While the North Carolina Knights continued onwards under the leadership of Cole’s second in command George Dorsett, it soon dissolved in mid-1958 due to legislative backlash and inter-klan competition.<sup>18</sup>

Edward’s U.S. Klans, meanwhile, managed to avoid the ire of law enforcement and public opinion for several more years, though when Edward died unexpectedly in the summer of 1960, a crisis in leadership caused the U.S. Klans to splinter. In 1961, the Grand Dragon of Georgia, Calvin Craig, broke away to form his own klan organization—the United Klans of America (UKA).<sup>19</sup> Shortly after, Craig agreed to merge his UKA with another organization, the Alabama Klans, led by Grand Dragon Robert M. Shelton; the two men met in July 1961, and agreed to keep the name “UKA”, while Shelton replaced Craig as the Imperial Wizard.<sup>20</sup> By 1963, the group had grown to include over nine thousand members in hundreds of local klaverns across the South; it was only the beginning for the UKA as it went on to become arguably the most dominant klan organization of the 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

As the UKA was one of the only organizations targeted by COINTELPRO-White Hate in North Carolina, a brief note on their structure is necessary, as attacking their organizational structure was a key part of COINTELPRO operations; additionally, the UKA developed a unique

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<sup>16</sup> Chalmers, 347; Cunningham (2013), 32; Newton, 127.

<sup>17</sup> Chalmers, 347-348; Christensen, 166-167.

<sup>18</sup> Chalmers, 348; Cunningham (2013), 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> Chalmers, 370.

<sup>20</sup> Newton (2007), 132; Chalmers, 372-274.

<sup>21</sup> Newton (2007), 132.

vocabulary which also bears explanation as many of those terms are also used here. Structurally, the UKA was an organizational hierarchy. At the base level were individual chapters, or Klaverns. When collected together, Klaverns formed a province. Provinces collected together formed Realms, and all the Realms together made up the Invisible Empire. An alternate way of understanding the structural division is through the system of administration used by many governments today. Klaverns were communities, the Provinces were similar to a county, the Realm was equivalent to the state, and the Invisible Empire was equal to the country. It is important to recognize that this structure only pertains to the UKA. The Invisible Empire, though it was seen as the national klan organization, was only comprised of UKA members. Essentially, every klan group organized themselves differently depending on their size and resources, and while many of the structures are similar, they are all independent of one another. Therefore, in theory, it was possible to have multiple Invisible Empires operating at a given time if there were multiple nation-wide klan organizations who identified as being the Invisible Empire.

Corresponding with this system of hierarchical divisions, there were four distinct levels of leadership within the UKA. A Klavern leader was known as the Exalted Cyclops, Province leaders were known as the Grand Titans, Realm leaders were the Grand Dragons, and the leader of the Invisible Empire was the Imperial Wizard. Other officials included: the Klaliff or the Vice President, the Klokard, who was the primary lecturer or speaker, the Kludd was a klan chaplain, the Kligrapp was the secretary, the Klabee was the treasurer, the Klexter was the outer guard, and the Klarogo served as the sergeant at arms and inner guard. Above the Klavern level, these individuals were identified by the addition of the prefix Grand or Imperial; for example, the Grand Klabee would be in charge of Realm finances and the Imperial Klabee would oversee

Imperial finances. While not all roles were present at each level, and there were additional officials at the Realm and Imperial levels, these were the most common officials and formed the basis of all klaverns in the Invisible Empire.<sup>22</sup> Again, recognize that this is just the leadership structure of the UKA. While Robert Shelton was the Imperial Wizard for all UKA members, and a national figure in that context, he was not the Imperial Wizard of all klanmen across the country—just those belonging to the UKA.

### *UKA in North Carolina*

In the wake of the collapse of the U.S. Klans and the North Carolina Knights, many North Carolinian klan members were left without a formal organization with which to identify. Some of those members joined the UKA when it was first formed in 1961, however, it would take a few years before the UKA fully established itself in the state. Working with the UKA's South Carolina Grand Dragon, a small group of klansmen in North Carolina sought to revive the klan in the state, and James Robertson (Bob) Jones, formerly of the U.S. Klans, emerged as the first Grand Dragon of the UKA in North Carolina.<sup>23</sup> Jones was soon joined by another former klansmen, this time of the North Carolina Knights, George Dorsett, who was elected the Grand Kludd and would later also serve as the Imperial Kludd.<sup>24</sup>

Dorsett and Jones represent the central figures around whom the story of the UKA in North Carolina unfolds. Both were second generation klansmen, they shared the belief that they

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<sup>22</sup> There are a number of books dedicated to explaining the structure and roles of members in the Invisible Empire. Michael Newton's *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Secret Society* (2007) includes two excellent chapters on the language and structure of the KKK as well as a reproduction of the Kloran, or the constitution of most modern klan organizations. See also Chester Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racist and Anti-Semitic Organizations*, 95-98 for examples of alternate klan structures, including that of the White Knights of the KKK, one of the most violent klan organizations from the 1960s.

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham (2013), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Newton (2007), 93.

had a birthright within this new klan organization. Jones, a native North Carolinian, never finished high school and was discharged from the Navy for failure to salute Black officers. With little education, he struggled to maintain regular employment, working briefly as a brick layer and a salesman before being elected Grand Dragon in July 1963.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Dorsett also never completed high school, working as an embalmer and a painter before becoming a self-taught evangelistic minister.<sup>26</sup> While Jones was known for his organizational abilities, Dorsett was a gifted orator, and the summer of 1963, they launched a massive recruitment campaign beginning with an inaugural rally in Salisbury on 31 August which attracted an estimated two thousand spectators and participants.<sup>27</sup> Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton was the keynote speaker at the event, which emphasised a new klan, one with a civic responsibility to defend the rights and interests of white Protestants in the South.<sup>28</sup> Shelton's message was picked up and repeated by Jones and Dorsett, and it resonated with many in North Carolina. Throughout the rest of 1963 and into 1964, the UKA in North Carolina began attracting more members, bolstered by weekly, if not nightly rallies, which drew on Shelton's message and emphasised that the UKA was the defenders of white America, the white equivalent of the NAACP. By the summer of 1964, Jones and Dorsett had succeeded in establishing over forty Klaverns across the state, though they were largely located in the eastern part of North Carolina, which had a higher proportion of Black residents, and struggled economically compared to the more industrial and urban areas of the state.<sup>29</sup> The growth of the UKA did not stop with forty klaverns; by best estimate, in the summer of 1965, there were one hundred and ninety-two organized klaverns in the state, which exceeded

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<sup>25</sup> Newton (2007), 75; *Klansville, USA*, directed by Callie T. Wiser, (2015; American Experience, WGCH Educational Foundation) Film.

<sup>26</sup> Jim Schlosser, "The Klansman and the Lawman", *Greensboro News and Records*, 10 June 2007; Newton, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Cunningham (2013), 43. *Klansville, USA*, directed by Callie T. Wiser.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham (2013), 44.

<sup>29</sup> Cunningham (2013), 51, 53.

the number of klaverns in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi combined, and with membership estimates between eight and ten thousand at the start of 1966, the UKA in North Carolina accounted for more than half of the UKA's national membership.<sup>30</sup>

Due to the sheer scope of the organization, a complete record of all UKA activities in North Carolina has never been compiled, and to do so would require more space than can be afforded here. Instead, the evolution of the UKA in North Carolina will be discussed in reference with events and individuals as they pertain to COINTELPRO-White Hate. The most common event that the UKA in North Carolina held were rallies, and as been alluded to, these events were a crucial part of the growth and sustainability of the UKA in the state. According to sociologist and klan expert David Cunningham, the rallies were both strategic and practical in their aims. Strategically, they were attempts to normalize the UKA's message and demonstrate that the klan was an acceptable organization in normal society—the white person's version of the NAACP. The fact that local and federal law enforcement rarely stepped in to prevent or police these rallies, according to Cunningham, “served to reinforce racial hierarchies and intimidate the klan's many enemies.”<sup>31</sup> The practical side of these rallies was that it served as a recruitment and fundraising opportunity, while also serving to build solidarity among its members. These events created a social dimension of the UKA that reimagined them as a family organization—each rally opened and closed with prayer, there was often music and games for entertainment, refreshments were sold, and at the end of the night, a cross was burnt.<sup>32</sup> For a small town, such an event was an attraction and even if individuals were not card-carrying UKA members, they

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<sup>30</sup> Christensen, 193; Cunningham (2013), 53.

<sup>31</sup> Cunningham (2013), 45.

<sup>32</sup> Cunningham (2013), 45-47. *Klansville, USA*, directed by Callie T. Wiser.

would attend and if they were sympathetic to the UKA's message, either buy UKA literature or donate a few dollars.<sup>33</sup>

By all accounts, these rallies remained a relatively peaceful expression of the UKA's ideology, even when the UKA formed their Security Guards (a Realm level organization) in mid-1964. Dressed in a paramilitary style uniform and carrying weighted clubs instead of firearms, these guards were in charge of security at all UKA events in the state.<sup>34</sup> While there was the occasional act of belligerence by Guards, mostly dealing with hostile press or counter-protestors, these actions were relatively isolated and were always justified by UKA leaders as being necessary to defend the racial order and white rights.<sup>35</sup>

Despite its attempts to cast itself as a family organization with a civic purpose, the UKA in North Carolina, like all klan organizations, became the subject of federal investigation following the murders of three civil rights workers in June 1964. The three individuals, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were working with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to register Black voters in Meridian, Mississippi when they were arrested under false pretenses by local police. Once released from police custody, they were followed by members of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which included several members of the local police department. Upon being pulled over a second time by police, the three men were shot and transported to a farm, where they were buried in a dam structure. The disappearance of these men sparked national outrage and a FBI task-force was established upon the direction of U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy in order to locate their bodies, which were found on 4

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<sup>33</sup> Furthering the idea that the UKA was a family organization, recruitment occurred at numerous state fairs, where booths were set up to sell klan literature and robes. At one fair in Raleigh NC, the UKA even had a plane fly over pulling a UKA banner. See FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 20-25, 10/22/66; Christensen, 193.

<sup>34</sup> *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson, (2009: Personal Documentary; Independently Produced) Film; Cunningham (2013), 51-52.

<sup>35</sup> Cunningham (2013), 52.



August 1964, forty-four days after their disappearance. A month later, on 2 September, the FBI issued instructions to sixteen of its field offices to launch a COINTELPRO-White Hate investigation; among the offices identified was Charlotte and included in the list of organizations to be targeted was the UKA.<sup>36</sup>

While the UKA was able to separate itself as an organization from the Freedom Summer murders, as they came to be known, they were unable to do so the following spring when 39-year-old civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo was murdered in Alabama by UKA members. On 25 March, Liuzzo was shot by UKA members after being spotted in a vehicle with a Black male, Leroy Moton. Liuzzo, who was driving at the time of the shooting, was killed by two bullets to the head; Moton survived the subsequent car crash and pretended to be dead when UKA members came to investigate the car, thus allowing him to escape and call for help. Four UKA members were arrested less than a day later, including FBI informant Gary Rowe who provided key information on the other klan members in the car, and did not face charges in the incident.<sup>37</sup> In response to the murder, President Johnson appeared on television, issuing the warning and statement:

I shall continue to fight them [Klansmen] because I know their loyalty is not to the United States of America but instead to a hooded society of bigots. Men and women have stood against the Klan at times and at places where to do so required a continuous act of courage. So if Klansmen hear my voice today, let it be both an appeal and a warning to get out of the Ku Klux Klan now and return to a decent society before it is too late.<sup>38</sup>

As an act of defiance to what they perceived as a presidential threat against entire segments of the American population, Jones and Dorsett invited three of the men indicted in Liuzzo's murder

<sup>36</sup> COINTELPRO-White Hate part 1, pgs. 4-8, 9/2/64.

<sup>37</sup> For a complete study of Gary Rowe and his role as a klan informant, see Gary May, *The Informant: the FBI, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Murder of Viola Liuzzo*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "Televised Remarks Announcing the Arrest of Members of the Ku Klux Klan", 26 March 1965. *The American Presidency Project*.

to speak at a rally held on 15 May 1965. Over six thousand attended the rally, and the event was filmed by the CBS and televised across the country.<sup>39</sup> All previous attempts by Jones and Dorsett to isolate the North Carolina Klan from the extremist violence of the Deep South were essentially undermined by this news reel which showed North Carolinians condoning murder and other acts of violence as being political necessary; from then on, the image of the UKA in the state changed and become a much greater focus for local and federal law enforcement.<sup>40</sup>

In the midst of the outrage over the Freedom Summer murders in 1964 and Liuzzo's murder in 1965, it is essential to emphasize that violence was not isolated to the Deep South. The UKA in North Carolina also engaged in acts of physical violence. For example, in January 1965, members of the Craven County Improvement Association, a front for the local UKA Klavern, travelled to New Bern with the intention of disrupting an NAACP meeting at a local church.<sup>41</sup> Dynamite was used to destroy the vehicles of two NAACP leaders, as well as in the bombing of a mortuary which was owned by a local civil rights activist. Three UKA members were quickly arrested, including the Exalted Cyclops of the Klavern, and confessed to the bombings.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike smaller klan organizations, the North Carolina UKA had thousands of members, many of whom had little desire to participate in acts of violence in defense of the racial order. Due to the constant effort of leaders like Jones, Dorsett and Shelton, the UKA had truly convinced many of its members that it was a civic-minded organization performing a public

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<sup>39</sup> "*Klansville, USA*, directed by Callie T. Wiser.

<sup>40</sup> Cunningham (2013), 61-62.

