

POWELL : You know what the trouble with that kind of books?

(S. Silverman)

Q: What's that?

POWELL: Times are moving so fast that they're outdated. By the time they go through the process of publication, which is usually six months, they're outdated, and Silverman really ~~maxx~~, as Malcolm X says, he knows ~~sax~~ probably as much about the black revolution as any white man. But his book, I can tell by the way he had me in there in ^{footnotes} / _____, that by putting me in in footnotes, and other people in footnotes, he was desperately trying to publish it, to try to update it.

Q: I don't want this to be topical in that sense. I want, many of the personalities that are ~~maxx~~ available now, as it were, will remain important, with varying _____, although some new names will appear. But ~~maxx~~ this, it ~~maxx~~ won't be three months, before the books' out, four, so things will change, but at least the quality of personality will remain important.

POWELL: I think it's going to be a very explosive summer, and so if it's out in three or four months, gonna be

Q: Well, the magazine will be out sooner of course, the magazine will be out _____. May I plung ahead?

POWER.: Yes sir.

Q: On the telephone the other day, you said to me, that you thought that the old leadership by and large, was finished, the old line organization leadership was finished. Do you mind expanding that, please sir.

POWELL: Well, I think as most old ladies, in all movements, they have not kept pace with the times, as I said in the summer recently, ~~xxx~~ let's trace the birth of an idea. It's born, it's rampant radicalism; it then becomes progressiveism, then becomes liberalism, then it becomes moderate, then it becomes conservative, then it becomes outmoded, and then it's gone. And the old leadership has not brought forth, new ideas, so the ideas they had, have now become ~~xxx~~ outmoded.

Q: What do you conceive the function of your organization, ACT.

POWELL: First, I do not belong to ACT. I said this repeatedly. I have only participated in one of its meetings, at the written request of the chairman, ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Landry of Chicago, and in the letter he ~~xxx~~ asked me to come and participate as "a consultant", so as the grand old man of the black revolution, because I'll be sixty years old in four years, and ~~a~~ these are all kids in their twenties, they're very few in the thirties, even, I was there as a ~~constulatr,~~ ~~constulatr,~~ consultant, and I gave them certain definite advice, based on my years of experience, because I led the first successful nonviolent ~~xxx~~ campaign amongst Negroes in the United States, for 11 years, from 1930, ~~and~~ ^{to} 1941, and I quite in ~~xxx~~ '41, because there were no more ~~xxx~~ worlds to conquer, almost like Alexander the Great, but don't

don't mean that. Now, we have new worlds to conquer. The northern school desegregation, the housing and the retraining of older Negroes for this new world, automation, and the training of our drop-outs and ~~xxx~~ push-outs for employment, and upgrading, and political patronage commensurate with the Negro's balance of power, in the big key electoral states.

Q: In the question of most revolutionary ~~xxx~~ social changes, in ~~a~~ those situations, there is usually a drive toward centralization of leadership.

POWELL: That's correct.

Q: Almost always happens. That has not happened to this point.

POWELL: It's only one year old. ~~xxxx~~ It's only one year old. I think there's gonna be a polarization. I think that these people who belong to ~~a~~ ACT may be ~~the~~ the catalytic agent in the polarization. Right now all we ~~hear~~ hear ~~among~~ among the demonstration leaders here, is a dissatisfaction, which is not constructive, of the old leadership. Now, with a catalytic agent such as ACT, there might be produced a polarization ~~xxxx~~ so we will have the two poles. Right now we do not have the poles. Eric ~~Severid~~ Severid, by the way, I have it over there, commented in a column, that in the ~~Negro~~ Negro revolution the fight is not between the conservatives and the liberals, the fight is between the liberals and the extremists.

Q: Well, how do you place ~~a~~ ACT in that spectrum?

