



CHALLENGES TO THE MOVEMENT

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What significant turning points affected the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement and challenged Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership from 1965 to 1968?

LESSON OVERVIEW

At any moment a variety of individuals or events can emerge that change the direction and evolution of a social movement or challenge its ability to achieve its goals. For example, the leadership and/or constituents of a movement can strategically plan a gathering, march, or protest or take a public stance to increase awareness and visibility and demonstrate their ongoing commitment for change. At other times external factors out of the control of the movement can emerge and undermine the mission, success of a campaign, or threaten the health and well-being of the movement's leadership.

In this lesson, students will focus on two significant and often overlooked challenges within the Civil Rights Movement and to Dr. King's leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). One challenge was strategic: Dr. King's decision to take a public stand against the war in Vietnam; and the other was external: the FBI's ongoing surveillance of Dr. King and many leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

By learning about the strategic and external factors that can challenge a movement's success and momentum, students will apply their history-reading skills of sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration, and broaden their skills and use of close reading strategies by analyzing historical images, documentary film, and first-person interviews alongside the transcript. As a demonstration of learning and/or assessment, students will write an editorial expressing their point of view on either the strategic decision of Dr. King to publicly oppose the Vietnam War, or the FBI's actions. Through this process, students will continue to build upon the essential habits of a historian and establish a foundation for critical media literacy.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will use skills in reading history and increase historical understanding by:

- Analyzing primary source materials including photographs and documents
- Critically viewing documentary film and first-person interviews to inform their understanding of the lesson topic
- Synthesizing new learning through developing questions for further historical inquiry
- Demonstrating their understanding of the lesson topic through a final writing exercise

MATERIALS

- Equipment to project photographs
- Equipment for watching video segments
- Copies of handouts

LENGTH

Two 50-minute class periods.

ACTIVITIES

- 2 Do-Now: Opening Exercises
- 2 Analyzing: Sourcing
- 3 Analyzing Film as Text
- 4 Close View of Interview Threads
- 5 Research and Corroborate
- 5 Closing Discussion Questions
- 6 Homework or Extended Learning

HANDOUTS

- 7 Timeline: *King in the Wilderness - 1965-1968*
- 8 Challenges of the Movement: Note Catcher
- 9 Challenges to the Movement: Interview Thread One
- 12 Understanding the Man: Interview Thread Two

ACTIVITIES

1. Do-Now: Opening Exercise

Teacher Note: Distribute Handout One: Timeline: *King in the Wilderness* - 1965-1968. Explain to students that while this timeline is not comprehensive, it highlights many of the central events and historical developments chronicled in *King in the Wilderness*. Have students review the timeline, underlining details that are unfamiliar and events they immediately identify as potential challenges to the philosophy and tactics of the Civil Rights Movement.

Spend a few moments discussing their questions and what they noticed as potentially challenging.

2. Analyzing: Sourcing

Teacher Note: A Close View mirrors a Close Read exercise in which students use visual analysis skills to “read” visual sources as if they were employing literary analysis skills.

Project or print and distribute the photographs under the “Images” title on the Challenges to the Movement Lesson page and have students discuss the questions in small groups.

- 1 Black soldier standing in a field in Vietnam, 1960’s. (Courtesy National Archives)
- 2 President Lyndon B. Johnson in Vietnam waving to soldiers from an Army Jeep, October 2, 1966. (Courtesy LBJ Presidential Library)
- 3 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking at the United Nations at the anti-war march in New York City, April 15, 1967. (Courtesy Library of Congress)
- 4 Large crowd at a National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam direct action demonstration, Washington, D.C., October 21, 1967. (Courtesy Library of Congress)

DISCUSS

- What do you see happening in each photograph?
- What story does each individual picture tell?
- What larger story do the pictures tell when viewed together?
- What questions would you ask the photographers about these photos?
- How can we know that these images are accurate?
- Do you trust what you see in the images? Why or why not?

3. Analyzing Film as Text

Watching a Clip from the Film *King in the Wilderness*: Contextualization

Teacher Note: In this clip we learn about Dr. King's decision to take a stand against the war in Vietnam.

