Overcoming Repression: Effective Strategies of Contemporary Black Social Movements in Canada and the United States

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Abstract

Although there has been an increase in Black activism after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, Black social movements continue to face obstacles. This research focuses on how pro-Black movements can overcome the repression they face to reach their goals of Black social change. Specifically, this research studies contemporary Black social movements in Canada and the United States to analyze what effective strategies are. This was examined by conducting ten qualitative, semi-structured interviews with members of contemporary Black social movements, with five being from Canada and five being from the United States. Research participants sat through interviews where conversations about their experiences with Black activism, as well as successful and unsuccessful strategies, were facilitated. This research concluded that effective strategies for Black movements to create Black social change are not heavily based on specific action strategies, such as rallies and protests, but more based on effective ways of organizing.

Keywords: Black activism, Black activist, Black social movement, Black organizations, Black movements, effective strategies, Black experience in Canada, Black experience in the United States, Black social change, Repression

Résumé

Bien que l'activisme des Noirs ait augmenté après le meurtre de George Floyd en 2020, les mouvements sociaux noirs continuent de se heurter à des obstacles. Cette recherche se concentre sur la manière dont les mouvements pro-Noirs peuvent surmonter la répression à laquelle ils sont confrontés pour atteindre leurs objectifs de changement social. Plus précisément, elle étudie les mouvements sociaux noirs contemporains au Canada et aux États-Unis afin d'analyser les stratégies efficaces. Pour ce faire, dix entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés ont été menés avec des membres de mouvements sociaux noirs contemporains, cinq au Canada et cinq aux États-Unis. Les participants à la recherche ont participé à des entretiens au cours desquels des conversations sur leurs expériences de l'activisme noir, ainsi que sur les stratégies réussies et non réussies, ont été facilitées. Cette recherche a conclu que les stratégies efficaces des mouvements noirs pour créer un changement social noir ne sont pas fortement basées sur des stratégies d'action spécifiques, telles que les rassemblements et les manifestations, mais plutôt sur des méthodes d'organisation efficaces.

Mots-clés : Activisme noir, activiste noir, mouvement social noir, organisations noires, mouvements noirs, stratégies efficaces, expérience des Noirs au Canada, expérience des Noirs aux États-Unis, changement social noir, répression.

1.0 Introduction

Since Black people were forcefully brought to North America during colonization, they have been economically, politically, and socially oppressed (X & Haley, 1965). Hooker and Tillery (2016) indicate that for social change to occur for a group of people, they need to unite and mobilize. However, Black social movements in Canada and the United States that attempt to mobilize Black people and address racial inequality are repressed (Choudry, 2018). This is evident in the United States where prominent Black leaders of the Civil Rights movement, such as W.E.B Du Bois, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. were heavily followed, surveilled and harassed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Burden-Stelly, 2019; West, 2008). Similarly, in Canada, national security was structured around the national interest of those who held political and class power (Choudry, 2018). As a result, Canadian Black social movements were attacked by national security because they challenged the dominant groups construction of national security, and were increasingly criminalized and surveilled (Choudry, 2018).

The murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in the United States by police officers in 2020, led to an increase in Black activism because it triggered memories of the countless Black people who have been subjected to anti-Black racism in North America (Cappelli, 2020). Coincidingly, Black social movements who publicly condemned the murder of George Floyd faced immense repression, with Black Lives Matter, one of the main Black organizations during this time, being referred to as a terrorist group by the mainstream media (Hutchinson, 2020). For this reason, this article will analyze how Black social movements successfully fight against anti-Black racism. More specifically, this article will answer the question of, what are effective strategies Black social movements use to overcome the repression they are subjected to and create Black social change. The intended contribution of this research question is to establish an understanding of successful strategies of Black social movements, because having strategies that lead to positive results is necessary for Black social change and racial equality. Furthermore, producing research that sheds light on effective strategies may serve as a form of guidance for other Black social movements on how to best operate and organize.

This paper begins with a review of literature on previous Black Social movements in Canada and the United States, including the repression they were subjected to and strategies they found to be effective. Next, the paper discusses methodology, where the interview style, participant recruitment, coding method, and demographics of the research participants is elaborated on. This leads into the findings section of the paper which consists of the empirical data that came from the interviews. The findings section was broken into two sections, with the first section on repression detailing the repression Canadian and U.S. interviewees said they experienced. The second section of the findings reveals the Black social movement strategies that the interviewees deemed effective. This section was separated into five categories: media strategies, persuasion strategies, leadership strategies, sustainability strategies, and protection strategies. Lastly, the paper ends with my final thoughts and conclusions from conducting the research, including a comparison of the experiences of previous Black social movements examined in the literature review to the contemporary Black social movements I analyzed in the findings. In addition, I discuss my revelations from the data..