<sup>41</sup> The vast majority of Klaverns in North Carolina adopted "cover names" such as improvement associations, hunting or sports clubs, or fraternal lodges. The purpose of this was to both act as a shield against law enforcement investigations, but also to further the public image of the UKA having a civil responsibility in society and furthering the idea of white public spaces. Michael Newton identifies one hundred and ten of these front organization of the UKA in North Carolina in his 2007 study (pg. 134-144); Chris Hoffman, "NAACP to Remember Anniversary of New Bern Bombing", *NewsChannel 12*, 11 June 2015; Bill Hand, "NAACP Calls for State Historical marker for 1965 Bombing", *Sun Journal*, 14 June 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Cunningham (2013), 57-59; Newton, 25.

service by defending segregation and the rights of white people. As a result, there existed a dual membership structure within Jones' UKA. At the heart of the UKA were core members, many of whom were second-generation klansmen raised in the culture and rhetoric of the klan by parents who had belonged to a klan organization, which included the leadership cadre such as men like Jones and Dorsett. Also included in this core were staunch segregationists—those who were not opposed to violence and often espoused violence such as Catfish Cole (of the North Carolina Knights). This core group would never abandon the klan and would be the group of people responsible for carrying on the work of the UKA after the 1960s.<sup>43</sup> Surrounding this core group were all the other members, all of whom had unique motivations for joining the UKA. While sympathy for the UKA's message of segregation and white rights was central, their dedication and loyalty shifted based on the political and social currents that influenced their motivations to join in the first place. These members were less likely to accept acts of violence, and much less willing to engage in acts of violence.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to understand this dual membership structure as it influenced the use of violence by the UKA in North Carolina. While core members could privately support violent actions, publicly the UKA had to preserve an image of non-violence as the secondary membership group was essential if the UKA wanted to either maintain or grow in size and influence.<sup>45</sup> As a result, by 1966, Jones and other state officials had created a unique classification of membership. White Card Members were appointed from each klan Province (county) and entrusted to carry out acts of violence in the name of the UKA. These individuals

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<sup>43</sup> In an interview given not long before his death, George Dorsett was asked if he was still a member of the Klan, to which he responded that he was a life-time card carrying member and would be until he took his last breath. For Dorsett's interview, see *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson; Schlosser, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> Cunningham (2013), 48.

<sup>45</sup> Cunningham (2013), 48, 69.

were often the most militant and almost exclusively belonged to the core UKA membership. According to an informant who worked with the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, white card members would carry out any act requested including acts of arson, bombings, and targeted cross burnings.<sup>46</sup> While records connecting these “White Card members” to acts of UKA violence rarely exist, in 1966 and 1967 there were multiple instances of bombing and cross burnings across the state, the most extreme occurring in Anson country where the homes of black students and school board members were targeted over desegregation school policies.<sup>47</sup> Twelve klansmen were arrested in connections with those bombings as well as several others that had occurred in Charlotte and other towns over the past year.<sup>48</sup> By creating and allowing selected groups to carry out UKA sanctioned violence, Jones operated a system where violence was still allowed, but it was also highly controlled and rarely publically endorsed. Unsanctioned acts of violence were publically criticized by the Grand Dragon as they reflected poorly on the UKA's image and limited future acts of violence by drawing an increased law enforcement presence. Meanwhile, members who committed unsanctioned acts of violence faced various forms of punishment, including banishment from their UKA Klavern on top of any legal repercussions they might have faced. Jones essentially found a way to minimize the unpredictability of his aggressive, core membership by providing them an outlet for violence that he alone controlled.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> As cited in Cunningham (2013), 63. This policy of having a small group of individuals responsible for performing acts of violence was not unique to Jones and the UKA in North Carolina. Gary Rowe, an informant within the Alabama Eastview Klavern, revealed to his handler that after each meeting a select group of members always stayed to arrange "missionary work", which was code for acts of violence and intimidation. See May, 18-21.

<sup>47</sup> Newton (2007), 25; Imari Scarbrough, “Pushing for Equality: 2017 is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Anson County segregation lawsuit”, *The Anson Record* (15 February 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Newton (2007), 25.

<sup>49</sup> Cunningham (2013), 64.

As violence became a more central part of the UKA throughout the South, and as the organization continued to grow especially in states like North Carolina, law-makers in Washington, prompted by the President, took a more expressed interest in the klan. In October 1965, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) launched an investigation into the activities of klan organization throughout the United States.<sup>50</sup> UKA Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton was the first Klansmen to be called to testify; many of Shelton's Grand Dragons and Imperial officials were also called to testify including Jones and Dorsett. All three men, as well as several others, refused to answer any questions or provide any of the requested UKA documentation. The records of their respective testimonies indicate that both Jones and Dorsett read the same prepared statement when asked a question: "I respectfully decline to answer that question for the reasons that I honestly feel my answer might tend to incriminate me in violations of my rights as guaranteed to me by the amendments 5,1,4,and 14 of the Constitution of the United States of America."<sup>51</sup> During Jones' testimony, he invoked the Fifth Amendment over two hundred times, refusing to answer any question with the exception of stating his name for the record. Dorsett followed suit, invoking the Fifth Amendment in response a total of ninety-eight questions. Shelton, Jones and Dorsett, among others, were held in contempt of Congress due to their non-cooperation with HUAC investigators.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The HUAC investigation into the klan represents the first time that HUAC was not investigating an area related to Communism. The decision to initiate HUAC hearings came only five days following the arrest of klansmen in connection with Viola Liuzzo's murder, and were likely prompted by President Johnson's continued attention towards putting an end to klan violence. Records of the HUAC hearings into klan violence are available through the Congressional archives.

<sup>51</sup> Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in the United States Part 1, *Testimony of James Robertson Jones, Accompanied by Counsel Lester V. Chalmers, Jr.* (20-21 October 1965), 1700-1789; Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in the United States Part 2, *Testimony of George Franklin Dorsett, Accompanied by Counsel Lester V. Chalmers, Jr.* (27 October 1965), 2035-2060.

<sup>52</sup> *Klansville, USA*, directed by Callie T. Wiser.

While the legal repercussions of the HUAC hearings would take several years to unfold with Jones and several others finally being convicted on contempt of Congress charges in 1969, the HUAC hearings had an immediate effect on the UKA in North Carolina. Many within the UKA were outraged that their leaders had consistently refused to cooperate with the HUAC investigators. In their minds, the UKA had nothing to hide—it was a legitimate and legal organization and they could not understand why their leaders refused to hand over documents concerning membership and financial records. When Joseph DuBois, the treasurer for a local Klavern in Goldsboro, North Carolina, was called to testify in a HUAC hearing, he resigned his position in the UKA while on the witness stand, stating that while other UKA members urged him to “stand on the Fifth Amendment”, he did not think it would do any good. He stated:

I figure that if the Klan had nothing to hide, the reason I joined it, I thought it was an organization that was according to what I knew about it and what I read, the literature I had read, had been to the betterment of this country. At this time, under the circumstances of the Fifth Amendment that the people have been taking on this, I would like to resign as a Klan member, and as treasurer of my local unit...<sup>53</sup>

DuBois’ dissatisfaction was echoed by fellow Klansmen Roy Woodle when he was called to testify shortly after Dubois. Woodle, who was elected the Grand Kludd of the North Carolina Kludd replacing Dorsett when he was elevated to Imperial Kludd, resigned mere weeks before his testimony in front of HUAC. When questioned about his resignation, he gave a dual answer: not only had he experienced a falling out with Jones after Woodle allegedly challenged Jones’ leadership, and he cited his growing disillusionment with the purpose of the UKA, stating:

...In my way of saying, I was approached that this organization was a very religious organization, it stood for the truth and what was right, and it stood against integration. Now I stayed in the organization some 8 or 9 months myself and I done what I thought I was supposed to do, try to carry out my duty as a member and what was asked, everything that was asked reasonable and right, and the whole time I was in I don’t find it stood for religion or against integration. If

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<sup>53</sup>Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in the United States Part 1, *Testimony of Joseph G. DuBois*, (22 October 1965), 1833.

it did, I don't know where the program was or where it preformed that. Not in the state of North Carolina...<sup>54</sup>

When questioned about an offer of formal employment he had received from the UKA, he continued:

I was about to take it [the offered position], but after I c[ame] to the conclusion that a man couldn't go under a dictatorship without a reason, why, to stand up with principle, a fellow couldn't afford to, and I had to withdraw...anybody who is paying you, most of the time, you have to listen to them...In my position, I didn't feel like—I was obligated to God—and my friends to go under dictatorship to no man.<sup>55</sup>

Woodle and DuBois vocalized a dissatisfaction and distrust that was growing in many local Klaverns, fed in part by HUAC revelations over financial impropriety among UKA leaders, including Jones and Shelton. Working in concert with HUAC investigators, COINTELPRO agents exploited these feelings of distrust between members and their leaders, as well as fears of competition between leaders alluded to in Woodle's testimony.

One of the greatest sources of tension within the North Carolina leadership moving throughout 1966 and into 1967 was the relationship between Dorsett and Jones. While Jones was the organizational master of the North Carolina Klan, Dorsett was the primary speaker and fundraiser. As such, Dorsett had been gaining attention in North Carolina throughout 1966 as his rhetoric became more militant in tone, and he faced several charges for disturbing the peace and attempts to incite riots in his home town of Greensboro.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Dorsett had reconnected with a Klansmen from his past: James Catfish Cole, the former leader of the North Carolina Knights and a close friend of Dorsett. Cole possessed the organizational skills that Dorsett

<sup>54</sup> Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in the United States Part 1, *Testimony of Roy Woodle*, (22 October 1965), 1845-1846.

<sup>55</sup> Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan Organization in the United States Part 1, *Testimony of Roy Woodle*, (22 October 1965), 1848.

<sup>56</sup> *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson.

lacked, and together the pair threatened Jones and Shelton, both of whom recognized that together Dorsett and Cole could challenge for state and national leadership of the UKA.<sup>57</sup> Even though both Dorsett and Cole were adamant that they were not interested in taking control of the UKA, they did little to support this claim. As the pair travelled from rally to rally, Dorsett made his opinion of Jones' leadership known, even publishing his own newsletters to UKA members detailing Jones' financial mishandling of klan funds, and his problems with alcoholism.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Cole was sworn into the UKA by Dorsett without Jones' consultation, a move that Jones understood to be a direct challenge to his leadership as Dorsett had previously served under Cole when he had been Grand Dragon of the North Carolina Knights in the 1950s.<sup>59</sup>

The growing tension between Dorsett and Jones, as well as the growing dissatisfaction among klan members with Jones' leadership, was documented by newspapers across the state.<sup>60</sup> And in the face of criticism from his membership base, as well as public scrutiny from these articles, Jones and Shelton realised they had to act quickly to ensure that they maintained full control over the UKA in the state, given that it accounted for more than half of the UKA's membership country-wide.

In mid-April 1967, Jones decided to banish Dorsett, Cole and a few others for insubordination and failure to uphold their sworn UKA duties.<sup>61</sup> Naturally, Dorsett contested his banishment, arguing that he was a lifetime member and lifetime members could not be banished, and he continued to travel to rallies and events across the South in accordance with his responsibilities as the Imperial Kludd. However, as word of his banishment spread across the

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<sup>57</sup> *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson.

<sup>58</sup> An example of this can be seen at FBI-White Hate, part 10, pgs. 117-124, 4/7/67.

<sup>59</sup> Cunningham (2013), 199-200.

<sup>60</sup> A number of these articles are documented in the FBI files. See FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 97-107, 4/4/67 which includes 3 articles as attachments, and FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 130-145, 4/20/67 which includes a number of newspaper articles as well as a newsletter from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'nai.

<sup>61</sup> For the Bureau's account of events, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 115-116, 4/5/67.



South, his appearance at rallies began to draw the ire of those loyal to Shelton and Jones. At a rally in Richmond, Virginia, the protest against Dorsett's appearance on stage finally turned violent. As Dorsett tried to take the stage in order to speak out against his banishment, the crowd began throwing things on stage and the UKA Security Guards at the event restrained Dorsett, preventing him from taking the stage. As death threats were issued from the crowd, Dorsett fled to his car, which has been damaged by angry UKA members.<sup>62</sup>

It was clear to Dorsett after the Richmond rally that he was no longer a welcome part of the UKA. By August 1967, Dorsett had been working as a COINTELPRO informant for several years unbeknownst to his fellow klan members, and with the support of his Bureau handler, joined forces with Catfish Cole to form the Confederate Knights of the KKK (CKKKK).<sup>63</sup> Partially a tool of FBI COINTELPRO operations, and partially a legitimate klan organization, the CKKKK failed to threaten the UKA's hold in the state in any significant way, disappearing altogether by 1969. However, the emergence of the CKKKK in 1967 as an alternate klan drawing support from disillusioned UKA members was a harbinger of things to come.

When Jones and Shelton were both convicted of contempt of Congress charges in the spring of 1969, leadership of the North Carolina UKA fell to Joseph Bryant, while Melvin Sexton stepped into the role of acting Imperial Wizard.<sup>64</sup> Bryant, another former colleague of Catfish Cole, quickly ran into problems both with local law enforcement and UKA imperial leadership.<sup>65</sup> On 16 September 1969, despite that he was the leader of the UKA in North Carolina, Bryant and a group of his supporters defected, nailing their UKA membership cards to

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<sup>62</sup> "Imperial Kludd Ousted From Rally" *The Progress-Index*, (Petersburg, Virginia), 7 May 1967, pg. 26.

<sup>63</sup> Newton, 116; *FBI:KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson. .

<sup>64</sup> Newton (2007), 60, 83.