POWELL: As a catalytic ~~an~~ agent, a group ~~funkin~~ fumbling around, trying to find something to hang its hat on, definitely stating before the press, in Washington, that they were not a new organization, they got word that we want to be a clearing house. And I said -- what you should ~~do~~ do is to make your umbrella big enough to include everyone. And I pointed at Malcolm X with whom I disagree, ~~ideologically~~ ideologically, but who I have great admiration ~~for~~ for some of his insights.

Q: He has some great insights.

powell; That's right, that's right, I'm glad you said that. I don't agree with the Black Muslim movement, don't believe in separation, so I did something which sounds ~~like~~ like semantics, before the ~~an~~ ACT program, which they ate up. I said -- let's don't fight integration. I ~~said~~ said -- let's stop the fight. Let's fight ~~for~~ for desegregation, and once we desegregate, then let each one go the way they way they want to, the Black nationalists want to go for separation, let them go. I'm an integrationist.

Q: You make the sharp distinctions then between integration and equality.

POWELL: That's right.

Q: and equality, you take as a prior condition

POWELL: Desegregation now, then after that, let each one indulge in the luxury of whatever philosophical point of view they have.

Q: But deal with the matter of first, civil rights approach, the F.E.P.C. approach,

POWELL: No, we're not even concerned with the civil rights. This is very important. If the Civil Rights Bill is passed, in its entirety without any watering down amendments, it would not affect the black revolution in the north one bit.

Q: Would affect the south.

POWELL: It would affect the south. You see, the black revolution is two-pronged. In the south it's middle class, and upper class Negroes, it's the preacher, the teacher, the student, and they're fighting for the golf courses and the swimming pools, and the restaurants right to vote. and the hotels and the ~~likes-of-these~~. Those are the two primary thrusts. But when you leave the south, where only one third of the Negroes now live, and come on into Washington, here you have a revolution of the masses. Not the classes. And that's the revolution ~~around--~~ around the country. And that revolution is interested in schools, housing, and jobs. And the Civil Rights Bill will not help that at all.

Q: I will not clearly. In a direct way. But

POWELL: I will create a climate. Will create a climate.

Q: Yes, the climate is important. One question about his distinction between leadership and masses in the ~~big~~ big northern cities. This distinction leads to speculation as to how leadership can control, what's the relation of leadership to that kind of a mass based movement.

POWELL: There is no leadership ⁱⁿ The old line and the new, that can control the masses. One of the shocking statistics, is that if you take these-called Big ~~##~~ Six, of the Civil Rights Organizations, they don't have but 900,000 members. ~~&~~ And many of those are white. So you have 19 million black people, who are uncommitted by loyalty to the civil rights movement.

Q: What is the problem of leadership then, you have this vast mass of people, many of them deprived and dissatisfied, and angry. What's the problem of leadership there.

POWELL: The problem of leadership is as follows: I have had here in Washington, two summit meetings, they were not recorded by the press, ~~although--er-r---~~ although it was released to the press. Here I think is the quickest way to get into the heart of the masses, and if I wasn't so extremely busy with this tremendous committee I have, that handles 40% of the domestic legislation in the United States, I would do ^{it} ~~it~~. I asked the Bureau of Census to give me the names of national organizations, ~~xxxx~~ that were black led, black membership, black financed. And they gave it to me. They gave me the Masons, the Elks, the _____, the doctors, the lawyers, the National Assn. of Colored Women's Clubs, and altogether there are 51 in the Bureau of Census, national Negro organizations, totally Negro, totally financed by Negroes, which had a membership ~~of~~ of 12,100,000. Now of course there are many duplications. The church for instance, the Baptist Church, the A.M.E. church, these have not yet been brought into the black revolution on an organizational basis, and that's where your mass is. So if someone could ever form a council of Negro organizations, they'd be getting right into the heart of the black masses. This was tried by A. Philip Randolph years ago in

Chicago, and they found the ~~Nxxx~~ National Negro Congress, and the commies took that over.

Q: Two things stem from that situation.

that you're describing. One is that we know there is no social change without power involved. What is the nature of the threat of this power. Power means a threat. What is the nature of this power and the nature of the threat ^{it} ~~that~~ mounts.

