

Dear Gerry,

4/6/90

How wonderful it will be if your father-in-law can get here so soon after the approvals! Our hopes are with you!

The Probability is that Jerry and his wife won't go away this summer. They've almost finished putting a room onto their house so the old lady won't have to sleep in the living room because she is unable to handle stairs. They are fortunate in having a fine crew that is working both well and ~~successfully~~ rapidly. She's coming along very well but they do not leave her in the house alone.

As of now early June looks fine. And by then we should not have any predictions of snow, as we have for tonight. Where you come from snow in April is not unusual but here it is.

There are new motels with which I've had no experience but none is more than 15 minutes from here. I think you stayed at the Holiday Inn. Dave used to but last time he was at the Red Horse Inn, across the highway from the Holiday. Cost less. Used to be better but now they are about the same. He said there was an appreciable difference in the prices. The university made the arrangements for him. Two of those a little farther away are Day's Inn and Quality.

Jerry is getting to be quite an expert on the subject-matter of your very good proposal. And in learning how so many of the government's records can't be found. The FBI's stonewalling is not new to him, though, and he seems to have found their records he did get hold quite a bit of useful information.

You can't expand your syllabus very much but you may want to see if you can squeeze in anything about the evidentiary hearings. If you do not have a copy of the initial transcript and want one, I have it. (I gave it that name in the era of miniskirts.)

Those who do not know what it really was may take the wrong thing from your use of the FBI's description of its dirty-work, "Counterintelligence.2 The learned their Orwell well!

Re King's education: Crozier was not a black institution. I knew a white preacher who'd gone there and being in Chester, Pa., it was probably largely if not mostly white. I'm not familiar with collegiate teaching perspectives of the late '40s and early '50s but I'm inclined to believe that there was less fear and apprehension then than later. The Cold war wasn't as deep as it became in its chilling, I think. And Mass. may have been less so, freer, than most states. But he ~~was~~ was a remarkable man and I suspect that fine as his academic achievements were he also was self-educated in his reading. I think he was always more radical than generally perceived.

For use we are OK, thanks, and happily Lil is getting to the end of the tax season. No signs of bloom in our dogwoods and azalea but other trees were in bloom maybe a month ago and we'd had jonquils for more than a week. Probably much of the local fruit cop was killed by a very cold March. Forecast for up to 4" of snow tonight!

If you did not send Jerry a copy I'll show him your proposal.

Our best,

Herb

Dear Harold,

4/4/90

Thanks for the letter of 3/23. There is no problem with re-scheduling our visit to Frederick. In fact, making the trip a bit later will make it easier for the rest of my family to come. I plan to take the summer off from teaching. My wife has been increasingly busy working at the hospital counseling diabetes patients, but her schedule is still somewhat flexible. For now, lets plan on June 2-4. We would probably leave here on Friday, June 1st and arrive that night. We would then stay through Sat., Sun., and early afternoon on Monday. I will make reservations ahead of time at one of the local motels. You do not have to ask Jerry if he could put us up, besides one of the things our kids like most about traveling is staying at the motel. Nonetheless, I do hope Jerry will be around so we can see him.

One possible event which could disrupt these plans would be the arrival of my wife's father from Vietnam, which could happen at any time. My wife will fly out to California when he does come. Senator Hollings office came through for us in terms of expediting some of the paper work. I will certainly keep you advised on any changes in our plans.

Just last week, I, along with a colleague in the history dept. (Prof. Joseph Killian), submitted a proposal for a special topics course next Jan. 1991 entitled, "The FBI, Martin Luther King, and the Civil Rights Movement". I have enclosed a copy. Prof. Killian does not know a whole lot about this, but he does have a background in black history and he teaches a course on the history of the Constitution which should be helpful. Also, the more we have talked about the course the more excited he has gotten about learning about the FBI's effort to spy on and undermine the civil rights movement. I have written to Jerry to see how he feels about coming down here as a guest speaker.

I, at long last, finished Racial Matters. I have recently picked up Garrow's biography of King, Bearing the Cross. Among other things, I have been surprised at the depth of King's education. It is interesting to see how King's views began to take shape. From Garrow's account, it appears King embraced some pretty radical positions, particularly when you consider that he was educated during the late 40's and early 50's.