<sup>65</sup> Cunningham (2013), 208-209.

a cross before setting it on fire.<sup>66</sup> With the help of another life-time klansmen in Edward Dawson, Bryant formed a new klan organization, naming it the North Carolina Knights of the KKK (NCKKKK) in homage to Cole's former organization.<sup>67</sup> With Bryant's defection and the formation of the NCKKKK, the UKA was left essentially leaderless, and floundered until Jones completed his prison sentence in late 1969. While Jones attempted to revitalize the UKA in the early months of 1970, the organization in North Carolina was effectively defunct.<sup>68</sup> Instead, the NCKKKK would continue on as the primary North Carolina klan for the rest of the 1970s and into the 1980s, recruiting many members from Dorsett's CKKKK when it folded in late 1969, including Dorsett himself.<sup>69</sup> Jones would eventually resign his position as Grand Dragon of North Carolina in October 1973, though he maintained that he would be a klanman until his death, and if the UKA was ever in need of his service, he would always be ready.<sup>70</sup>

The collapse of the UKA in North Carolina in the 1970s would have been unimaginable only a few years earlier. Even amid the leadership struggle between Jones and Dorsett in 1967, the membership of the UKA in the state was well over ten thousand. Detailing exactly why the UKA collapsed so suddenly in North Carolina is a difficult task and draws together several different factors. Among them is the leadership struggle that the UKA faced in the later years, including the rift in leadership that eventually saw Dorsett banished and many klansmen disillusioned with Jones' leadership, as well as Jones' conviction and prison sentence following

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<sup>66</sup> Part of the reason behind Bryant's defection was a feud with Marvin Sexton, acting Imperial Wizard. The argument was money for the legal defense of 17 klansmen who were arrested following a July 1969 shoot-out with local Black residents in Hyde County. During the subsequent legal proceedings, Bryant accused Sexton of siphoning funds for his own use rather than their intended purposes of covering legal costs. The ensuing argument between Sexton and Bryant resulted in Bryant being labeled a outside agitator, and banishment from the UKA. See Cunningham (2013), 208-209.

<sup>67</sup> Newton (2007), 127

<sup>68</sup> Cunningham (2013), 209-210.

<sup>69</sup> Newton (2007), 93, 127.

<sup>70</sup> As cited in Cunningham (2013), 210-211.

his contempt charges. A period of highly divisive leadership followed by a period of almost no consistent leadership was devastating for UKA membership. In a state where the majority of klansmen were not extremely violent and did not have the desire to commit violence, the leadership was responsible for creating a sense of purpose among the members. Without that sense of purpose, many klansmen simply left the organization. Additionally, there was a sense that the UKA had largely failed to achieve any significant victories in North Carolina. Despite its size, it had relatively little political power as the geographic dispersion of its membership prevented it from forming a substantial voting block, and none of the UKA leaders had the time or the desire to run for political office as they were fully employed by the UKA. Desegregation, the primary impetus for klan revival, had continued in schools despite the UKA's best efforts, and was becoming the norm for many public and private institutions. Furthermore, membership in the klan was becoming an increasingly costly endeavour, not financially but in image and social standing. In the wake of the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations, the media continued to report on the klan's financial improprieties, creating the image that the leaders of the UKA were exploiting their members for their own financial gain. This, combined with an increased effort by both federal and local law enforcement to seek prosecution against klan members, convinced many that membership in the UKA was no longer worth it.

The rise and fall of the UKA in North Carolina, as it is referred to by David Cunningham, represented one of the greatest periods of klan growth of any Southern state in the 1960s, as well as one of the quickest declines among modern klan organizations. North Carolinian politicians have long held to the notion that their state is somehow different—it is more moderate, more accepting of its Black population, but the UKA directly contradicts this belief, and amid political and social debates surrounding North Carolina's history with klan organizations is the

complicating fact of COINTELPRO, and the role it played in shaping the place of White Hate organizations in the state. This complex relationship between politics and society, and federal authorities outlines the context in which the next part of this analysis—exploring COINTELPRO-White Hate in North Carolina, takes place.

## **COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE AND NORTH CAROLINA KLAN ORGNIZATIONS**

The declassified files available to discuss COINTELPRO-White Hate in North Carolina are unfortunately not as comprehensive as the files available for COINTELPRO-Black Extremism in the state. Unlike the Black Extremism file, the White Hate file from Charlotte has only been partially released as part of the larger declassification of documents from COINTELPRO programs. There are added COINTELPRO records released as part of the HUAC records that are also publically available, as well as records released as recently as 2017 as part of the process to declassify documents belonging to the President John. F. Kennedy Assassination Record Collection. The result is that there are still a significant number of documents available that speak to the nature and behaviour of the Bureau and COINTELPRO-White Hate.

The COINTELPRO-White Hate files are divided into 14 sub-files in PDF format, totaling 1,993 pages and 852 documents.<sup>71</sup> In sorting these documents, 206 were identified as containing information pertinent to events in North Carolina and the Charlotte Field Office. Of those documents, 146 were prepared for or by the Charlotte office, 30 were memos between

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<sup>71</sup> The total number of documents available for COINTELPRO-White Hate actually exceeds the document count from the FBI-Black Extremism Charlotte used in the previous chapter despite the fact that that file had nearly 1,000 additional pages of documentation. The reason for this discrepancy largely lies with the fact that the COINTELPRO-White Hate file contains very few special intelligence reports longer than 20 pages, where as the FBI-Charlotte files contains dozens of these reports. The lack of such intelligence reports in White Hate records will be addressed further on in this study.

COINTELPRO administrators and senior staff at the Bureau Headquarters in Washington D.C., with the rest originating with other field offices, mainly Atlanta and Birmingham.<sup>72</sup> While the documents in the files begin with the launching of COINTELPRO-White Hate in September 1964, the majority of the documents date from 1966 onwards; this holds true both for the entire file, as well as the documents pertaining specifically to the Charlotte office. There are several reasons for this. Following the Liuzzo murder in 1965, Hoover was instructed to increase the efforts of COINTELPRO-White Hate, and the program did see an increase of activity past this point. Additionally, working in concert with HUAC hearings which began in October 1965, COINTELPRO-White Hate again increased its activity to exploit the tensions and divisions that were revealed within klan organizations by HUAC hearings.

As with the COINTELPRO-Black Extremism files, it is necessary to categorise these documents based on the content contained within each document, and the same three categories were used when considering these documents, with one minor difference. Instead of monthly intelligence reports, the Charlotte office filed quarterly intelligence reports on White Hate since the program's inception. As a result, the three categories for COINTELPRO-White Hate programs are: quarterly intelligence reports, special intelligence reports, and activity reports.

### *Quarterly Intelligence Reports*

The quarterly intelligence reports filed by the Charlotte office pertaining to COINTELPRO-White Hate serve as a fascinating insight into the development of the UKA in

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<sup>72</sup> These two offices were perhaps the busiest during COINTELPRO-White Hate. Given that the UKA headquarters was located in Tuscaloosa Alabama, which is less than an hour away from Birmingham, this office was in charge of tracking the national communications of the UKA, as well as disrupting the actions of imperial leadership of Shelton and Sexton. Though Georgia did not have as many UKA members, it was one of the central hubs for transportation and the movement of information both for the Bureau and the UKA, a link between the more northern areas and the south.

the later part of the 1960s. As mentioned, the majority of documents available in this file date from 1966 onwards, and in the case of quarterly intelligence reports, they begin in April 1967 and continue until the cancellation of COINTELPRO programs in April 1971.<sup>73</sup> The information contained in these reports, in some ways, is similar to the information contained in the monthly reports from COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, however, there are also some significant differences. Given the number of klansmen and klaverns active in the state, tracking the total number of members and klaverns, the number of members in jail or temporarily located elsewhere would have been impossible. Instead of focusing on the individual as they did with Panther members, these reports focused more on information at the Realm level. While they still tracked the appearance of new klaverns and general membership numbers, they largely focused on things such as changes in Realm leadership, discrepancies in Realm finances, as well as potential sources of factionalism forming in the state.<sup>74</sup>

Also included in these quarterly summaries was information concerning the actions taken by the field offices and resident agencies and the results of such activity, as well as any recommendations for future counter-intelligence opportunities. While these recommendations were present throughout the records from 1967 until mid-1970, a memo in July 1970 from the Director to Charlotte instructs that, moving forward, the field office should refrain from outlining

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<sup>73</sup> The only quarter report missing from that time range is quarter Three (July to September) from 1967, meaning there is a total of sixteen quarterly summaries. For reference, the quarters break down as Quarter One: January to March; Quarter Two: April to June; Quarter Three: July to September; Quarter Four: October to December.

<sup>74</sup> For an example of a report containing information on new klaverns, see the quarterly summary from Quarter Three from 1968 which describes the appearance of the Hinton Rowan Helpers Society, Inc., a suspected UKA front organization (FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 149-151, 9/30/68). The Quarter One report from 1969 provides an analysis of recent klan membership and klaverns (FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 162-165, 3/27/69). The Quarter Two report from 1969 speaks to the acting Grand Dragon, as Jones was serving time in prison (FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 167-169, 7/2/69). The Quarter 1 1970 report addresses the split in the UKA, and the formation of the NCKKKK (FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 223-225, 3/30/70). And the Quarter Two 1967 report addresses the misappropriation of funds in connection with UKA's Widow's Benevolent Fund (FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 28-33, 7/7/67).

specific counter-intelligence operations in their quarterly summaries, and instead submit all counter-intelligence requests in a separate airtel to the Bureau headquarters.<sup>75</sup>

Once again, the information compiled in these reports represents an impressive effort by local Bureau agents in collecting data, especially when considering the size and scope of the organization under investigation. The types of counter-intelligence activities undertaken by the field office cover almost the entire spectrum of COINTELPRO tactics including references to informants, fake mail campaigns, anonymous telephone calls, and working with local journalists. This speaks to the dedication of the agents working on COINTELPRO-White Hate operations, and the sustainability and longevity of the program they had constructed. Every quarterly report in the file indicates that the Charlotte office had planned and executed a counter-intelligence operation within the respective quarter. This constant work resulted in a situation that by August 1967, senior leadership in the Bureau believed that a “death-dealing blow” directed towards the UKA in North Carolina would not only render the organization defunct in the state but would resonate nationwide as well.<sup>76</sup>

While it is clear from the quarterly reports that COINTELPRO agents were dedicated to their task of disrupting and discrediting the UKA in the state, it is interesting to note that, unlike with the Panthers, that dedication was directed exclusively at the organizational level. The majority of klan members never become targets for COINTELPRO attention. Field agents were happy to let klan members be, so long as they remained peaceful and did not cause any significant trouble for the Bureau.<sup>77</sup> Instead, leaders such as Jones and Dorsett were viewed as

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<sup>75</sup> The reason for this shift was not articulated in the documents. FBI-White Hate part 12 pg. 8-9, 7/15/70.

<sup>76</sup> This is discussed in a memo between the Assistant Director of the Domestic Intelligence Division C.D. Brennan and his boss William Sullivan, the director of the Domestic Intelligence Division. FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 61, 8/24/67.

<sup>77</sup> An airtel from Charlotte dated 12 October 1964 lined Charlotte’s approach to the UKA based upon their knowledge of the group. Included in one of their 5 identified strategies was to avoid targeting and “stirring up small, inactive and peaceful” klaverns. As cited in Cunningham (2009), 370.

the keys to unlock the UKA, and COINTELPRO agents used leaders' positions within the structural hierarchy of the UKA to undermine the stability of the organizational hierarchy. Again, this is supported by information found in the quarterly summaries which consistently notes situations where leaders were in a vulnerable position and could be manipulated to create distrust among members. For example, the quarter two report from 1967 discussed management of a widow's fund and several counter-intelligence operations run by Charlotte demonstrating to UKA members that their dues money was being incorrectly spent by UKA leaders. Similarly, the quarter one report from 1968 discussed the re-election of a redacted individual in a Realm-level position despite the fact that he lacked the support of many klansmen across the state and suggests a potential counter-intelligence operation to remove him from his office.<sup>78</sup>

The quarterly summaries provided by the Charlotte office demonstrate yet again the scope of COINTELPRO as a counter-intelligence operation and stand as a testament to the work of the agents assigned to COINTELPRO. They speak to the range of activities and creativity of operations launched by agents in their quest to disrupt and discredit UKA activities, but they also speak to the mindset of the agents who designed and executed these operations. Recognizing that they could not track and target every single klansman in North Carolina, agents designed a "top-down" approach to disrupting the UKA, focusing almost exclusively on the core members who formed the building blocks for the organizational structure of the UKA.

One question that the quarterly reports fail to answer fully is the issue of the motivations behind the "top-down" approach. While it is possible that the decision to focus on leaders was a pragmatic one based on limited resources, most academics familiar with COINTELPRO-White have suggested that agents in the Bureau demonstrated a degree of ambivalence towards the

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<sup>78</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 31-32, 7/7/67; FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 107-108, 4/1/68.



majority of UKA members based often times on a shared ideology or a belief in the justness of the UKA's cause, and it was this ambivalence which dictated how agents approached the UKA.<sup>79</sup> By targeting leaders such as Jones and Dorsett, the Bureau would appear to be something to combat the UKA as was their mandate, while ultimately allowing the UKA to continue operations in local communities unhindered. This question of motivation is important to keep in mind as this study moves on to consider the two types of documents from COINTELPRO-White Hate files.

### *Special Intelligence Reports*

Without question, this is the smallest collection of documents within the COINTELPRO-White Hate file; only seven special intelligence reports were identified in connection with the Charlotte Field Office and, in one case, the intelligence report was removed from the record with only the cover page and attached memo indicating its existence and content. Of the seven special intelligence reports identified in the records, two address interviews and transcripts of speeches by klan leaders and two address investigations into a rifle club established by a UKA klavern in the state.<sup>80</sup> The remaining three each address a different subject matter: recruitment tools, a shooting at a klan event, and the military service of a redacted UKA member.<sup>81</sup> While there is no explicit explanation as to why there are not more special intelligence reports in the record, there are several speculative reasons. First, with any body of declassified documents, one has to

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<sup>79</sup> David Cunningham has been the largest proponent of this belief, though John Drabble has also made similar speculations in some of his works.