Distribute Handout Two: Challenges to the Movement Note Catcher and review Visual Analysis questions listed below. Have students read the questions before showing the clip so they have a sense of what to watch for and how to take notes. You may elect to watch the clip more than once for students to collect detailed notes.

Watch the film clip for this lesson, "If America's Soul Becomes Poisoned." (run time 7:39).

QUESTIONS

What did you see?

- What were the challenges Dr. King faced in the last three years of his life?
- Why did these occur at this time in the Civil Rights Movement?

What did you learn?

- What did you learn about the position of Dr. King and the war in Vietnam?
- How was his position on Vietnam received within the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, throughout the press, and by leaders in the United States federal government?

Why is it important?

- What were the personal consequences that Dr. King faced at this time?
- What were the political consequences and ramifications of Dr. King's stand on Vietnam?

Ask students to share notes in pairs or as a large group.

HABIT OF A HISTORIAN

After students view the photos and watch the film clip, have them write down their questions about the challenges Dr. King faced as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement.



4. Close View of Interview Threads

Contextualization and Corroboration

To make *King in the Wilderness*, 19 interviews were completed. For each lesson, interviews were edited together to create what we are calling “interview threads.” Each thread weaves together different interviews to enrich student learning of the lesson topic. In this lesson there are three interview threads that teachers and students can access that offer new insights and previously untold stories. These interviews are part of the Interview Archive but were not used in *King in the Wilderness*.

Teacher Note:

- Print and distribute the transcript of the interview segments in Handout Three and Handout Four.
- Have students follow the transcript, underline details that catch their attention, and take notes as they watch the interviews.
- When finished have students write new historical questions sparked from what they read or heard for later investigation.
- Have students use their notes and questions to select a historical detail, then research a corroborating document and place the interview segments in a larger context.

Biographical information about each interviewee is available at:
www.kunhardtfilmfoundation.org/interview-archive

WATCH THE INTERVIEW THREAD(S)

- 1** Thread One: “Challenges to the Movement: Militarism and the FBI”
Featuring: Mary Lou Finley, Richard Fernandez, Clarence Jones, and Cleveland Sellers. (run time: 16:03)
- 2** Thread Two: “Challenges to the Movement: FBI Investigation.”
Featuring: Clifford Alexander, Joseph Califano, and Cleveland Sellers. (run time: 6:52)

DISCUSS

- What do we learn from the first-person accounts featured in the interview segments that is different from other kinds of historical sources?
- What questions arise from using memories as historical sources?



5. Research and Corroborate

Teacher Note: After viewing and reading the interview threads, have students choose one or more historical details to practice their sourcing and corroborating skills -- in other words, have them research and identify a credible historical source that will verify the detail they selected from the interview.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Where did you find the document? Is it credible? How do you know?
- What is the date and who is the author? Why is this important?
- How does the source confirm the detail selected from the interview?

HERE ARE SUGGESTED ARCHIVES TO USE TO FIND CORROBORATING EVIDENCE:

- 1 The King Center. (www.thekingcenter.org/archive)
- 2 Stanford University: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. (kinginstitute.stanford.edu)
- 3 Library of Congress. (www.loc.gov)

6. Closing Discussion Questions

- How does viewing the historical sources contribute to your understanding of the challenges Dr. King faced as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement?
- What can we extrapolate from this lesson about the risks and rewards of taking a moral stand during a time of conflict or crisis?
- What other sources can you use to help you better understand memories and recollections as historical resources?

HABIT OF A HISTORIAN

After completing the lesson, have students note what answers they found to previous questions, or identify new questions they'd like to explore.



7. Homework or Extended Learning: Writing an Op-Ed

Throughout this lesson students have been studying two specific details associated with Dr. King that continue to be a focus for both ongoing study and controversy: his vocal stand against America's participation in the war in Vietnam; and the FBI's subsequent surveillance of him and the intelligence they fed to President Lyndon Johnson.