I hope you and Lillian are well and are enjoying warmer spring weather. The azaleas and dogwoods have been in full bloom here for over a week.

Best Wishes,



WOFFORD COLLEGE  
FORM FOR FACULTY MEMBERS' PROPOSALS FOR INTERIM PROJECTS

Respond to each item. Submit proposal, typewritten or in print-out, on this form.

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PROPOSAL BY Professors G. Ginocchio & J. Killian

Signature, department chairman \_\_\_\_\_

A. Project title. The FBI, Martin Luther King, and the Civil Rights Movement

B. Describe the project in a well-composed statement for the Interim booklet. This project will document, analyze, and discuss the unprecedented effort on the part of the FBI to spy on and attempt to divide and undermine the civil rights movement in the 1960s and early 1970s. Although many civil rights leaders looked to the Justice Department and the FBI to enforce newly-won civil rights against deeply entrenched local resistance, J. Edgar Hoover's FBI saw black militance as the major problem facing America and not white resistance to abolishing discrimination. The FBI's surveillance and counterintelligence projects targeted groups as widely varying in program and rhetoric as SCLC and the Black Panthers. Among all the black leaders to emerge during the 60s, no one was pursued more relentlessly than Martin Luther King, Jr.. The project will conclude with a look at the assassination of King and the "mini-trial" of James Earl Ray, the alleged sole assassin. *Evid hrs*

C. Indicate the ways in which non-traditional, innovative, or experimental methods or content will be involved in the project. (a) it will be team-taught, combining knowledge of the history of the black struggle, constitutional issues, and some familiarity with FBI operations in the 60s and 70s. (b) will involve students in reading and analyzing primary source materials (i.e., FBI documents obtained through FOIA litigation. See attached McKnight articles) (c) will examine an important chapter in our history which has, regretfully, been little explored.

D. Enrollment, prerequisites, expenses  
1. Proposed maximum enrollment: 25 If not at least 20, please attach explanatory statement.  
2. Academic prerequisites and/or other restrictions to enrollment, if any:

none

3. Check here \_\_\_\_\_ and attach explanatory statement if enrolling students by computer seems not feasible for the project.  
4. Expected maximum project expense per student, and the items it covers:  
Approx. \$50-60 for books and xeroxing documents.

E. Will any off-campus activity be required for the project? Yes \_\_\_\_\_; No x  
If yes, what will be its nature and duration?

F. Provide a week-by-week syllabus to show fully your plans for accomplishing the educational objectives of the project.  
\* see attached sheet

G. Show the requirements students in the project will be expected to meet. (Include specific readings. Indicate the number and types of tests, papers, reports, or journals required; show the requirements for discussion, participation, and any other activities or products.) Basically, students will be evaluated on the basis of: (1) strict attendance (no more than 2 cuts will be allowed; more than 2 cuts will mean failing); (2) will have to turn in answers to 75-100 study questions on one of the required books; (3) will have to complete a term paper (over 12 pages). Failure to do (2) or (3) or doing unacceptable work on both (2) and (3) will result in a failure for the project.

D.

1. Explanatory statement on enrollment:

We believe trying to accommodate 40 students would be unwieldy, particularly in terms of working with the FBI documents. We plan to have students work in teams of 2 or 3 on those materials and even with 25 that would mean there would be several groups. As the syllabus below indicates, we also plan to have each team give a class presentation during the final week of Interim which would certainly be more feasible with 25.

- F. Week-by-week syllabus:
- 1st Week: Background on the Civil Rights Movement. See videotape presentations (eg. selections from the "Eyes on the Prize" series). Begin reading "Racial Matters": The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972 by Kenneth O'Reilly, and begin working on study questions. Organize team projects.
  - 2nd Week: Begin working on FBI documents. Toward end of week, begin The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis by David J. Garrow. Finish "Racial Matters"; study questions due at end of week.
  - 3rd Week: Tentative: guest speaker, Prof. Gerald D. McKnight who is currently working on a book on the FBI and the Poor Peoples' Campaign of 1968. Continue with Garrow's book. Work with team projects. Begin Frame-Up: The Martin Luther King - James Earl Ray Case by Harold Weisberg.
  - 4th Week: Video on the King assassination and critical analysis of it. Presentation of team projects. Term papers due at the end of the week.