<sup>80</sup> For the intelligence reports of interviews with klan leaders, see FBI-White Hate part 3, pgs. 66-69, 9/13/69 and FBI-White Hate part 8, pgs. 10-22, 12/27/65. For intelligence reports of UKA rifle clubs, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 75-81, 3/30/67, and FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 276-280, 6/28/67.

<sup>81</sup> For intelligence report on recruitment tools, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 20-25, 10/26/66. For intelligence report on the hooting at a klan event, see FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 170-175, 8/15/69. In reference to the report on an individual's service record, this is the case where the intelligence report was removed, but for the attached memo on the contents, see FBI-White Hate part 3, pgs. 33-34, 11/9/64.

recognize that certain information may not have been declassified and, given the often-sensitive nature of the information contained in these special reports, it is entirely plausible that some were simply not considered for declassification. Additionally, unlike COINTELPRO-Black Extremism which sought to gather intelligence for the prosecution of Panther members for things like firearm violations and under the Smith Act of 1940 for sedition, these attempts were not duplicated during COINTELPRO-White Hate operations against the UKA, so it makes sense that these records are not present in this file. The exclusion of this tactic reflects the different structures and purposes COINTELPRO. Furthermore, all COINTELPRO mandates were executed independently from one another, which allowed for local and regional circumstances to influence what tactics were used by the agents responsible for the programs. Despite the exclusion of the Smith Act from the special intelligence reports, the reports that do exist in the record can still provide fascinating insight into COINTELPRO-White Hate program in North Carolina.

The two reports investigating a UKA rifle club are interesting as they are examples of an instance where the Bureau tracked the UKA's relationship with gun ownership and the potential for violence. In both of these special investigations, the issue at hand is the formation of the Belmont Rifle and Pistol Club, which would be the designated club for members of the Belmont Klavern. The first intelligence report, from March 1967, identified the creation of the rifle club for the purpose of training klansmen as security guards to serve in the Realm's security organization, and that many of the members of the Belmont Klavern were also members of the National Rifle Association. Because of this pre-existing relationship between klansmen and the NRA, the intention of the rifle club was to seek a NRA endorsement; additionally, members of the klavern believed that if they recruited twenty-five individuals into their NRA-endorsed rifle

club, they would be provided rifles and ammunition through an NRA-U.S. Army partnership.<sup>82</sup>

In the attached airtel to this intelligence report, agents in Charlotte suggested that the Bureau contact not only military intelligence and the office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship, but also reach out to the NRA with the intention of persuading the NRA to deny the Belmont Rifle and Pistol Club an official NRA endorsement. If neither of those avenues for distribution of the rifle club were possible, the report suggested instead using the recent Congressional debates over gun control legislation to discredit the NRA by demonstrating that they were sponsoring klan violence.<sup>83</sup>

The second special intelligence report on the Belmont Rifle and Pistol Club was filed three months later, in June 1967. This intelligence report tracked the progress of the Belmont Klavern and their attempts to form a rifle club. In the report, it is stated that the members of the rifle club recently held a special meeting because they had received a letter from the NRA denying their endorsement and charter. While no reason was mentioned as to why the NRA did not grant the organization a charter, the decision was made to effectively put an end to the attempts to organize a rifle club. Additionally, all the members of the rifle club were also UKA members, so not only was a second organization redundant, they did not have a range to practice at or weapons to practice with.<sup>84</sup>

What this series of investigations re-enforces is the idea that the UKA was allowed to operate relatively unhindered except when the potential for violence was identified by agents. The Belmont Klavern was forming a rifle club for the purpose of training individuals to join the

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<sup>82</sup> Such a partnership between the NRA and the Director of Civilian Marksmanship of the U.S. Army did exist, though it is unclear whether or not the UKA would have been considered eligible for this sponsorship program, despite the beliefs of UKA members. See FBI-White Hate part 10, pg. 75, 3/30/67.

<sup>83</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 75-76, 3/30/67

<sup>84</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pg. 277, 6/28/67.

UKA Security Guards, a group which was known for sporadic acts of aggression and violence at UKA rallies and marches around the state. The formation of the rifle club made the otherwise peaceful Belmont Klavern a threat, thus necessitating the attention of Bureau agents and the potential for counter-intelligence operations. Once the threat of violence had passed when it became clear that a rifle club was not possible, agents were content to once again leave the Belmont Klavern alone.

In addition to the few special intelligence reports that are found in the document files, there is a second category of documents that could be considered as part of the special intelligence category. In the COINTELPRO-White Hate record, there are numerous examples of memos between senior leadership within the Bureau discussing COINTELPRO-White Hate. What makes these memos part of the special intelligence category is that the majority address the organization and execution of national level counter-intelligence operations under the COINTELPRO-White Hate mandate. Due to the organizational structure of the UKA, and the rigid hierarchy of leadership, the UKA was susceptible to large-scale counter-intelligence operations in ways that other organizations were not. As result, there were several counter-intelligence operations that were launched simultaneously by multiple field offices and that were sustained for months.

The best examples demonstrating this practice is the National Committee for Domestic Tranquility (NCDT). First suggested in a memo between DID official Fred Baumgardner and Assistant Director Sullivan in March 1966, Baumgardner suggested creating the organization as a “vehicle for attacking Klan policies and disputes from a low key, common sense and patriotic position”.<sup>85</sup> The primary method of attack against the klan would be through news bulletins,

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<sup>85</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 81, 3/10/66.

written by one Harmon Blennerasset, and issued from an undisclosed office location in Dayton. Blennerasset, interestingly enough, was an obscure reference to a financial supporter of Aaron Burr, and Dayton was selected as a generic location as there were more than a dozen towns in the United States named Dayton.<sup>86</sup> In support of his suggestion, Baumgardner attached a draft of a NCDT bulletin that could be sent to klan groups across the south which argued that by creating turmoil in the United States, the KKK was effectively aiding communism, which thrived amid domestic turmoil. The bulletin ended by urging individuals to “quit the Klan, and back our boys in Vietnam”.<sup>87</sup> The program was approved, and nineteen field offices including Charlotte began mailing out news bulletins from the fictional NCDT. By June 1966, the NCDT had mailed out two separate bulletins, and it was determined that a “headquarters” was necessary so that the NCDT could receive correspondence from klansmen who either agreed or disagreed with the NCDT’s message. Dayton, Ohio was selected as the preferred location for a post-box to receive such correspondence, and the Cincinnati Field Office was tasked with acquiring a post-box and monitoring incoming mail and communicating any possible counter-intelligence operations to Bureau headquarters.<sup>88</sup>

The NCDT ruse continued into 1967, with the Bureau issuing a bulletin in January 1967 announcing the formation of a regional office of the NCDT in Tuscaloosa, Alabama to be headed by John O. Diamond. Tuscaloosa also happened to be the location of Shelton’s estate and the UKA headquarters, a fact emphasized in the NCDT bulletin, which argued that the NCDT needed to have a presence in the heart of the Deep South, where violence was most common.<sup>89</sup> The NCDT campaign was ended in April 1967 when Bureau leaders felt that it has served its

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<sup>86</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 81, 3/10/66.

<sup>87</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pg. 83, 3/10/66.

<sup>88</sup> FBI-White Hate part 14, pgs. 29-30, 6/30/66; FBI-White Hate part 14, pg. 65, 12/29/66.

<sup>89</sup> FBI-White Hate part 1, pgs. 146-152, 1/24/67.

purpose as a counter-intelligence operation, and any further communications from the NCDT would cast doubt on the legitimacy of the organization.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the small number of special intelligence reports, they are a fascinating group of documents to consider concerning COINTELPRO-White Hate. Contributing to the discussion concerning motivations, these documents lend credence to the idea that FBI agents were only concerned with violence perpetrated by klansmen, as demonstrated by the special intelligence reports into the Belmont Rifle and Pistol Club. Furthermore, the NCDT sought to play on the klan's anti-communist rhetoric by creating the illusion that klan violence contributed to the spread of communism. If klansmen accepted this argument, there were two potential outcomes: either klansmen would continue to identify as UKA members but would limit or cease their violent activities or they would decide to leave the UKA altogether, opting instead to support the NCDT or another non-violent organization. Both of these potential outcomes would have likely been acceptable to Bureau agents, as they would both yield a situation where the Bureau had succeeded in manipulating klansmens into becoming peaceful, and thus manageable.

### *Activity Reports*

In comparison to the relatively small number of special intelligence reports, there are plenty of activity reports which describe how the Charlotte office operated their COINTELPRO-White Hate operation. In the seven years that the Charlotte office ran a White Hate program, there were sixty-seven proposed counter-intelligence operations. Of those, sixty were put into effect.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> FBI-White Hate part 14, pgs. 68-69, 4/18/67.

<sup>91</sup> In total, COINTELPRO-White Hate encompassed over 450 initiated actions against organizations identified in its mandate.

As mentioned, counter-intelligence operations in Charlotte include many of the tactics academics have come to expect of COINTELPRO. One of the more common tactics found in the record from Charlotte were fake or anonymous letter campaigns which often sought to create dissatisfaction or exploit pre-existing grievances among klansmen. The difference between a fake letter and an anonymous letter is that in fake letter campaigns, Bureau agents would forge the signature of a known klan member, meanwhile an anonymous letter was as it sounds—anonymous and unsigned. Forging signatures for letters occurred less often, as the Bureau went to great lengths to ensure the authenticity of a signature before authorizing a potential counter-intelligence operation based upon a forged document. For example, in a counter-intelligence operation proposal submitted by Charlotte on 9 August 1967, they requested that Bureau laboratory prepare a rubber stamp replicating the signature of an individual (redacted) as they were suggesting a significant letter campaign that would include multiple communications. In support of this request, the Charlotte Field Office was prepared to provide the Bureau copies of letters signed by the individual so that any recreations of their signatures would be accurate.<sup>92</sup> In their response, the Bureau indicated that the value of having a rubber stamp signature was clear, but that the laboratory was unable to produce an accurate rubber stamp reproduction of the signature due to the handwriting. As such, the Bureau denied this request and the letter campaign associated with it.<sup>93</sup>

While signed letter campaigns remained rare, the Charlotte office did launch the most effective and ambitious anonymous letter campaigns of any field office engaged in COINTELPRO-White Hate. In a 9 May 1967 airtel to the Bureau, Charlotte suggested the establishment of a Bureau-run National Intelligence Committee (NIC). In accordance with UKA

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<sup>92</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 41-48, 8/9/67.

<sup>93</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 49-50, 8/21/67.

handbook, an NIC could be struck to protect the klan from “the actions of unfavourable members” and to investigate members whose actions were “suspicious” or demonstrated a “lack of proper regard to any part of their oath”.<sup>94</sup> The hope was that the Bureau could use such an organization to create the illusion that UKA leaders were under investigation by their own organization, creating dissent and confusion among members as to the validity of their leaders. Charlotte proposed copying the letterhead and seal found on official Klan documents in order to send false letters, supposedly from this intelligence committee. The first letter Charlotte proposed sending would include the results of a NIC investigation into the disputes between Jones, Shelton, and Dorsett in North Carolina, as Dorsett had been banished from the UKA in the weeks prior.<sup>95</sup> The letter would announce that Jones and Shelton were guilty of violating their UKA oaths among other things, and both had been banished from their positions in the UKA, appointed interim leaders in their place, and would be distributed to all Imperial officers, Grand Dragons and Titans in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina Tennessee and Virginia as well as North Carolina.<sup>96</sup> Charlotte predicted that this false letter campaign would create significant confusion among klansmen in North Carolina as to the integrity of Jones’ leadership and whether or not Dorsett was wrongfully dismissed, thus creating a situation where klansmen would have to decide if they were going to continue to support Jones or leave the UKA and stand with Dorsett.<sup>97</sup> The Bureau agreed with Charlotte’s assessment of the counter-intelligence value

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<sup>94</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 205-209, 5/9/67.

<sup>95</sup> Dorsett’s banishment is addressed in several COINTELPRO memos. See FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 115-116, 4/5/67, FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 117-124, 4/7/67, FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 237-239, 6/7/67. This last document includes two articles from Atlanta-area newspapers concerning the banishment of Dorsett and Catfish Cole from the North Carolina UKA.

<sup>96</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 206-207, 5/9/67.

<sup>97</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 208, 5/9/67.



of launching a false NIC campaign, and granted Charlotte permission to draft the first NIC fake letter.<sup>98</sup>

Charlotte submitted the draft letter in a memo to the Bureau on 31 May 1967, and it was subsequently mailed out to twenty-eight UKA officials across the south on 5 June.<sup>99</sup> The results of this one NIC letter were greater than anyone had anticipated. Originally designed to create confusion and exploit instability in North Carolina, the letter garnered a response from UKA officials across the south, including Shelton and his apparent successor as Imperial Wizard, Melvin Sexton.<sup>100</sup> Unsurprisingly, Shelton denied the information contained in the NIC report and the existence of the NIC, but he also filed an inquiry with the Bureau and Postal Inspector into the possibility of a mail fraud investigation.<sup>101</sup> That Shelton filed a request with the Bureau to investigate this campaign is very interesting to note. By June 1967, COINTELPRO-White Hate had been operational for almost three years, and yet the possibility that the Bureau would investigate the UKA, let alone actively attempt to destroy the organization, had not occurred to Shelton.