To demonstrate their ability to synthesize new knowledge, students will write an op-ed, or an opinion piece, sharing their point of view about Dr. King's moral stand. Students may want to **read** Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech, given on April 4, 1967, and use several quotes from this speech as a place to begin

Common Core State Standards

ANCHOR STANDARDS

Reading Literature and/or Information: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- RL/RI.X.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- RL/RI.X.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- RL/RI.X.9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

- SL.X.1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.X.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL.X.3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- W.X.7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- W.X.8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

TIMELINE: KING IN THE WILDERNESS - 1965-1968

1965

- **January 2 until March 25:** The Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
- **March:** First U.S. Marine Corps combat units arrive in Vietnam.
- **March 7:** "Bloody Sunday" attack on non-violent civil rights activists occurs, Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Alabama.
- **March 21-25:** Dr. King leads the final march from Selma to Montgomery.
- **August 6:** President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act.
- **August 11 -16:** Watts Riots/rebellion in the Watts section of Los Angeles, California.



U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War escalates; U.S. troop levels increase from about 15,000 to 184,000.

1966

- **January:** Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) announce plans for Chicago Freedom Movement to expand their civil rights activities from the South to northern cities beginning in Chicago.
- **January 26:** Dr. King and Coretta Scott King move to Chicago and into a railroad flat on the corner of Hamlin Avenue and 16th Street.
- **June 6:** James Meredith shot in Mississippi during a March Against Fear.
- **June 16:** Stokely Carmichael, newly appointed chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), issues a call for Black Power.
- **Late June:** Carmichael and Dr. King debate Black Power versus nonviolence as they continue the Meredith March through Mississippi.
- **August 5:** Dr. King leads nonviolent march from Marquette Park to Gage Park, Chicago resulting in the Summit Agreement whereby Mayor Richard J. Daley and the Chicago Real Estate Board pledged to make housing open and fair and Dr. King agreed to stop marching.

1967

- **April 4:** Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam sponsor event at Riverside Church. Dr. King delivers "Beyond Vietnam" speech urging an end to the war.
- **May 17:** Coretta Scott King and Dr. Benjamin Spock lead anti-Vietnam War rally in front of the White House.
- Riots/rebellion in Newark, New Jersey (July 12-17) and Detroit, Michigan (July 23 - July 28).
- **December 4:** Dr. King announces launch of the Poor People's Campaign, a campaign to "dramatize the plight of America's poor of all races."



U.S. troop levels in Vietnam increase to 485,600.

1968

- **April 3:** Dr. King travels to Memphis, Tennessee to support striking sanitation workers.
- **April 4:** Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated at the Lorraine Motel, Memphis.
- **April 9:** Funeral for Dr. King, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia.
- **April 11:** President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968.
- **May 12-June 19:** Poor People's Campaign, Washington, D.C.



U.S. ground troops in Vietnam increase to 536,100.

CHALLENGES TO THE MOVEMENT: NOTE CATCHER

Instructions:

As you are watching this film clip from *King in the Wilderness*, consider the following questions and record your answers.

What did you see?

- What were the challenges Dr. King faced in the last three years of his life?
- Why did these occur at this time in the Civil Rights Movement?

What did you learn?

- What did you learn about the vocal position Dr. King took on America's involvement in the war in Vietnam?
- How was his position on Vietnam received within the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, throughout the press, and by leaders in the United States federal government?

Why is it important

- What were the personal consequences that Dr. King faced at this time?
- What were the political consequences and ramifications of Dr. King's stand on Vietnam?

After watching this clip: What further questions do you have?

CHALLENGES TO THE MOVEMENT

INTERVIEW THREAD ONE: MILITARISM AND THE FBI

MARY LOU FINLEY

"Well, I remember that there was a Vietnam War teach-in at Stanford [University] in May of 1965, which was right before I graduated and right before I came to Chicago. So that was the beginning. It was during the early years of the teach-in movement when people were -- college students in particular were saying, 'We need to understand this. What's going on?' So that gives you a little sense of the historical moment that we were in as all the Chicago Movement was taking shape. And it was... so the anti-war movement -- coming out of students in particular, the anti-war movement was starting by the summer of '65, so that was just beginning.