POWELL: ~~--Threat-to-the--~~Threat to whom?

T---

Q: Threat to the status quo.

POWELL: Alright, as I said in my speech in Harvard Friday, and at Indiana University last Monday, the white man is afraid today. He's afraid because all of the instruments of containment, of containing the Negro in a second class status, he had a cartel. He monopolized these. He had a cartel, a monopoly, _____ national guard, the police force, electric cattle prods and the numerical superiority. All of a sudden Birmingham exploded. And the demonstrations began all over the country. And these demonstrations based on the _____ of nonviolence. And you cannot stop nonviolence with violence. So the white power structure now stands aghast. Wondering what to do, in the face of these kids rolling out in the streets, these people marching, with nothing but ~~xxxx~~ "WE shall overcome some day."

Q: That's is, the technique of nonviolence is a decisive factor in Negro power.

POWELL: The day the Negro changes from nonviolence to ~~violence~~ violence, he is finished, and the Black revolution, has to start all over again. at some future date.

Q: Now there are some Negroes in responsible positions, even _____ organizations, that profess nonviolence, which think _____ some other platform, which speak of _____ of violence. The threat of violence, has uncontained _____ (TAPE ~~XX~~ RECORDING IS COMPLETELY UNEVENING -- SWITCHES BACK ~~FROM~~ AND FORTH FROM 3-3/4 speed to 1-7/8 speed or somewhere in between --)

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Q: Well, back to our topic of leadership and the centralization of leadership, it's always true apparently, that any competition for power, or competition for policy, you ~~may~~ find the crisis of over-reaching, entering very soon. One person promises more, offers more, ~~radically~~, more and more radical solutions. This conforms to expectations as well as to personal _____, but this carries dangers. How much danger do you see now.

powell: I don't see any danger of that at all, except in the ranks of those self-proclaimed leaders who are trying to move up the ladder, by virtue of these promises, because they have no other method of moving up the ladder.

Q: How did you ~~responde~~--respond to Rev. Wlamison's now well-advertised statement, that the schools could be wrecked if not conforming to the time table of integration.

POWELL: The schools could be wrecked?

Q: Should be, the public schools should be destroyed if they don't conform to his time table of integration.

POWELL: Well I don't subscribe to that no more than I can subscribe to the white segregationist destroying the public school system rather than obey the Supreme Court Decision.

Q: They are parallel.

POWELL: They are exactly parallel.

Q: In the area of over-reach. Now what about the stall-in. Is that an over-reach clearly.

POWELL: Yes, it's an overreach, but I was in favor of the stall-in, not knowing anything about the techniques, nor the organization, whatsoever, because to me, any form of demonstration that's nonviolent, necessarily quickens the thinking of people in the power structure.

Q: Now here's what I'm getting at. In terms of nonviolent demonstrations, is there a distinction between the legitimate and the illegitimate. That is, those with different kinds of social reference. That is, the stalls _____ is one thing, picketing or sitting in or

POWELL: No I don't think there is any ~~xxx~~ difference, ~~see~~ no difference, I say any form of nonviolence, has its ~~xxx~~ effect

Q: Oh violence has an effect too of course.

POWELL: Yes, but I don't believe in it, because, I don't believe in violence totally, not just as a Negro. I don't believe that violence has ever accomplished anything, you're a historian, and you know, that better than I do, that war and violence does not accomplish any satisfactory solution -- our civil war, our world war, making the world safe for democracy and so forth, So I'm against violence period.

Q: Well, what about demonstrations directed at specific targets, and those that are merely expressions of dissatisfaction or

anger. Nonviolent.

POWELL: I believe in demonstrations directed at specific targets, because when you have demonstrations of just bitterness and resentment and frustrations, with no goal in sight, then you're on the edge of something that could turn into violence.