In North Carolina, Charlotte reported that the NIC letter had significant disruptive effects. Attached to a Charlotte memo from 14 June are ten different newspaper articles from papers across the state reporting on the banishment of Jones and Shelton; several of the articles also included interviews with other UKA officials and Dorsett.<sup>102</sup> In the same memo, Charlotte suggested two further counter-intelligence operations—another NIC letter, responding in part to

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<sup>98</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 210-212, 5/24/67.

<sup>99</sup> A copy of the faked letter is included in the document files, unredacted. See FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 214-220, 5/31/67.

<sup>100</sup> Sexton's comments can be found attached to an airtel from the Birmingham office, see FBI-White Hate section 10, pgs. 247-248, 6/16/67. And another, from Atlanta, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 249-251, 6/15/67.

<sup>101</sup> A copy of Shelton's published memorandum response and report to the authorities is attached to an airtel in the file, see FBI-White Hate part 10, 242-246, 6/14/67.

<sup>102</sup> FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 252-271, 6/14/67.

Shelton and Jones' response to their banishment, and a false letter 'written' by Dorsett, in which he accepts the criticism the NIC leveled at him in their original letter, but also praising the NIC for their efforts in investigating on his behalf.<sup>103</sup> Both the request for a second NIC letter and a fake, signed letter from Dorsett were approved by the Bureau on 20 June, and the Charlotte office submitted the second NIC letter to the Bureau in a memo dated 23 June.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately for the Charlotte office, this second letter was never sent, with the Bureau issuing a hold on the NIC fake letter campaign on 29 June, in light of a possible investigation by the Chief Postal Inspector into the incident, upon the request of Shelton.<sup>105</sup> While a decision over the investigation was being considered, the Bureau did indicate a willingness to continue the program should an investigation not occur, and even though the NIC was not investigated for mail fraud, the Charlotte office never sent another NIC fake letter campaign.<sup>106</sup>

The NIC was not the only klan related organization that the Charlotte office helped organize during the COINTELPRO-White Hate era. While impressive in its ability to create disruption among the North Carolina UKA, fake letters were a standard COINTELPRO method, unlike Charlotte's other attempt at forming an organization to disrupt klan activity. The second attempt by the Charlotte office at establishing a klan-related organization began in August 1967 and centered around the relationship between the Bureau and George Dorsett. Dorsett was a long-time informant employed by the Bureau, having agreed to serve as an informant when the UKA in North Carolina was still in its formative stages. His Bureau handler was Special Agent

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<sup>103</sup> A copy of this proposed letter from Dorsett is attached to the memo, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 268-271, 6/14/67.

<sup>104</sup> For Bureau approval of this letter campaign, see FBI-White Hate part 10, pgs. 272-273, 6/20/67. For the draft of the second NIC letter, see FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 3-8, 6/23/67.

<sup>105</sup> A memo from Atlanta to the Bureau on 27 June indicates that the Postal Inspector in Atlanta who originally looked into the mail fraud investigation request filed by Shelton had decided to forward the investigation request onwards to the Chief Inspector in Washington D.C. See FBI-White Hate part 11, pg. 34, 6/27/67.

<sup>106</sup> See FBI-White Hate part 11 pgs. 36-37, 7/24/67 for the Bureau's willingness to continue the NIC campaign.

Dargan Frierson, who was well-known for his ability to develop informants, and the Bureau was able to exploit the longevity of Dorsett's service, and the personal relationship he developed with Frierson, whom he considered a good friend.<sup>107</sup> Following Dorsett's expulsion from the UKA in March 1967, the Bureau encouraged him to defy Jones and Shelton to further the confusion and divisions slowly emerging in North Carolina. Certainly, the NIC was a part of this process, but when the NIC campaign was cancelled, the Bureau sought another way to use Dorsett's continued loyalty to klan ideology to disrupt Jones' UKA. In mid-August 1967, Dorsett formed the Confederate Knights of the KKK (CKKKK), drawing the majority of his initial support from UKA members who were disgruntled over his banishment from the UKA.<sup>108</sup> While excluded from the public documents in the COINTELPRO-White Hate records, both Dorsett and Frierson have admitted that the CKKKK was, in part, enabled by the Bureau, with Frierson helping Dorsett write the constitution and recruitment material for the new organization.<sup>109</sup> This is further supported by records from the Church Committee's 1976 report. Through their investigation, the Church Committee found evidence suggesting that Bureau agents not only encouraged Dorsett to establish a rival organization, they helped write the CKKKK's constitution and other official documents for this new klan group and paid for start-up expenses such as printing new klan manuals, membership cards, and the cost of renting a post box.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Cunningham (2009), 371; *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson.

<sup>108</sup> Newton (2005), 116.

<sup>109</sup> This has been confirmed in by both Dorsett and Frierson, see *FBI:KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson, as well as Cunningham (2009), 371-371; Cunningham (2003), 345-246; Newton (2005), 134.

<sup>110</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports of Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (23 April 1976), pgs. 45, 251-252. This report does identify the Bureau memos in which such information was stated, however as the report itself notes, the dates on those documents were removed for security purposes. Furthermore, unredacted records were not found in the publically available FBI-White Hate file, though they were later released as part of publication of Church Committee Records. Redacted records can be found in FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 58-58, 8/22/67. Unredacted records are in the author's possession.

The CKKKK, from the perspective of the Bureau, represented an unparalleled opportunity to target the UKA, and the hope was to exploit Dorsett's CKKKK in order to reduce membership numbers among UKA Klaverns, and to call into question the legitimacy of Jones' leadership. In support of achieving these ends, in the spring of 1968, the Charlotte Field Office mailed anonymous letters to klansmen urging them to abandon the UKA and join the CKKKK as it was a better klan organization.<sup>111</sup> In a 30 January 1969 report, Charlotte notes that the CKKKK had succeeded in causing the UKA to lose members, as the CKKKK had grown to over two hundred members and forty Klanverns in the state.<sup>112</sup>

At the core of the FBI's plans for the CKKKK was the idea that they could control, and had to control, the CKKKK. Recognizing that Dorsett was more prone to violence than Jones, both in his rhetoric and practice, combined with the fact that Catfish Cole played a significant role in the CKKKK leadership, the Bureau understood that this new organization was more likely to draw the support of those who felt that the UKA over-regulated the use of violence.<sup>113</sup> However, the agents in Charlotte felt confident that they could mitigate this increased risk of violence. A January 1969 report noted that there was sufficient informant coverage among the CKKKK Klaverns that the Bureau remained fairly well informed about the activities of these

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<sup>111</sup> The letter in question is referred to in the Quarter One report from 1968 and was originally attached to the quarterly report. However, it was removed along with other attached material from the record. See FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 109-111, 4/1/68.

<sup>112</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pg. 160, 1/30/69. Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports of Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (23 April 1976), pg. 251. Further insight into the CKKKK is found in a series of documents released by the Bureau as in November 2017 in connection to the ongoing efforts to release documents from the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection. These documents represent a series of communications between the Bureau and the Attorney General and other senior Bureau officials from late 1975 and early 1976. The documents detail the concerns of the Bureau over the ongoing Church investigation, as George Dorsett has been publically identified as an informant, despite the fact that he had been promised anonymity, and the documents under investigation had redacted all personal identifies. The Bureau was therefore concerned about how Dorsett's name had been discovered, and if any more informants were at risk of being identified by the Church Committee.

<sup>113</sup> Cunningham (2013), 202.

groups.<sup>114</sup> Whatever risk arose from having Klaverns without informant coverage was deemed to be an acceptable level of risk. In the same report, agents noted that “there are many members of the CKKKK who will join any klan organization in existence. If the CKKKK ceases to function as an organization, these members undoubtedly will return to the UKA. This is not desirable.”<sup>115</sup> This was a very astute observation by the agents in Charlotte who recognized that there were klan members who would always be loyal to the klan ideology, and who would always find or establish an organization through which they could act on their ideologies. The CKKKK was a tool through which these individuals could be controlled, at least in principle if not in practice.

While Bureau reports indicated that they intended to "phase out" the CKKKK when it ceased to be of use to the Bureau, there was never any indication how the Bureau was going to put an end to this organization.<sup>116</sup> As it turns out, the CKKKK collapsed a mere two years after its inception, in part due to Dorsett's lack of organizational skills, and when it collapsed, many members were left searching for an alternative klan organization. The organization that appealed to the majority of them, including Dorsett, was the North Carolina Knights of the KKK, established by Joseph Bryant and Edward Dawson. Another organization founded by those dissatisfied with the UKA and Jones' leadership, the NCKKKK gladly accepted the former CKKKK members into their ranks.<sup>117</sup> As with the CKKKK, the Bureau deemed NCKKKK an acceptable alternative to the UKA, and viewed its formation as a positive indication that the Charlotte office was making progress with an effective counter-intelligence program.<sup>118</sup> Neither

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<sup>114</sup> The document addressing informants in the CKKKK was partially deleted from the FBI-White Hate record, see FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 156-161, 1/30/69. An unredacted, complete record is in the author's possession.

<sup>115</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pg. 160, 1/30/69.

<sup>116</sup> These records are unfortunately not available in the public COINTELPRO-White Hate file; however, reference is made to them in the records from the Select Senate Committee. See Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports of Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (23 April 1976), pgs. 252, footnote 124 and 124b.

<sup>117</sup> Newton (2007), 93, 116, 127.

<sup>118</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 181-185, 9/12/69.

the CKKKK or the NCKKKK were targeted for significant counter-intelligence action under COINTELPRO-White Hate.<sup>119</sup>

While the actions of the Charlotte office described here represent a small fraction of the activity and work Bureau agents dedicated to COINTELPRO-White Hate, they provide fascinating insights into the nature of counter-intelligence against klan organizations and, once again, speak to the motivations of COINTELPRO-White Hate. As with quarterly intelligence reports and special intelligence reports, activity reports demonstrate perhaps best of all the nature of COINTELPRO-White Hate and its targeting of leadership and violence exclusively.

Furthermore, they demonstrate that the Bureau was less concerned with actually destroying klan organizations, than they were with being able to control them. The CKKKK is the ultimate example of this—contrary to the very core of the COINTELPRO-White Hate mandate established in September 1964 to disrupt and eliminate white hate organizations, they encouraged and even aided in the creation of such an organization. The claims of the Bureau that the CKKKK was an unequivocal counter-intelligence success need to be carefully scrutinized. The Bureau recognized that the CKKKK members were prone to violence, more so than the majority of the UKA members, but rather than luring these violent individuals away from the UKA and then neutralizing the CKKKK, as would have been in line with their COINTELPRO mandate, the CKKKK was allowed to operate as an independent klan organization. And while the Bureau emphasized the need to control the CKKKK in order to prevent any violence, existing records suggest that the Bureau was not as effective in this endeavour as they perhaps should have been. As part of their investigation, the Church Committee subpoenaed the Director of

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<sup>119</sup> This organization lasted well into the 1980s, growing throughout North Carolina and eventually allying itself National Socialist Party of America, forming the United Racist Front, and the organization that was responsible for the Greensboro massacre in November 1979 which claimed the lives of five individuals.

North Carolina's State Bureau of Investigation. According to his testimony, the CKKKK was a violence-prone group, and frequently engaged in armed clashes with members of the UKA. Furthermore, they engaged in cross-burnings and other acts of intimidation in several communities which hosted CKKKK Klaverns. Additionally, the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) Director testified that he had attended a CKKKK rally at which Dorsett invigorated the crowd by stating that even if they needed to "kill every Negro", they would bring peace and order to the United States.<sup>120</sup>

There is sufficient evidence to support the Bureau's claim that it did have an effect on the membership of the UKA, with the vast majority of CKKKK members defecting from the UKA. However, in light of the violent rhetoric and acts of violence committed by its members, the legacy of the CKKKK is much more complicated than simply being a successful COINTELPRO operation. By aiding in the formation of the CKKKK, and encouraging klansmen to join the new organization, the Bureau succeeded in neutralizing the more violent factions of the UKA, however they did not neutralize those responsible for the violence. And rather than seeking a way to eliminate the violence of these klansmen, the Bureau provided a new organization for these individuals, temporarily disrupting them perhaps, but never actually neutralizing them.

## **Conclusion**

It is hard to deny the role of the Bureau in deconstructing the UKA in North Carolina; all academics who have written on the subject agree on that fact. But caution needs to be exercised before the Bureau is granted more credit than it is perhaps due in this case. The documents available through the COINTELPRO-White Hate record pertaining to the Charlotte Field Office

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<sup>120</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports of Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (23 April 1976), pg. 252

and its operations against the UKA, when considered closely, present an alternate understanding of the nature of COINTELPRO-White Hate and its relationship with klan organizations in the state. Throughout all the documents in the record, there is a consistent tone that indicates that the Bureau was less concerned with actually eliminating the UKA in its entirety and were simply more interested in controlling the members of the UKA.