"So, during the year that I was here and worked with Martin Luther King, the staff for instance, were very strongly opposed to the war and were trying to get Doctor King to speak out against it. And I know that he had in some modest ways before that, but we were trying to encourage him. Many of the staff who were -- and the people who were close to him and had worked with him in the South more than somebody like me, but there was a strong feeling that we needed to oppose the Vietnam War.

"In the midst of all of that, [Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist] Thich Nhat Hanh showed up in Chicago. It was like in May of 1966. We're in the middle of getting ready for doing the tenant unions, getting ready for the summer open housing campaign. And he came to see Doctor King because he wanted to talk to him about the issues in Vietnam, in the Vietnam War. I thought it was a very touching moment. I remember him walking down the street, in some street on the west side of Chicago. I never spoke with him, but I remember his presence there at that time. And I know that Doctor King was already thinking about the Vietnam War issue before he met with Thich Nhat Hanh. But that it was a very touching moment that this Vietnamese priest and peace activist wanted to connect with Martin Luther King, even in the midst of the Chicago confusion of all these other kind of activist things that were happening to call his attention to the Vietnam War issue."

RICHARD FERNANDEZ

"And the MOBE [Mobilization Against the War] would be -- what was called the New York Avenue, Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee was organizing a big, big protest at the United Nations in April of 1967. And they invited Doctor King to come. And he had never come out quite loud and clear about the war. He had mentioned it a few times in a couple of places, and he wanted to consider it. And in order to do that with his some of his staff, he came to New York and met with a group of about 20 people. I was not in that circle, but a number of them were donors, people who had backed SCLC, some leaders from the anti-war movement, including Doctor Benjamin Spock. And the question was should he go down to this event. [Civil rights and peace activist] Bayard Rustin argued that there were two reasons not to go to that event. The first is you don't want to mix the Civil Rights Movement with the anti-war movement. It will not be good for either. The second reason, according to Rustin and others in the room, was that on the letterhead of this organizing group was the name of Arnold Johnson, who was a member of the Communist Party and it said that right on the letterhead. Now, I happened to know Arnold Johnson personally. He didn't have enough assertiveness to teach a Sunday school class. He was a lovely person. He had gone to Union Seminary, but they were afraid that the Communist thing would stick to King. And as many people know, there were those around the country who were trying to always associate him with the Communist Party, and they alleged this, that, and the other thing during his lifetime.

"So, King took all of this in, and he went back to Atlanta, had more discussions with staff, and decided about 15 days later he was going to speak at that event."

Luther King, even in the midst of the Chicago confusion of all these other kind of activist things that were happening to call his attention to the Vietnam War issue."

CLARENCE JONES

"What I knew, and Stanley Levison knew, but others did not know in that meeting, is that sometime before he made a decision to speak out he had received a cable, an invitation by cable sent to Paris, from a North Vietnam --a peace group in North Vietnam, offering to meet him in Paris to discuss how there might be a way of ending the Vietnam War. He felt that after having received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 that he had a different, special obligation, rising above his so-called stature as a civil rights leader. And I said categorically, 'You cannot go.'

" 'What do you mean I can't go?' I said, 'That would be the worst possible thing you can do at this time.' [Unclear] I said, 'You know, the FBI and the government will use it against you.' He said, 'Well, they don't know anything about it.' I said, 'Excuse me, Martin,' I said, 'You can believe within 10 minutes of that cable being transmitted from North Vietnam there's a copy on a CIA desk at Langley [Virginia, at CIA headquarters], and that they've had it for as long as you've had it. And you don't need to go down that direction at this time.'