Q: Well, this then is the distinction between the stall-in had no objectives. Just hypothetically, _____ it had no objective _____

(OFF ON A DIFFERENT SPEED OF RECORDING AGAIN)

POWELL: The stall-in ~~is~~ had an objective to me, although as I said, I never even met the leaders of the ~~xxx~~ stall-in, probably came to Washington, never spoke to him more than 30 seconds. The stall-in had an objective in pointing up to people coming from all ~~over-the~~ over the world, all over the United States, the, first, the lily-white policy of the World's Fair itself, second, the segregation and discrimination policies in the building of it; third, for instance, the African pavilion at the World's Fair, was built entirely by white labor. ~~Max~~ No Negroes worked on that at all. In a city where there are 1,200,000 Negroes and 800,000 Puerto Ricans. So I think the stall-in, ~~up-anti~~, _____, I thought the Stall-in had an objective in pointing that up. That ~~was-it~~---was it for me. Now if the leaders of the stall-in ~~xxxx~~ didn't have that as their target, then I say they were wrong.

Q: Well, the pint I was getting at, is the different kind of social refernece, you see, that picketing of the African pavillion, the Fair itself is one thing, had a specific target. The o ther refers to society in general, and can have serious _____ consequences.

powell: Yes, that's true.

Q: That makes a real difference, doesn't it.

POWELL: Yes, it does make some what of a difference, but I believe that anyone who goes into a demonstartion, must go into t he demonstation with a view that there's life and death involved. All you need is one trigger-happy policeman, and that's all, and it's all over, we've had it happen.

Q: It's happened.

POWELL: Yes, the S tudent Nonviolent Group, ~~SMX~~ SNCC, has had four workers killed in the south,

q; Oh, yes, tha t's the question where the demonstrator himself takes his risk, not the risk of a sort of innocent person, ~~whax~~ in the ~~axx~~ ambulance, being ~~waxxx~~ whirtled away to the hospital, being ~~axng~~ stopped on the road. That's the ~~kid-ef---~~ kind of risk.

POWELL: Yes.

Q: Coming back to something else, how much apathy is there still in a place like Birmingham or a place like Harlem.

POWELL: I can't speak for Birmingham, all I can speak for is Harlem. I would say that the apathy in Harlem, was massive until the Birmingham explosion. And now it recovered from its ~~lethargy-and--~~lethargy and indifference because they thought they were so well off, they made all these gains back in the 30s and ~~early--~~early 40s, and when the school demonstration was ~~xxx~~ called first by Galamison, the New York Times, in recording statistics, of the school demonstration, pointed ~~xxx~~ out that in my district, central Harlem, was 92% absent from the classrooms. Nearest to us was Galamison's district, 68%, Bedford ~~Stuyvesant~~ Stuyvesant.

Q: What about the question of Negro responsibility. Now the white responsibility is clear at this point. There's no question about that, _____ . What is the Negro's responsibility.

POWELL: I ~~think--~~think the Negro responsibility is different ~~than~~ than what you are probably ~~xxx~~ thinking about. The responsibility of the Negro is to quicken the white man's responsibility into action.

Q: He has not other responsibility than that?

POWELL: Not right now. This is a time of crisis, time of emergency. That's his responsibility. All this business about fixing up your houses, and not spending money on luxury products,

and getting a better education, all those things, right now, have become secondary, because this is a time of crisis. This is the year of decision, and therefore the normal responsibility of the Negro, the long range responsibility has to be waived now, for the present ^{CRISIS.} ~~time.~~

Q: Should the freshman in college suspend his studies?

POWELL: If necessary, yes, if necessary, yes. He has to risk being kicked out of school, if necessary.

Q: That's something else, kicked out of school.

POWELL: Everybody got to take a rest. For now.

Q: This thing of Dr. King's speech at Bridgeport a few weeks ago, which after his ordinary aggressive line, I would have to put that before it, when you say it, it ~~shows~~ sounds different, he winds up, you see, with the -- not cast down your buckets where you are, but if you are the street sweeper, you know, sweep that street; if you are the nuclear physicist, do that job; that line. As being ~~another--another-series-of--~~ a necessary associate, responsibility, with the ~~raz~~ revolution.