This indication of control rather than elimination begins with the first document the Charlotte Field Office produced as part of the COINTELPRO-White Hate program. In October 1964, as per instructions issued in the SOG in Washington D.C., the Charlotte office prepared a memo indicating how they were going to construct their operations against klan organizations in the state. In this memo, the SAC established that Charlotte's approach would avoid klaverns that were "small, inactive, and peaceful", and in cases where klaverns became active and violent, they would not act against that klavern until informant coverage could be established. This ensured that the Bureau would always have sufficient information and ways of tracking the results of their activities.<sup>121</sup>

The methods of counter-intelligence operations used against the UKA remain consistent with the methods of counter-intelligence operations demonstrated in COINTELPRO-Black Extremism and against other COINTELPRO targets. Though COINTELPRO-White Hate operations did use informants with more frequently than COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, which partially explains the tendency of COINTELPRO-White Hate to focus on control rather than elimination of white hate organizations. By mid-1969, the Charlotte Field Office and the Resident Agencies around the state had established informants in over one hundred and sixty of

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<sup>121</sup> This document, while not present in the public COINTELPRO-White Hate records, was obtained by David Cunningham through his own Freedom of Information Act request during his research into COINTELPRO-White Hate. The document is reproduced in his work, see Cunningham (2004) and Cunningham (2013).



the approximate two hundred and twenty-five active UKA klaverns, and in many cases, more than one informant was active in these klaverns.<sup>122</sup>

The ability to recruit so many informants reflects both a COINTELPRO success, but also a danger that was not replicated in the COINTELPRO mandates and operations. In many ways, klan organizations and the Bureau shared a number of common characteristics. The UKA was deeply suspicious of communism, and highly patriotic—they saw themselves as the "everyday" equivalent of the Bureau and the protectors of white, middle-class America.<sup>123</sup> This cultivated a deep respect for the work of the Bureau among UKA members, which in turn could be exploited by Bureau agents as a tool of recruitment.<sup>124</sup> However useful these commonalities were, the ability of many agents to convince klan members to work as informants also rested on a deeper, shared political ideology. Dorsett's handler, Special Agent (retired) Dargan Frierson, has been very candid about his and his colleagues' feelings towards the klan and the COINTELPRO-White Hate mandate. Frierson recalls that they did not have a fundamental problem with the klan—they did not view the klan as a particularly subversive organization in their ideology or their practices, and the only times when the klan was seen as a threat that needed to be control was when they resorted to physical violence.<sup>125</sup> When talking specifically about his approach to handling informants, Frierson admitted that he would "look the other way" when informants

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<sup>122</sup> Cunningham (2013), 198.

<sup>123</sup> This belief is imbedded in the list of questions prospective klansmen must answer before they can be initiated into the organizations. One question reads "Do you esteem the United States of America and its institutions above any other government, civil, political, or ecclesiastical, in the whole world?" This was followed by "Will you, without mental reservations, take a solemn oath to defend, preserve and enforce same?" For a full list of questions, see May, 11.

<sup>124</sup> Cunningham (2003), 363. When one Bureau handler provoked his informant by suggesting that he was not supplying all the information he knew, the informant replied that he was there [informing] because he loved the FBI and his country and that is his handler did not believe him, he would stop providing information. See May, 18-19.

<sup>125</sup> As cited in Cunningham (2009), 371; Schlosser (2007); *FBK KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson.

engaged in cross burnings, acts of intimidation, and violent speeches, as these were essentially harmless activities and did not warrant a significant Bureau response.<sup>126</sup>

Frierson has also spoken openly about how he managed to recruit informants for the Bureau, something he did so well that it was his only role in the COINTELPRO-White Hate program.<sup>127</sup> He understood that being able to empathise with his informant was critical, and would tell stories about his grandfather, a klansmen in the 1920s. He would further share his dislike for President Johnson, encouraging his informants to "cuss LBJ all you want".<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, he later admitted that he shared their unease towards integration, and while he recognized it was probably the right thing, that he was not happy about the prospect of it occurring in North Carolina.<sup>129</sup> When writing to FBI superiors about the process of creating informants in the UKA, Frierson wrote "don't send any Yanks", emphasising how important a common heritage and empathy were for trust between an informant and their handler to fully develop.<sup>130</sup> Regardless of whether Frierson was correct in asserting that a Northerner would not be able to work with a klansman, the fact that he, and presumably others in his office, believed it is very telling. Success with informants was inherently linked to a shared political belief and a common understanding that non-violent klan activity was not fundamentally wrong. David Cunningham explores the informant-handler relationship in his research on COINTELPRO-White Hate and determines that Bureau handlers were compromised because of they shared political beliefs and opinions with their targets. Cunningham uses the term "ambivalence" to describe the effects of the informant-handler relationship on the handler and argues that it is one

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<sup>126</sup> See interview in *FBI KKK*, directed by Michael Frierson; As cited in Cunningham (2013), 202.

<sup>127</sup> Sclosser (2007).

<sup>128</sup> As cited in Cunningham (2013), 201-202.

<sup>129</sup> As cited in Cunningham (2009), 371; Sclosser (2007); Lopez (2014).

<sup>130</sup> Cunningham (2009), 371; Schlossler, 2007.

of the key reasons that agents did not seek to end white hate entirely, as per their mandate, but sought to control merely the violent factions of white hate groups.<sup>131</sup>

Ambivalence was indeed present throughout COINTELPRO-White Hate operations in North Carolina, not just manifest in their informant-handler relations. Quarterly reports speak to the ambivalence towards everyday klan activities by demonstrating how much time Bureau agents spent on understanding and tracking only high-level leadership, focusing on a "top-down" model of targeting klan violence. Meanwhile special intelligence reports speak to the role of violence and how the potential for violence dictated much of the Bureau's response to the UKA in North Carolina. Finally, activity reports demonstrate that the Bureau sought control rather than neutralization, over-relying on their informants to keep agents informed of impending violence and upcoming events.

Admittedly, the term ambivalence needs to be used carefully as Bureau agents did have a job to complete and a mandate to maintain, and failure to be productive and follow protocol would yield harsh punishment. However, caught between their mandate to fully neutralize White Hate targets and their sympathy for the political orientation of klansmen, agents decided that the best way forward was rooted in a "middle ground". Rather than neutralize all white hate targets, they focused on those who were engaging in acts of physical violence and committing serious criminal acts. This middle ground approach leads back to the issue of efficacy of COINTELPRO-White Hate, and whether or not it is still possible to suggest that even though the Bureau may have compromised its mandate in some ways, that it was effective in what it set out to do. The UKA in North Carolina, by the end of COINTELPRO in 1971, was decimated. And the klan organizations that remained in the state were a mere shadow of the former membership

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<sup>131</sup> See Cunningham (2009), 370-375; Cunningham (2013), 195-211.

of the UKA. The question that remains, though, is if the success of destroying the UKA is significant enough to overlook the fact that a federal law enforcement agency not only allowed itself to be compromised in the face of sympathetic ideologies, but also allowed additional, arguably more dangerous, organizations to replace the UKA as the primary actor of White Hate in North Carolina.

## ***Conclusion:***

### ***Understanding the Bureau's Behaviour and COINTELPRO's Legacy***

On the morning of 3 November 1979, a group of Communist Worker Party members and their supporters gathered outside of the Morningside Homes neighbourhood in eastern Greensboro. This was the rally point for a “Death to the Klan” march slated to begin at noon. As the protesters gathered, a caravan of nine cars carrying thirty-five members of the United Racist Front (a mix of klansmen from the NCKKKK and American Nazi Party members) drove by. “You asked for the Klan, and here we are”, shouted one klansmen as they drove past the marchers; CWP members began hitting the cars with their picket signs.<sup>1</sup> The caravan slowed to a halt, and klansmen used their side-arms to fire several rounds into the air as a warning to the CWP members, who responded in kind by unholstering their own weapons and firing their own warning shots. At the sight of armed opponents who were threatening violence, URF members began unloading shotguns and rifles from the trunk of a car, and the shooting began.<sup>2</sup> Eighty-eight seconds later, five CWP leaders were dead and an additional dozen people were injured. As the URF drove away unscathed from the scene, the Greensboro Police Department (GPD) arrived on location and began arresting CWP members who were attempting to aid their wounded friends.<sup>3</sup> This event, dubbed the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, was and remains highly controversial to this day.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spoma Jovanovic, *Democracy, Dialogue, and Community Action: Truth and Reconciliation in Greensboro*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2012), 13; As quoted in "Frontline: Eighty-Eight Seconds in Greensboro", directed by William Cran, (1983, Boston, MA; Public Broadcasting Service).

<sup>2</sup> Jovanovic, 13-14; Magarrell and Wesley, 8-9; Mark Hand, "The Greensboro Massacre", *Press Action*, (18 November 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The victims of the shooting were Sandi Smith, Dr. James Waller, Bill Sampson, Cesar Cauce, and Dr. Michael Nathan. Jovanovic, 14; Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission "Public Testimony- Nelson Johnson", (25 August 2006), 21.

<sup>4</sup> The reasons for the controversy are broad and multi-faceted. They range from discrepancies over the factual account of events, police response to the event, prior knowledge by law enforcement of the URF's plans to initiate

The legal aftermath of the 3 November shootings would haunt Greensboro for several years. After two criminal trials in the early 1980s, the first a state murder trial and the second a federal civil rights trial, both ended in the acquittal of klansmen and ANP members by all white juries, a civil trial was launched in 1985 by the survivors of the shooting; in total, the civil trial brought charges against sixty people, including twenty URF members, four federal agents, and thirty-six members of the GPD. In the end, a federal jury ruled that five URF members, two GPD officers and one police informant were liable for the wrongful death of two protesters and the injuries sustained by two more. The jury awarded two survivors of the shooting a \$350,000 settlement, concluding that the city of Greensboro, the klan, and the ANP were guilty of violating the civil rights of the protestors. All three parties maintained that they had no role in the shooting and were innocent, and the city of Greensboro agreed to pay the whole settlement.<sup>5</sup>

Among those involved with the events of 3 November, two individuals emerge as being critical in the context of this study: Nelson Johnson, the former leader of the Greensboro Association for Poor People (GAPP) and an active participant in the early Black Power movement in Greensboro, and Edward Dawson, the former acting Grand Dragon of the UKA in North Carolina and the founder of the NCKKKK.<sup>6</sup> Johnson was one of the key organizers working with the CWP, having transitioned away from the Black Power movement towards labour rights and activism. Dawson was still an active member of a klan group but had been replaced by Virgil Griffin as Imperial Wizard of the NCKKKK. Dawson was also working as a police informant for the GPD at the time of the shooting and had not only shared intelligence

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violence, the presence of an active GPD informant in the klan who participated in the shoot-out, the role of an undercover federal agent in the ANP and his role in the violence, the arrest of CWP members, as well as the suppression of evidence in the criminal trials following the events.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Peterson, "Civil Trial Opens on Greensboro Clash", *The Washington Post*, (16 March 1985).

<sup>6</sup> As a reminder, the NCKKKK was founded in 1969 by Dawson after he left his role as acting Grand Dragon of the UKA. His group gained membership after Dorsett's CKKKK collapsed and went on to become one of the most active klan organizations in North Carolina.

with the GPD but also received key information surrounding the CWP march from law enforcement officers.<sup>7</sup>

These two men, Dawson and Johnson, represent the continuation of Civil Rights era organizations into the 1970s and 1980s. It is often forgotten that the activists who rallied and marched so consistently in the 1960s did not disappear with the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, or the end of the decade. While the Civil Rights movement is historically associate with the 1960s, these men and women, and the issues that were so central to their political activism, continued to influence and shape society for decades to come. There was a longer trajectory to many of the stories from that tumultuous decade.

Understanding that the events of 3 November did not occur in isolation allows them to be worked into a much larger narrative addressing the legacy of actions and activities that came before. In the context of the study at hand and given the history behind the organizations and individuals involved in the Greensboro Massacre, a part of that story is COINTELPRO operations and the Bureau's response to organizations like GAPP and the UKA, which were very early iterations of the organizations responsible for the violence on 3 November. In particular,

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<sup>7</sup> Dawson's exact role in the events is controversial, as there are two varied accounts. It is clear that once he heard of the URF's plans to hold a counter-demonstration, he did alert the GPD. However, following this and for reasons never fully explained, the GPD gave Dawson a copy of the permit to march that the CWP filed, which included a copy of the march route. Some members of the URF claim that once Dawson had the map, he began encouraging all klansmen to arm themselves for the rally and to anticipate violence, while Dawson himself claims that he emphasised not bringing weapons as he knew it would ensure a heavier police presence and arrests on the spot. These two accounts were both addressed in a series of interviews. These two perspectives were quoted in a series of interviews with URF members who were present at the shooting. The witnesses remained anonymous for their protection, but do recall Dawson instructing them to carry shotguns, rifles and pistols as long as they were unconcealed as concealed firearms were not allowed under North Carolina's gun laws at the time. See also "Frontline: Eighty-Eight Seconds in Greensboro", directed by William Cran. See also Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Public Testimony- Virgin Griffin", (16 July 2005), 6-7; Amy Wolfford, "FBI Informant on Klan-Nazi Shooting Dies- Edward Dawson Severed his ties with the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s", *The Winston-Salem Journal*, (20 September 2002); Douglas Martin, "Virgil Lee Griffin, Klan Leader, Dies at 64", *The New York Times*, (17 February 2009).

the questions posed at the end of Chapter Three—questions of efficacy and whether or not the success of the Bureau's program justifies the tactics and approaches they adopted—comes into sharper focus in light of the events in Greensboro. Less than a decade after COINTELPRO ended and the UKA was deemed defunct in North Carolina, an organization once deemed by the Bureau to be an appropriate klan alternative to the UKA was directly involved in the violence that occurred in Greensboro. And though the historical record is more ambiguous concerning the role of the CWP in the violence, it is equally important to recognize is that members of Black Power organizations, such as Nelson Johnson, were also implicated in the Greensboro Massacre. Whatever successes COINTELPRO may claim in North Carolina and however much agents may boast that they succeeded in tempering subversion or violence, it is hard to deny that success was short-lived. This is not to suggest that the Bureau is to blame for the shooting in Greensboro; indeed, assigning responsibility for the event is not the purpose here, and has been taken up by numerous other studies, including the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>8</sup> However, the connection between the organizations implicated in the Greensboro Massacre and those that were once supposed to be neutralized by COINTELPRO operations raises some serious questions about COINTELPRO and its legacy. Far from being a benign program that can be relegated to the archives of FBI history, COINTELPRO needs to be more carefully considered, and it is past time that questions about COINTELPRO operations be addressed so that moving forward, the same mistakes are not committed and progress can be made towards something better.