"So, we had that discussion, discussions back and forth. And since I was equivocal, but mostly seemed to be opposed, he says, 'Well, since you feel this way, Clarence, why don't you try drafting something.' So, I did try doing an initial draft. Now, my draft started out by just reciting dispassionately, objectively, clinically, just what the facts were about the war in Vietnam and the state of the failed peace negotiations at that time, about a two-paragraph summary, or something. And then I would go and I'd write something I thought was very passionate about why there should be an effort to find a negotiated solution, an end to the war. But then I would say, but on the other hand, and then I would write another equally balanced passage that would counterbalance what I had said before, and that's the way I went back and forth the whole letter. Say one thing, but then I would say, I was giving deference to both sides. Doctor King gets a copy of the speech, and he calls me up, and he said, 'Clarence, I thought you were my radical.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He says, 'I don't get this. On the one hand, and on the other hand. You, above all people, should know that the Vietnam War is either morally right or morally wrong. And I'm a minister of the Gospel. I don't segregate my morals, I don't segregate my moral principles. What is this 'morally right?'' He said, 'You know, I love you, this is, you know, I can't use this, but I'm surprised you even wrote this. . . .' He said, 'I can't use this. I'm going to have to consult with my brother Vincent. Vincent Harding, you know Vincent.' At that time, he lived about four blocks from him in Atlanta. He said, 'We got to, I got to write something because I've gotta make a statement on this. I want to go to New York.'

"And so, at the end of the day the so-called time to break the silence, the speech that he gave on April 4th, 1967, to the committee of certain laymen and clergyman in the Riverside Church publicly opposing the war in Vietnam, was written by him and Vincent Harding. Martin acknowledges the writing. The thoughts and contents were both of them, but a lot of the writing was done by Vincent. So, I get their letter that they had jointly written, and I read it, and I call them up, and reflecting my earlier teachings by Catholic nuns about English grammar, using old fashioned phrases like the topic sentence, I said, 'Now, I don't know, in the topic sentence of the 20th paragraph, are you sure you want to say this?' 'Well, what do you mean?' I said, 'You have a sentence that begins and says, 'The United States today is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world, period.' ' I said, 'Do you want to say that, first of all, and if you want to say it, do you want to start that as the first sentence of your paragraph?' 'Well, it's true,' blah, blah, blah.

"Anyway, in the final version of the speech what they did is they kept the sentence in, but they didn't make it the first sentence of the paragraph they embedded it in the paragraph. It was an extraordinary speech. But that speech, and the reaction to it, maybe when he gave is so-called "I Have a Dream" speech April 28th, 1963, using current parlance, maybe his approval rating was like 60 to 70 percent. I can assure you at the time he gave this speech on April 4th, 1968, five years later, his approval ratings were probably only 30 percent, at most, in the country. And what really hurt him and hurt me and angered me is that all of these people who have said he was the greatest civil rights leader of all time, and extolled him for his great civil rights leadership, then turned on him. And then what really hurt him, initially, then he got over it, was when you would have people like Roy Wilkins, president of the NAACP, and Whitney Young, president of the Urban League and all of these -- and some newspaper -- Negro newspaper publishers, and presidents of Negro colleges and universities coming out and criticizing him, all prompted, of course, by Lyndon Johnson, he was attacked viciously."

CLEVELAND SELLERS

"Yeah, it was -- it was-it was not the precursor to Riverside [Church, in New York City], it was the first release of that statement in, in Ebenezer [Baptist Church in Atlanta] . . . But Doctor King called Stokely [Carmichael] and said, 'I want you to come to church,' and Stokely said, 'When?' He said, 'It's Sunday.' He said, 'I have a speech I'm going to make and I want you to hear it.' And Stokely said, 'Doctor King, you know, I'm a heathen so I, I'm not going to be up...' He said, 'Come to church.' And I said -- and he said, 'Okay, well, I'll come, I'll put on my Sunday go-to-meeting suit and I'll come on over there to your church.' And he -- then after he hung up with Doctor King, he called me.