POWELL: I don't believe in that right now. As I say, I repeat again, that all these normal responsibilities, all these responsibilities, must be waived in the face of the ^{immediate.} crisis.

Q: Well, suppose we are past the immediate crisis, suppose we assume the proper direction, at a speed to be acceptable.

POWELL:

] Then we come back to the responsibilities, that of the normal responsibilities of any group of people in the world.

Q: Doesn't that seem like an arbitrary distinction to you?

~~POWELL~~ POWELL: No sir, not to me.

Q: Here's another idea to toss around. _____

that segregation gives the advantage of the disadvantage, by offering-- very often you profit from the disadvantaged.

POWELL: Oh yes, surely. But that advantage, if you travel through Negro communities, is not of such a significant nature, that it should stand in the way, just a few people here and there, profit from ~~it~~ it -- the Negro insurance company, although the white insurance companies, are now using actuarial tables that give Negroes ~~as the~~ the same as whites. The Negro undertaker, one of the wealthiest undertakers in New York is a white firm, Walter Cook, employing--burying Negroes. The Negro ~~is~~ doctor, anyone who will practice in the ghetto, whether the ghetto is Italian, Jewish, or Sutton Place, all these are ghettos, the ghetto to me is merely a place where ~~the~~ a group of people live, who basically are of the same race. I don't consider a ghetto necessarily a place of ~~slums~~ slums. I consider Sutton Place, a ghetto.

Q: You ~~mean~~ mean a gilded ghetto.

~~POWELL~~ POWELL: That's right. So anyone that practices in those areas, is bound to succeed in those areas. Succeeds by compulsion.

very good relationships with men from the south. People would be amazed
of the fences
on both sides/if they knew how well we got along. Because I know their

_____, _____
right now I have two or three outstanding southern congressmen from the
deep hard core south, who are begging me to attack them, in public,
because they are afraid they might lose the primary.

Q: And you

POWELL: _____

scared to death because of Wallace.

Q: There's a line taken by James Baldwin and some other
Negro _____, that the real aim, one aim anyway, _____
of the Negro revolution, is the moral regeneration of America.

POWELL: Correct. That's my view. My view changed at the
~~xxx~~ Bandung conference. ~~xxxx~~ Until the Bandung conference, I believe
that everything I had done, in ~~xxxx~~ picketing in New York for 11 years,
in being the first Negro in New York City, Council, in ~~offering or~~
authoring or co-authoring every civil rights bill, in the Congress,
I wrote the ~~fixx~~ first F.E.P.C. 20 years ago, it's my ~~RXX~~ F.E.P.C. bill,
I wrote the _____ on the ~~whxx~~ withholding of funds, which is in the
F.E.P.C. bill, all of this, was for the good of Negroes. But when I came
back from the Bandung conference, on April 19, 1955, I said -- no, this
now is a fight to save America. The question of civil rights, the
question of all these demonstrations is not gonna help the Negro, this
is to save the United States. Moral regeneration yes, moral regeneration
before the eyes of the world. And this is a question which is asked me
when I go to important international conferences. I will be the chairman

But the advantages of segregation for the Negro are rapidly fading.

Q: Without reference to ~~xxx~~ that

POWELL: The fact that the white people are ~~gakt~~ beginning to open their doors of business, and employment, oh, it's one of the threats to the whole society, the chain store is ~~wiping~~ wiping out the small business man, white as well as black. Happening in Harlem.

Q: Dubois said long ago, that he noted the great split between the pull of Negro tradition or even an African tradition, as well as _____
_____ as opposed to the impulse, ~~xpux~~ pull toward the western European American white society. That pull. This, for some Negroes, has created a very fundamental _____

POWELL: I think that the African nations' attitude toward the Negro _____ is _____

that the Negro in the United States of America, is more concerned with being an American with full rights, than with preserving any African culture that he doesn't know about, _____

Q: Forgetting Africa, though, there is still the pull for some people, to the Negro American ~~xxx~~ culture, as distinguished from the white middle class world of outside.