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<sup>8</sup> The Greensboro TRC was established in 2004 and was the first domestic TRC in the United States. The TRC finished its work in 2006, with the publication of its full report in May of that year. All testimonies and reports issued by the Commission are still archived and publicly available on the Greensboro TRC website. For an academic analysis of the Greensboro TRC and its contribution to understanding the process of reconciliation in the United States pertaining to racial violence, see Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley, *Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).



## **The Results of this study**

At its outset, this study sought to understand how COINTELPRO mandates differed from one another in practice, and why such difference might have existed. Through a careful study of COINTELPRO document records pertaining to the Black Extremism and White Hate mandates in North Carolina, a clear image emerges of two COINTELPRO mandates that had vastly different interpretations which directly influenced the modes of operations and standards of success.

COINTELPRO-Black Extremism and COINTELPRO-White Hate had identical mandates: to identify, disrupt, discredit and neutralize the threat posed by organizations and individuals adhering to the ideologies identified in the mandates. Despite having the same mandate, the evidence in this study suggests that COINTELPRO-White Hate and Black Extremism had fundamentally different interpretations, which then influenced the operations undertaken by agents. In seeking to neutralize the threats posed by Black Extremism, the focus was on neutralization through elimination; if the group ceased to exist, the threat they posed would also cease to exist. This approach never considered the nature of the organization, thus never allowing a non-violent Black Power group to operate. COINTELPRO-White Hate, however, focused on neutralization through the containment of individuals or groups likely to commit violence, and allow everyone else to continue operating peacefully. In both cases, the approach used by agents was problematic, and limited the potential outcomes of COINTELPRO operations.

The basis of this study was a series of document records from the COINTELPRO era. In each of the document records, three major types of reports were identified: monthly/quarterly

summary reports, special intelligence reports, and activity reports, and each category was considered in context of what it revealed about the nature of the COINTELPRO mandate. In both White Hate and Black Extremism, an enormous amount of information was collected and meticulously catalogued. Any claim that COINTELPRO-White Hate was simply a "token" program and that no real work was completed, or counter-intelligence operations executed, is completely discredited by simply considering the amount of information and insight provided by quarterly summaries alone.

The quantity of information in these reports between COINTELPRO-White Hate and Black Extremism may be similar, but the content of the documents reveals several differences between the mandates supporting the idea that White Hate was focused on containment and control, and Black Extremism on elimination. The first difference between the two mandates is that COINTELPRO-White Hate focused almost exclusively on state and national level leaders and initiatives, while COINTELPRO-Black Extremism employed a "bottom-up" method of operations, emphasising community and local leadership. The decision to pursue a "top-down" approach against the UKA was likely influenced by the size of the organization for pragmatic reasons- at its height, the UKA had over ten thousand members in North Carolina. However, the results of this pragmatic choice still influenced the orientation and outcomes of COINTELPRO-White Hate. Targeting UKA leadership was based on the calculation that if the senior leadership structure disintegrated, the rest of the organization would as well. In many ways, this calculation was accurate. The vast majority of UKA members in North Carolina were casual klansmen who were essentially non-violent and who harboured only modest connections to the klan ideology, meaning that if their local klavern would cease to exist, they would likely leave the klan. However, the Bureau's assessment precludes the idea that there was a dual membership structure

in the UKA that juxtaposed these casual members against core members who would always be klansmen regardless of struggles at the leadership level. While the Bureau's top down approach neutralized klan activity by removing casual members from the organization, it created a gap in which core members continued operating relatively unaffected by the Bureau's efforts even though it was these members who were more likely to use violence. This approach contrasts heavily with the approach established in COINTELPRO-Black Extremism which sought to identify every Panther member or potential ally. Regardless of how active or inactive the individual was in Panther activities, they still presented enough of a threat that the Bureau felt justified in surveilling their activities and reporting them to the SOG in Washington.

This primary difference in targeting leadership versus membership speaks to the idea that Black Extremist organizations would always represent a threat, and therefore needed to be completely eliminated to be neutralized, while only specific sectors of White Hate organizations presented the same level of the threat. This contrast in threat construction and percepts translated into how field agents operated, and the types of counter-intelligence activities agents employed. The clearest example of this is seen in the special intelligence reports compiled for the respective mandates.

In COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, the prosecution of Panthers for sedition or treason is the subject of seven independent reports, while prosecution for firearms violations represents another significant element of special intelligence gathered under this COINTELPRO mandate. These attempts to collect information never resulted in a prosecution, though it demonstrates quite clearly that neutralizing the entire Panther organization was truly the emphasis as legal prosecutions would not only neutralize the immediate threat of violence but would effectively put an end to any long-term threat by ensuring that any potential perpetrators were in prison.

Furthermore, even when the Panthers were not engaged in any violence-oriented activities, and had ceased arming themselves and barricading their headquarters, the Bureau continued to collect information about the potential for violence or revolutionary rhetoric despite noting in their records that the Panthers did not actively pose a threat.

Understanding why Bureau agents did not respond to the behavioural change in the Panthers lies largely with understanding the organizational culture of the Bureau at this time. Because compliance with procedure and avoiding public criticism were crucial cultural tenets of the Bureau under Hoover, agents could not appear to be doing less than everything expected of them as outlined in their COINTELPRO mandate. Furthermore, if violence were to erupt, the Bureau would need to be able to deflect blame solely on the Panthers by demonstrating their relentless work against the Panthers in the past. As a result, agents were highly risk adverse, which also contributed to the tendencies of the Charlotte Field Office to simply utilize any counter-intelligence opportunities that arose out of the relationship between the Panthers and local law enforcement which still afforded the Bureau the opportunity act against the Panthers without risking any legal repercussions or public embarrassment.

A risk-adverse COINTELPRO operation is not inherently problematic, especially considering that the field agents continued to meet procedural expectations placed upon them. The larger problem is the Bureau's insistence the Panthers could not be anything else except a dangerous, potentially violent and subversive organization despite the fact that there was ample evidence suggesting that the Bureau's perception of the Panthers was flawed. This issue becomes even more relevant when compared to the approach Bureau agents took towards COINTELPRO-White Hate and klansmen during the same period. Special intelligence reports indicated that the issue of violence or the potential for violence would draw an immediate response from the

Bureau, but once violence was not longer a possibility, the Bureau returned to their focus on executive leadership. Even in situations where klaverns or individuals were deemed to pose a threat and could not be allowed to continue operations, the Bureau opted for a form of control rather than neutralization. False front organizations like the National Committee for Domestic Tranquility, which attempted to direct klansmen towards alternative, non-violent organizations that still allowed them to hold their anti-Communist and anti-integration ideologies, were prevalent and mainstream initiatives among COINTELPRO-White Hate, as were attempts to direct UKA members towards alternate “Bureau approved” klan organizations, such as George Dorsett’s CKKKK. The desire to control, rather than eliminate, klan organizations was highlighted yet again by agents in Charlotte who argued in late 1967 that they should cease their efforts to remove Jones from his position as Grand Dragon, believing that a new leader would not be as susceptible to Bureau manipulation, and would boast moral and recruitment among UKA members.<sup>9</sup> While the COINTELPRO administrators in Washington disagreed, and instructed agents to continue focusing on Jones, this emphasises just how different the interpretation and orientation of COINTELPRO-White Hate operations was from COINTELPRO-Black Extremism.<sup>10</sup>

When all the evidence is considered together, an image emerges that both challenges and reflects what academics have come to expect from the Bureau during the COINTELPRO era. COINTELPRO-Black Extremism is characterised as detail orientated and relentless, with a constant effort being made by Bureau agents to track and fully neutralize the Panthers. This fits with the established narrative of how the Bureau treated the Panthers; what does not fit is the risk-aversion and lack of new or innovative counter-intelligence measures used in pursuing their

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<sup>9</sup> FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 75-81, 11/6/67.

<sup>10</sup> For the Director's response to Charlotte, see FBI-White Hate part 11, pgs. 82-84, 11/15/67.

goal. Agents were dedicated to their work to the extent that they were driven to succeed and produce results, but they were not willing to face punishment over failures or causing the Bureau public criticism, which in some ways limited the scope of COINTELPRO operations in North Carolina.

Similarly, COINTELPRO-White Hate challenges the narrative that it was simply a token program designed to appease the public's growing concern over racial violence in the South and did not actively seek to achieve anything. The fact is that the UKA in North Carolina was defunct by the time COINTELPRO was cancelled; however, that success needs to be questioned, as unlike other COINTELPRO mandates which were rigid in their application, the agents in North Carolina assigned to White Hate employed a looser structure which not only dictated the direction of their operations but resulted also in the neutralization of only one type of klansmen and only one klan organization.

The emergence of these two very different images of the COINTELPRO mandates answers the first part of the question posed here: yes, there was a difference in the nature and methods of counter-intelligence work when directed towards White Hate groups and Black Extremist groups. The question that remains, then, is why did these differences exist?

Seeking to explain different behaviour among individuals or groups of individuals can be very difficult. However, there are certain factors that need to be acknowledged as they mitigate some of the different circumstances that might have influenced how COINTELPRO operations unfolded. First and foremost, and this cannot be emphasised enough, the goal of every COINTELPRO mandate was the same. The memo issued to the respective field offices selected for inclusion in a COINTELPRO mandate is almost identical for Black Extremism and White Hate; besides some minor differences in phrasing and language, the premise of each document is

the same, as is the stated goal and endorsed methods. Second, all agents operated within the same institutional culture, broadly speaking. While different Field Offices and Resident Agencies almost certainly had different idiosyncrasies and practices, all agents underwent the same training when they enlisted in the Bureau and were subject to the same expectations placed upon them by Hoover and the senior leadership within the Bureau. Equally, they were all subject to the same brand of punishment if they should fail in any way or cause the Bureau public criticism. This resulted in an organization where taking risks was broadly discouraged and every agent understood his place, and the expectation he had to meet.<sup>11</sup>

Keeping those two factors in mind, the differential approach towards Black Extremism and White Hate can best be explained as a combination of several factors, though the primary cause that emerges out of this research is the difference in how the respective organizations were perceived by the agents responsible for executing COINTELPRO operations. As was briefly addressed at the start of this study, COINTELPRO began as an initiative to identify and eliminate subversive organizations, starting with the Communist Party. Considering that the Bureau received blanket approval for counter-intelligence operations with subversive targets from the National Security Council, it was central that all subsequent COINTELPRO mandates target subversion, otherwise Congressional, or at least Presidential approval would have been necessary for counter-intelligence work.<sup>12</sup> When it became apparent that klan violence needed to be addressed, the Bureau attempted to cast the klan and its affiliates in a subversive role by arguing that the Communist Party was drawn to the racial violence the klan was engaging in, and

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that in the 1960s, and for the duration of Hoover's term as Director of the Bureau, women were not allowed to serve as agents or employees. Women held civilian contracts roles in administrative or secretarial roles only.

<sup>12</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations Book II: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (26 April 1976), pgs. 21-30.

by allowing racial violence to continue, they were allowing the Communist Party to become fully entrenched in the Civil Rights movement and the race question in American society.<sup>13</sup> This logic is flawed as it both ignores the fact that the klan was ardently anti-Communist, and fails to formally establish the connection between subversion and the klan. Instead, it suggests that the klan was responsible for helping create the conditions in which subversive organizations might prosper; whether or not that actually qualifies the klan as being subversive is questionable. Regardless, the Bureau was able to create significant suspicion surrounding the klan to establish a COINTELPRO mandate without seeking Congressional approval. Not only was this the easiest path forward for the Bureau as it eliminated significant administrative work, it also meant that they could protect their ongoing counter-intelligence operations by not publicly discussing their methods.

However, the flaw that arose out of these attempts to cast the klan as subversive is that despite their ability to create the mandate, senior leadership in the Bureau could not force their field agents to believe in the mandate. In North Carolina, this manifested in agents not seeing the klan as an inherent problem needing to be addressed. To them, the klan was not illegal, nor was it shameful to belong to the klan. In some cases, it went further to agents agreeing with the ideologies espoused by the klan. One of the ways in which Bureau agents addressed their responsibility to COINTELPRO-White Hate while also maintaining a casual support for klan activity is by using the defence that the Bureau was a law enforcement agency; it was not their role to protect or intervene in situations of violence, but rather to investigate criminal acts, and when they could prevent violence from occurring they would, but their primary role was to

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<sup>13</sup> For a full summary of the Bureau's argument, see again FBI-White Hate part 1, pgs. 12-16, 7/30/64.



investigate after a crime was committed and bring the perpetrators to justice.<sup>14</sup> While this viewpoint is highly problematic as it raises question about COINTELPRO's position within the Bureau's investigation and intelligence gathering structure, it also highlights the ambivalence among agents towards White Hate targets, especially those who were non-violent. Furthermore, it demonstrates that a lack of belief in the *raison d'être* behind COINTELPRO-White Hate created a situation where agents did not act with the same urgency or resolve as they might have otherwise if they truly believed in that the klan represented a threat to American society the same way the believed Communism or Black Extremism represented a threat.

Unlike with COINTELPRO-White Hate where the Bureau had to work hard to establish a connection between subversion and White Hate ideologies, the connection between Black Extremism and subversion was much easier to establish, both from the perspective of senior Bureau leadership and field agents assigned to the COINTELPRO-Black Extremism mandate. The ideology of the Panthers, though not explicitly communist, did include parts that were certainly influenced by communist thought. Community-based social programs, an equal distribution of power among the people, equal access to resources and education, and equal opportunity employment; all these were core pieces of the Panther's political platform that challenged the social, economic and political structures of American society. While the Panther's platform did include discussions of revolution, the emphasis was on social revolution supported by an armed revolution only if it was needed. This nuance did not factor into how the Bureau approached the Panthers. They were armed, they espoused revolutionary violence, and they preached an ideology compatible with Communist teaching; in short, they were dangerous, and that drew the Bureau's attention. To the broader public, the political position of the klan might

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<sup>14</sup> This justification was enumerated several times in the wake of racial violence in the South, including after Freedom Rider riots in 1961, various sit-ins across the counter and the Freedom Summer murders in 1961.

have appeared morally dubious or distasteful, but this was not always the case with the Bureau; meanwhile, the political position of the Panthers was dangerous, and that is what Bureau agents responded to through COINTELPRO operations.