"Stokely called me and said, 'We have to go to church on Sunday, Doctor King is going to make a speech that we need to -- we need to hear.' And -- a sermon, he said it was a sermon, a special sermon, and so we got up and we went over and we got there and we -- Stokely had promised we were going to be on the first row. We couldn't make it to the first row, that was too early, but we got on the second row and Doctor King started talking about his position against the war in Vietnam. And when it was over, we both stood up and cheered, Stokely and I, and then eventually the rest of the church got up and cheered, but that was -- that was just sweet to my heart because I had been a resister, an anti-war resister before and had actually refused induction into the military service. And during that time, I was refusing induction, I talked to Doctor King about being a conscientious objector and how to stand on faith and principles and those kinds of things and he talked to me all the time. "

CLEVELAND SELLERS

"We had a responsibility to move Doctor King as far to the left as you possibly could. And so, when we had an opportunity to talk to him about the war in Vietnam and about Black Power, we encouraged him to understand what we were saying and to support those efforts, and so we did stress that he needed to take a position against the war, the war in Vietnam. That was, that was mission number one at the start of it, you know, to get Doctor King to kind of keep moving further and further to the left, and to recognize we had seen that people in Alabama who couldn't vote, and people in Alabama that was getting killed and Mississippi for trying to register to vote and all those were getting killed and all that because they didn't want -- they didn't want them to vote, they didn't want them to have power, they didn't want them to make independent decisions, and that we needed to keep educating people on those factors, to people who would listen and understand and move on that and take those kinds of actions. We wanted to, to, to have the community with the resources, the skills, and the power to make decisions about their lives as, as much as they could and continue to develop strategies way be -- you know, way after we had been in there organizing the first time around and had left. That was our -- that was our goal and that was our mission, to train people who could have those skills, those organizing skills and talents to get people going."



CHALLENGES TO THE MOVEMENT

INTERVIEW THREAD TWO: FBI INVESTIGATION

CLIFFORD ALEXANDER

"My father, for some reason, who was not in politics, had this extraordinarily negative opinion of [FBI Director J. Edgar] Hoover. And I think it was just generally known in black communities that this was the enemy, and he was indeed, indeed the enemy. His stuff, you know, the personal stuff was awful and. . . But he used that, not as much, but he used that on white politicians the way he did on King. But the extent to which at least that I've read that he did on King was horrifyingly offensive. Which he is just a horrible human being with an extraordinary amount of power, which he chose to exercise in that fashion. And I remember one incident when I ran the White House Conference to Fulfill these Rights, everybody who was coming had to have a, not a full feel, but an 'okay' by the FBI. And since I was in charge, I remember Marvin Watson coming to me and telling me that Bayard Rustin who was gay and known to be gay and had been arrested for it and convicted, really shouldn't be on the list. And I remember saying to Marvin, 'If you don't have him you won't have a conference because you've got Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph here.' So, they had him.

"But, you know, that kind of stuff, if it isn't run by somebody like me who knew the underlying facts were, God knows how many people didn't make it through his sieve of whatever it might be. And there is a long tradition of no black agents [in the FBI], certainly."

JOSEPH CALIFANO

"When Doctor King came out against the war in Vietnam and at one point -- and when he was after [the anti-war speech at] Riverside Church, he went to Harvard and he said he might run for president, then the very next day he didn't. And Johnson was worried. He wasn't worried about Doctor King and the war because he had much more trouble with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the war than he would with Doctor King. What he was worried about were two things. One, the FBI was constantly investigating King and constantly citing one or two of his associates who they said were Communists. And he was afraid that that would build up -- he was afraid that, that concern, the FBI would leak it and it would build up an enormous white backlash, because King coming out against the war, the Soviets were on the other side of the war. That was his big concern. And so, he never really criticized King for what he did on the war. He wasn't happy about it, he's a human being."

CLEVELAND SELLERS

We all felt that and we all could see FBI agents around and about. And they were very deliberate in, you know, watching you and watching you travel and all of that kind of stuff. In places like Mississippi, they had the Sovereignty Commission and they would instruct police in Mississippi, state police and local police to surveil. So, they got all of this documentation on people and what they, what they perceived that they were doing, not what they were doing, but what they perceived that they were in fact doing. So, the surveillance was, was tremendous and just as [boxer] Muhammad Ali's case was resolved over wiretap, mine was too at the same time, around the same time. So, you know, I was, I was -- the charges were dropped against me, but I had already done three months in federal penitentiary as a result of Orangeburg, which the judge said that I could not -- I could not post the bond because of my moral turpitude and he was talking about the Orangeburg massacre.¹ And you know, it -- it's just -- the FBI and local police have not been a friend of mine and I don't think they are even today.