POWELL: The Negro never had any American culture. The nearest thing you had to it, is something the whites have adopted and that is the Negro spiritual, which is the only original music that America has ever produced. But there was not much Negro culture, the church was different than the white church, but now as the churches have gotten larger and wealthier, the ~~ministres~~ ministers ~~bette4r~~ bettered ~~educatie~~ educated -- you know, here is a fact that's amazing, I'm sure you know about, very few people do. There are more Negro young people in the United States out of a population of 20 million, going to colleges and universities, than all of the young people of England, out of a population of 56 ~~mkx~~ million.

Q: I didn't know that.

powell: I know it, very few people know it. It's a statistic from the Bureau of Census, that'

that's been running over there since 1960. It's amazing!
When I ~~read~~ read it, I was just so shocked. And

POWELL:

~~xxx~~ This indicates the fact the Negro has a responsibility, ~~and-prepare---~~ and compared to England, indicates a fact that he's interested in being an American, and the Negro college is ~~fading--~~ fading. The Negro press has come back because it was almost on its last legs -- but ~~xxx~~ its circulation is up now because it's the organ of protest -- of the revolution. The Negro church always will be ~~stern---~~ strong as it is because people go to the church around the corner. But there are a lot of whites going into fringe area churches, a lot of Negroes going into white churches, AND churches ~~being~~ beginning to have Negro clergymen even, in mixed congregations.

Q: One town I know in Vermont -- is considering a Negro clergyman.

POWELL: You know, I used to tutor the interracial project in Vermont around 20 years ago, where at our own expense, in my church, we sent about 50 youngsters to Vermont, to areas where they'd never even seen Negroes, and then the farmers there would take them in as their guests for a two-week period, and in the winter time they would charter a bus, and 40 or 50 would come down and spend a week-end living in a Harlem apartment, ~~xxxx~~.

Q: There is no Negro in ~~xxxx~~ this township that I'm thinking about. I suppose there's never been one there.

POWELL: They're probably able to hire him because ~~the~~ he's better trained than , at a salary they would offer to somebody from Yale Divinity or Harvard Divinity.

in Ken tucky
Q: In the town~~a~~/where I was born, at one time, there was a Cornell doctor, a Ph. D., principal of the Negro school, and ~~a~~ the principal of the white~~s~~ school, I should say, was semi-literate.

POWELL
~~POWER++~~ That's right, that's right, we have problems like that in government here. Where we have supervisors , high school graduates over men with bachelors and masters, one of the things we're ~~gix~~ fighting right now, the President's Committee.

ideal
Q: Myrdal says in his big book, that the ~~idea~~ program of the reconstruction of the south in the civil war, would have had these other provisions -- one, compensation to the now ex-slave holders, for their ex-slaves , their "property", two, expropriation of land, but compensation to the _____; three, land distributed to the freedman, but not as ~~ixf~~ gift; long term , supervised sales. Plus move the population, taking a certain number of Negroes, and resettling on public land. Do those things strike you as reasonable?

POWELL: They were in those days, because Myrdal is copying that from what Queen Victoria did. When Queen Victoria freed the ~~slave~~-slaves, she paid everyone, she got them land, and the bitterness and the friction was not there.

q; Well, it didn't happen here anyway. But you would find no resistance to the idea.

POWELL: No, none whatsoever.

q; It's strange how often there's a vast emotional resistance to this idea, on the part of both Negroes and white, as ~~xxx~~ condoning a moral wrong. Isolating the moral question from any other context.

POWELL: Well, as Myrdal points out, it wasn't a moral wrong only, it was an economic loss. And just like compensation now to Israel for Jews that were murdered. _____ been worked out between West Germany and Israel.

Q: ~~xxxx~~ You don't _____ moral question out of context _____ You see it in terms of human economic ~~terms~~ and social context.

POWELL: That is correct.

Q: That's a big split along discussions of all kinds, isn't it.

POWELL: Yes it is. Now you take our manpower development training act, which

END OF TAPE ONE.