The ideological orientation of the organizations involved and how the Bureau responded to them is a crucial factor in explaining why the activities of COINTELPRO-White Hate differed from Black Extremism. The klan was not truly subversive and was rarely violent; the logic that if the Bureau agents could control the klan, they would mitigate violence and therefore neutralize the parts of the klan that attracted negative public attention is what drove the orientation of COINTELPRO-White Hate operations. The same logic did not apply to the Panthers and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism. Regardless of the levels of violence or criminality of the Panther members, they were targeted because their rhetoric was inherently subversive, and no amount peaceful action would overcome that label. With the issue of ideology firmly at the heart of this divergence between COINTELPRO-White Hate and COINTELPRO-Black Extremism, there also needs to be a careful examination of the role of race in the COINTELPRO mandates and the Bureau at large.

Although it would be nice to claim that race played no part in the differential treatment of klansmen versus Panthers, this simply does not reflect the reality. It is impossible to completely ignore that the klan was inherently all white and the Panthers were equally all Black, and that their respective racial identities were inherently linked to the ideologies that attracted the Bureau's attention in the first place. In the case of the two COINTELPRO mandates discussed here, there is enough evidence to suggest that race was a factor in how COINTELPRO targets were selected and how operations unfolded; after all, they were the only two COINTELPRO mandates that identified groups based on racial identifiers. However, that evidence is insufficient

to speak to the entirety of COINTELPRO operations as there were five total COINTELPRO mandates that covered broad sectors of American society. Particularly, COINTELPRO-New Left raises some fascinating questions about the role of race versus ideology in the treatment of COINTELPRO targets. The New Left and the Panthers were in the same ideological stream focusing on social change that directly challenged American society, and often formed partnerships with each other. Additionally, New Left groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee, were some of the most integrated organizations across the country. Without fully considering how the treatment of COINTELPRO-New Left compares with COINTELPRO-White Hate and Black Extremism, it is difficult to fully understand the race-ideology nexus in COINTELPRO operations broadly speaking.<sup>15</sup> While it is tempting to make the argument that the Panthers were selected because they were Black, and that the klan received preferential treatment because they were white, such claims must be limited to specific studies that only highlight those two organizations in comparison to one another. To extrapolate and claim that the entirety of COINTELPRO operations and its political orientation was driven by racism sets a dangerous precedent about the role of race in the Bureau that is not yet sufficiently grounded in academic research.

Instead of postulating about the role of race, which at this juncture would lead to more questions than actual answers, let us focus in on what this study has actually demonstrated and what it means moving forward. COINTELPRO as a counter-intelligence effort has never been replicated in American domestic intelligence or law enforcement communities since its cancellation in the 1970s and given that it is one of the most developed counter-intelligence

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<sup>15</sup> The work of David Cunningham has largely addressed the relationship between COINTELPRO-New Left and White Hate. However, it rarely bridges the issue of race focusing instead on the differences in the actual application of counter-intelligence methods. His work does provide solid academic footing upon which further research could be explored with emphasis placed on the question of race.

programs in American history, it deserves frequent reconsideration. In 1976, the Church Committee reviewed COINTELPRO in the context of the rights of the American people and found it to largely ignored the First Amendment Rights of entire sections of the American population, and that rarely was the question of legality or morality raised in selecting actions and targets.<sup>16</sup> The findings of the Church Committee continue to be relevant today as technology has increased the ease and temptation of mass intelligence gathering and surveillance operations. The findings of the Church Committee continue to present valuable lessons about one element of COINTELPRO operations, but there are significant other lessons that can be learned from COINTELPRO records, particularly about how surveillance programs treat their subjects, and the differential behaviours that exist in the intelligence and law enforcement community. Contrary to the role they attempt to cast for themselves, the Bureau throughout their COINTELPRO era was deeply influenced by politics, creating ambivalence and ambiguity that compromised the integrity of counter-intelligence operations and outcomes.

Far from being able to provide any suggestion or solution on how to address the presence of ambivalence and political compromise among intelligence agents, this study is primarily a cautionary tale: ambivalence and ambiguity in the intelligence and federal law enforcement community during the Civil Rights era presents a deeply problematic history that implicates law enforcement and intelligence agents by demonstrating that through their ambivalence and ambiguity they did not provoke violence, but they certainly did very little to prohibit violence in certain circumstances. This raises further questions about the past role of law enforcement and the extent to which they met the expectation placed upon them to prevent violence and protect victims, and the extent to which they continue to meet these expectations. These questions about

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<sup>16</sup> Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations Book II: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans (26 April 1976), pgs. 13-18.

the role of law enforcement and intelligence, and the existence of ambivalence in their work, have yet to be reconciled in the historical context of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and if it cannot be reconciled in the past, there is little hope of identifying and addressing it in the current intelligence environment or preventing it in the future.

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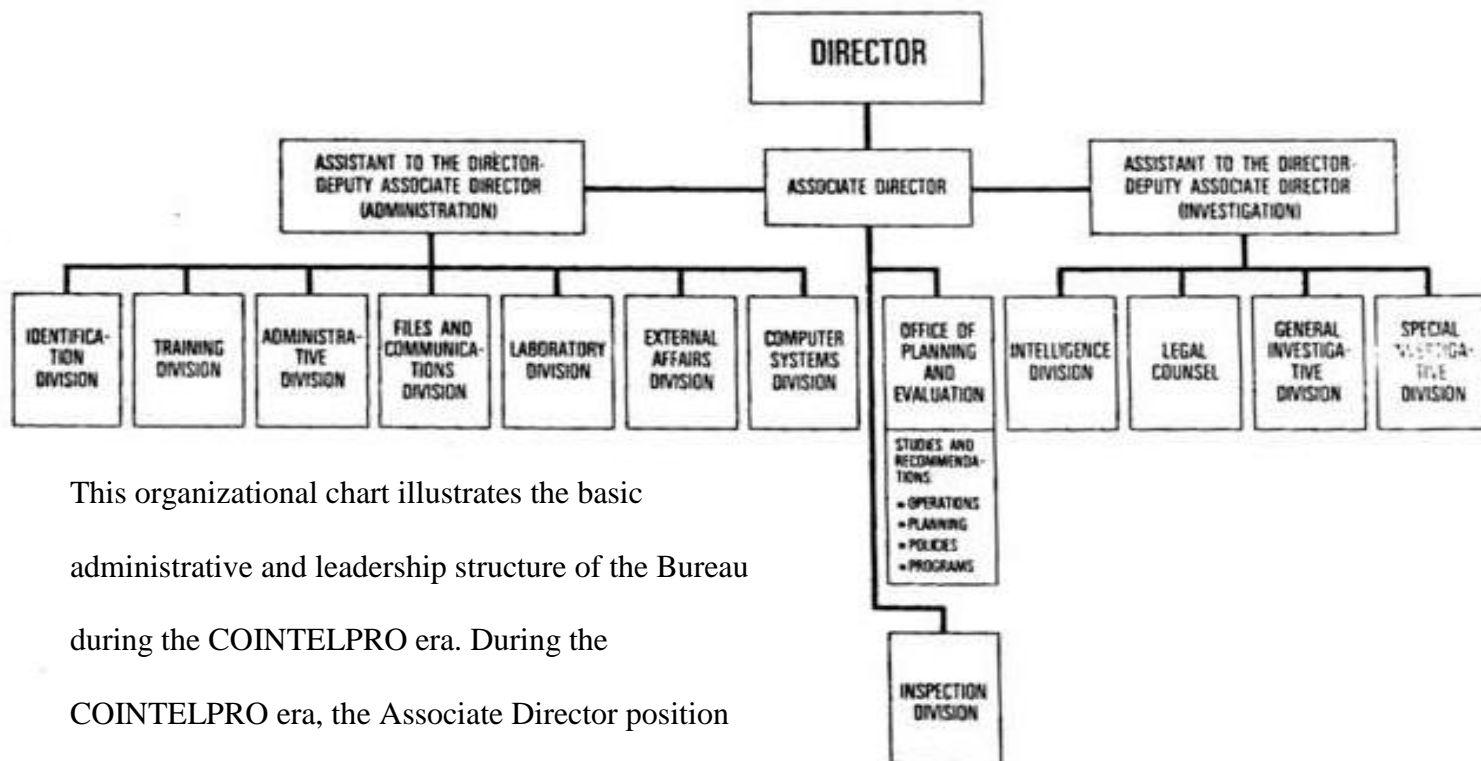
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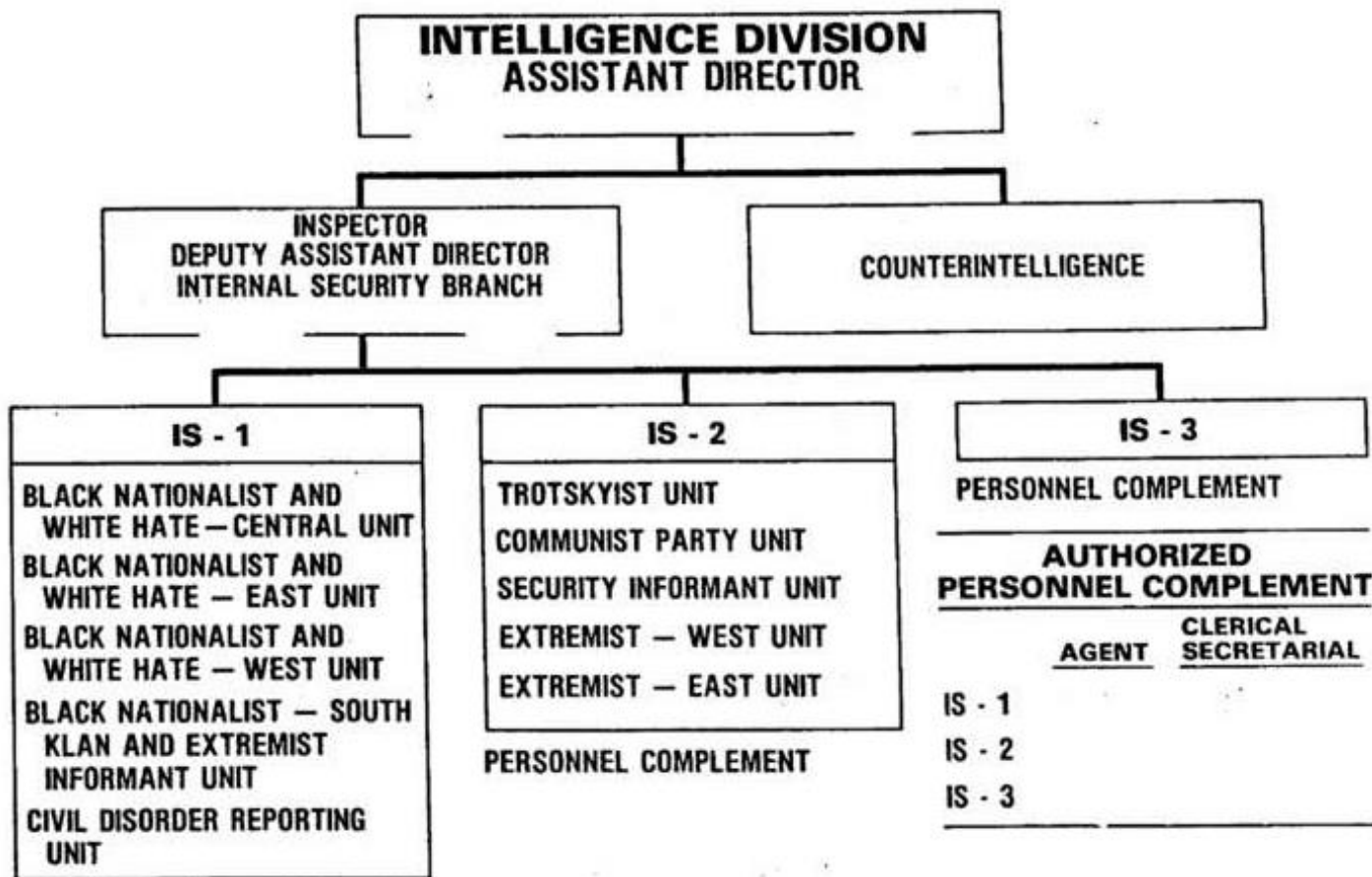
*Appendix: Bureau Organizational Charts*

## FBI FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION CHART



This organizational chart illustrates the basic administrative and leadership structure of the Bureau during the COINTELPRO era. During the COINTELPRO era, the Associate Director position was held by Clyde Tolson. William Sullivan served as the Director of Intelligence Division before being promoted to the Deputy Associate Director (Investigations). Sullivan was replaced by Fred Baumgartner as the Director of Intelligence Division. The General Investigation Division was led by Alex Rosen.

Source: *Hearings before the Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Volume VI: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1975, pg. 347.*



This organizational chart in a closer look at the structure of the intelligence division. Although there were units in the Internal Security Branch contained units dedicated to organizations like Black Nationalist Groups and White Hate organizations, COINTELPRO operations would have fallen under the Counter-Intelligence side of the organization.

Source: *Hearings before the Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Volume VI: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1975, pg. 348.*