From the outset, the FBI characterized the dispute as a "racial matter" with potential internal security ramifications. Armed with the assumption that the nation's security was endangered, the FBI set in motion a massive political intelligence operation that covered nearly every organizational aspect of black community life in Memphis associated with the strike. Unhindered by respect for the rights of labor to organize, the First Amendment, and a citizen's right to privacy, the FBI intruded into lawful political activities of citizens without any indication that specific crimes in violation of the federal law were imminent. The methods the Bureau employed in this comprehensive urban surveillance were suggestive of the tactics of a police state.<sup>2</sup>

For the first five decades of the century Memphis and "Boss" Edward H. Crump were synonymous. During this period of heavy-handed machine rule, race leaders gained small concessions for the black community by way of reward for keeping a lid on racial dissent. White Memphians came to expect that blacks would deal and not act in the tidy political universe presided over by the powerful Boss Crump. During the early 1960's the long shadow of Crumpism still influenced white racial attitudes. Taking pride in the orderliness of relations between the races, Memphis had experienced no major racial troubles since the days of Reconstruction; most whites were convinced that the past would continue to serve as a guide to the future.<sup>3</sup>

Despite white expectations, Memphis was fast becoming a candidate for racial confrontation. All the conditions for racial unrest delineated by President Lyndon B. Johnson's Commission of Civil Disorders were present in Memphis. By the mid-1960's black civil rights leaders in the Bluff City were critically aware that the new federal laws and court decisions had accomplished little to improve the conditions of the city's black poor. Equally disquieting for black leaders was the realization that the easy battles against Jim Crow in public accommodations had left most whites determined to resist any further pressures for social change. Increasingly,

perhaps the first comprehensive scholarly use of these files. It throws new light on an important event in contemporary American history and public affairs that would doubtless have escaped public scrutiny except for the passage of the Freedom of Information Act. Historian David J. Garrow, in his recent work *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis* (New York, 1981), cites these files, but very sparingly because the sanitation strike was not central to his story. The writer wants to thank Harold Weisberg of Frederick, Maryland, who obtained these documents from the federal government in civil action suit 75-1996, and generously permitted the author to reproduce the Memphis Sanitation Strike and Invaders files for his own research purposes.

2. For an operational definition of "security police" as it applies to the methods the FBI employed in the Memphis operation see Otto Kirchheimer, *Political Justice: The Use of Legal Procedure for Political Ends* (Princeton, 1961), pp. 202-4.

3. William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge, 1964), pp. 102-4, 207.

## The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike and the FBI: A Case Study in Urban Surveillance

Gerald D. McKnight

On 11 February 1968, the eve of Lincoln's birthday, several hundred black sanitation workers proclaimed by a show of hands that emancipation was still a hope that could stir action. The following day the city of Memphis, Tennessee, was hit with a garbage strike. What started as a "wild cat" strike soon escalated into a racial confrontation, then into a compelling civil rights struggle of national importance, and two months later culminated in an assassination that triggered a storm of racial violence that stunned white America. For one dark moment this southern riverfront city served as a microcosmic reflection of the domestic forces in conflict during this traumatic decade.

The 1968 Memphis sanitation strike attracted little national attention until local blacks persuaded Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to enlist his moral prestige and international reputation on the side of the striking garbage workers. Weeks before local black leaders had succeeded in entreating King to come to Memphis, J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), had approved the launching of a domestic surveillance program against the strikers and their allies in the black community. The scope and intensity of this political intelligence-gathering operation constitute an untold story of outrageous and unwarranted abuse of power by Director Hoover and his national security police. For King, it was the cry of the powerless and oppressed that brought him to Memphis. For Hoover, Memphis became another front in the director's stepped-up campaign to contain the rising tide of black militancy and eventually to carry forward his secret war against the black civil rights leader.<sup>1</sup>

GERALD D. MCKNIGHT teaches history at the Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. He is writing a study of the FBI and the "Poor People's Campaign" of 1968. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 83:2, Spring, 1984. Copyright © 1984 by Duke University Press.