"But J. Edgar Hoover -- it was known that if we were under surveillance that Doctor King was under surveillance. We, we, we knew that there were people in the organi -- in- infiltrators in the organization and we tried to minimize that in SNCC. So, the criteria for coming into SNCC at first was that you had to have a badge of honor. You had to have some arrests and you had to be on that bus in order for you to become a member in SNCC or you have to be active and in an organization that was a progressive organization that you're coming from. So, we managed to for a long period of time,

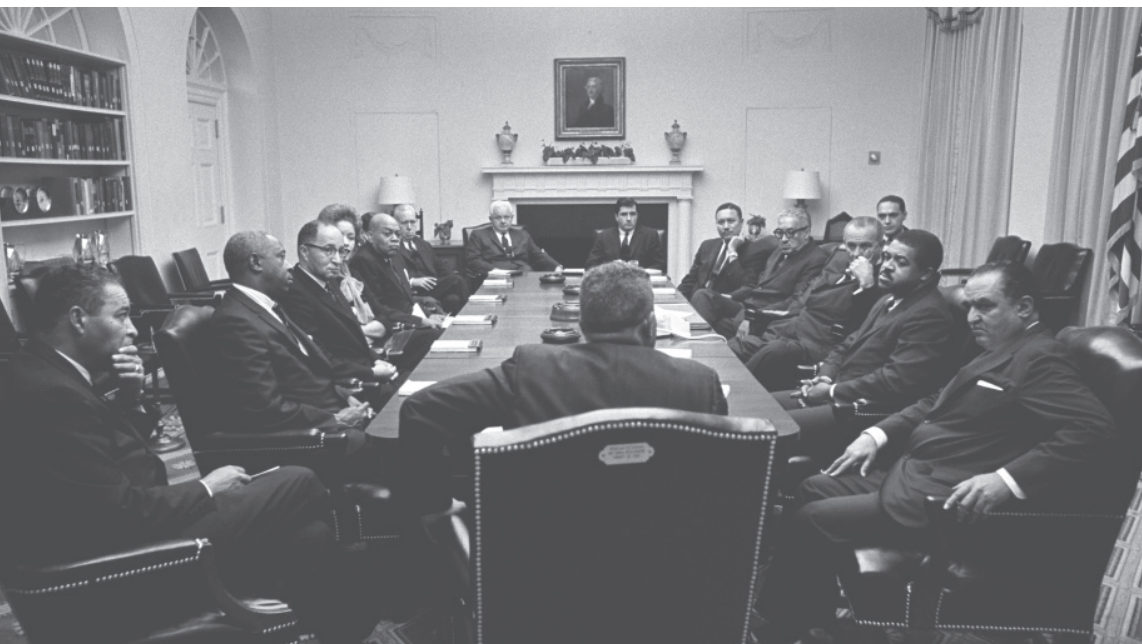
you know, not have informants in the organization. Plus, we were young, and we talked in a different language and all that kind of stuff, so it made it difficult for somebody who was coming outside inside and you not being able to see that they were like a duck out of water.”

TREY ELLIS:

“What did the FBI look like?”

CLEVELAND SELLERS:

“All white. Now, the informants were black, but all the FBI were white, no blacks, all white. And so that would be the first telltale sign ‘cause we lived in communities in which we were trying to change. And so, you know, there wouldn’t be many unmarked cars that were brand new -- that would be anybody other than the FBI. And they would -- I was saying they were new because we, we would recognize the local police. They wouldn’t have new cars to ride around in, they would have the old stock. So that’s, that’s what, that’s what we, we looked at when we went out or when we’re walking or if we went around the block or that kind of thing. Plus, our phones -- we found out that we could actually not pay our telephone bills and the phones would stay on. The only reason that was because if, if they did, if they let the phone go off they couldn’t tap us any longer and so they would tap us like that.”



¹ The Orangeburg massacre refers to the shooting of protesters by South Carolina Highway Patrol officers on the South Carolina State University campus in Orangeburg, South Carolina, on February 8, 1968.