1. This paper is based largely on the examination of more than 2000 FBI documents in a file entitled "Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike." The author also found it necessary to use a companion file entitled "Invaders" in preparing this paper. This paper represents

Students will have access to all these files → \*

## A Harvest of Hate: The FBI's War Against Black Youth — Domestic Intelligence in Memphis, Tennessee

Gerald D. McKnight

In the annals of the black emancipation struggle of the 1960s the Memphis movement marks the end of an era, the last great nonviolent civil rights campaign in the South. The sanitation strike that engulfed the Bluff City began as a wildcat job action, escalated quickly into a compelling civil rights struggle, and climaxed in one dark moment with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Overlooked in the telling of this major event in black history is the immediate aftermath of the Memphis movement. King's death and the resolution of the strike, both inextricably linked, did not ring down the curtain on the civil rights drama unfolding in Memphis. Leaders of the black community vowed to keep up the nonviolent pressure for change with a renewed dedication—the most fitting tribute they could pay to their slain "Drum Major" for social justice and economic emancipation.

The Memphis movement was unique in that it was a spontaneous fusion of organized labor with activist elements of the black middle class and black church. However, as the strike galvanized the entire black community a new element soon became a factor in the protest movement—angry, aggressive-minded, militant young blacks who espoused the black power philosophy. Somewhat vague in their ultimate strategy, and unsympathetic to Dr. King's doctrine of nonviolence, they entered into an uneasy relationship with the moderate segments of the coalition supporting the strike. Mild in comparison to radical black youth in other cities, they nevertheless attracted the attention of national authorities. In short order the Federal

GERALD MCKNIGHT is professor of History at Hood College. "A Harvest of Hate" is a companion piece to an earlier article appearing in the Quarterly entitled "The Memphis Sanitation Strike and the FBI" (Spring 1964). He is currently at work on a study of the FBI and the Poor People's Campaign of 1968.  
The South Atlantic Quarterly 86:1, Winter 1987. Copyright © 1987 by Duke University Press. CCC 0038-2876/87/51.50.

Bureau of Investigation (FBI) took up the case of these incipient black power advocates in Memphis. After April 1968, Bureau officials in Washington and Memphis, with a vindictiveness and compulsion to destroy we associate with the security police of authoritarian governments, targeted this indigent and loosely organized grass-roots movement for disruption and elimination. The Bureau's campaign against these local black powerites, many of whom were no strangers to the Memphis police and court system, was based on political considerations and revealed the extent to which the FBI had become a national police force determined to undermine a militant racial movement which Bureau officials found repugnant. The FBI's actions against this small, local, and generally ineffective black militant movement is an untold but integral part of the larger Memphis story.<sup>1</sup>

April 1968 was indeed a cruel month for Memphians, white and black. Dr. King's assassination and the wave of arson, looting, and sniping his murder incited left the city traumatized and divided. Some whites were guilt-ridden; most were fearful and angry. King's violent death produced a groundswell of pressure that forced the city government to drop resistance to the modest demands of the black sanitation workers and bring the sixty-five-day strike to a negotiated settlement. While the strike ended on April 16, the civil rights struggle it fostered took on an independent momentum of its own. The city's black leadership promised to escalate pressure on Memphis's white power structure to find solutions to other grievances such as police brutality, black unemployment, and substandard housing. One of the strike leaders, Reverend James M. Lawson, threatened to continue boycotts and demonstrations against local companies that refused to hire blacks. "We have the troops now," Lawson declared, "to move systematically from industry to industry." Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy, King's chief lieutenant in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), promised that the successful end of the sanitation strike was only the first step in meeting the needs of the Memphis black community. To underscore his pledge that the SCLC had enlisted for the duration against racism and discrimination, Abernathy designated Memphis as the southern headquarters—"the jump off point"—for the projected Poor People's March on Washington.<sup>2</sup>

1. This paper is based on the examination of more than 2,500 pages of documents released by the FBI in compliance with the 1966 Freedom of Information Act. The "invaders" file included the Bureau's Memphis field office records, the Washington headquarters records, and a companion file entitled "Marrell McCullough." The writer wishes to thank Harold Weisberg of Frederick, Maryland, who obtained these documents from the federal government in civil action suit 75-1996, and generously permitted the author to reproduce the invaders file for his own research purposes.

2. Memphis Press-Scimitar, 26 April 1968; New York Times, 21 April 1968.

Students will have  
← need to all  
→ that file