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Historical repression

Black activism in the United States, specifically activism that is deemed radical, has historically been repressed by the state (Burden-Stelly, 2019). The U.S. government portrayed Black movements as a threat to national security and anti-American because they challenged the

hegemony, particularly racial capitalism, which was the basis of the U.S. economy (Burden-Stelly, 2019). W.E.B Du Bois and the Peace Information Center (PIC) he founded were heavily surveilled by the FBI (Burden-Stelly, 2019). Martin Luther King Jr. was harassed by the FBI, specifically the chief J. Edgar Hoover, who was obsessed with documenting Martin Luther King Jr.'s extramarital affairs in hotel rooms and threatening to publicly release the evidence if he did not commit suicide (West, 2008). In Malcolm X's autobiography, he talks about how his phone was tapped, he was watched, and the FBI would frequently show up, armed, at his events (X & Haley, 1965). As well, the Black Panther party was continually harassed, discredited, and eventually exterminated by institutional agencies such as the FBI, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Internal Revenue Service because of their economic agenda that opposed capitalism (Willhelm, 1979). The FBI had even labeled the Black Panther Party the "greatest internal threat to the national security of the United States" (Jeffries, 2002, p.72).

The rise of Black activism in the 1960s in Canada led to national security actively targeting Black social movements (Choudry, 2018). As a result of Black people trying to challenge the socio-political environment through activism, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) labeled Black organizations as radical and a threat to national security, and for this reason, they were heavily monitored, surveilled, and policed (Choudry, 2018). The Canadian government also denied funding to Black social movements that were deemed militant, instead only providing funding for movements that had leaders who were considered moderate (Calliste, 1995).

2.2 Strategies of previous Black Social Movements in the United States

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the oldest Black organization in the United States and was founded in 1909 by approximately sixty people, seven of them being Black (Sullivan, 2009). This organization was created to focus on four main areas: investigation, publicity, legal aid, and public meetings (Sullivan, 2009). Some of the strategies the NAACP used in their earlier years was creating a legal bureau to draw attention to injustices and publicize the case so that legal and constitutional rights were enforced (Sullivan, 2009). They were also able to get an anti-lynching bill passed in Pennsylvania after a Black person was lynched and create a fund to support further investigation into lynching's (Sullivan, 2009).

One of the most notable figures of the civil rights movement was Martin Luther King Jr. He was a part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and believed that non-violence was the most effective strategy for Black social change (King, 1967). He believed that violence was impractical for Black people as they did not have the resources and techniques to win, and if demonstrators practiced non-violence, the injustices and moral issues of America would be exposed (King, 1967). Through the years, Martin Luther King Jr. led non-violent sit-in, boycott, and mass march campaigns in the most racially segregated cities where members of his campaigns were attacked and beaten but did not reciprocate with violence. The non-violent strategy was so successful that President John F. Kennedy said he felt he had to make legislation that pushed for Black civil rights a top priority for Congress, eventually signing the first Civil Rights bill in 1964 (Clayton, 2018). Martin Luther King Jr. also led a non-violent demonstration in Selma, Alabama for voting rights, where police began beating and assaulting demonstrators (King, 1967). The scene of this caused President Lyndon Johnson to sign the Voting Rights bill of 1965 (King, 1967). Some Black activists that worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr. did not like how his strategies incorporated White people in the movement (King, 1967). However, in his book, King (1967) asserted that the only way for different races to learn to coexist was through racial contact.

Unlike Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X did not advocate for non-violent resistance (X &

Haley, 1965). Although he denied inciting violence, Malcolm did believe in self-defence and emphasized that Black people should protect themselves using arms, if necessary, from brutality (X & Haley, 1965). In his autobiography, Malcolm X said the sociological conditions of Black people, including inadequate housing, education, and the lack of protection from the law, are what leads to violence (X & Haley, 1965). Stokely Carmichael, a leader in the Black Power movement, was also critical of non-violence as a strategy (King, 1967). Originally a part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), he later lost hope in Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent approach after witnessing many Black activists be brutalized and murdered without any consequence (King, 1967). The lack of major changes in the quality of life for Black Americans using non-violent strategies led to what Baggetta & Myers (2021) refer to as the 1967 'long hot summer'. The summer of 1967 was the longest period of civil unrest in U.S. history, with hundreds of violent riots due to Black people more increasingly feeling like violence was necessary for social change to occur (Baggetta & Myers, 2021).

The Black Panther Party, created during the Black Power movement in 1966, was a militant group that advocated for Black people to be armed in case of violence from their oppressor, as well as for Black people to create their own institutions (Jeffries, 2002). One of the most successful strategies the group had was their breakfast program, with the Baltimore Black Panther chapter feeding two-hundred children a day (Jeffries, 2002). Another strategy they used was having a strict, hierarchical chain of commands, and not releasing any information about membership, including the number of members or specific names of members (Jeffries, 2002). They also had community leaders that were available on-call for people that needed assistance, especially if they were dealing with the police (Jeffries, 2002).

In regard to using the media as a strategy, while planning a demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama during the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists created Project C (Clayton, 2018). This was an action campaign that involved showing images of children being sprayed on by water hoses and bit by police dogs to the media, to gain sympathy from the public. Also, during the Black Power Movement, the Black Panther Party created their own media outlets, including their newspaper the *Black Panther Intercommunal News*. They did this to make sure Black people were being informed with reliable information (Jeffries, 2002).

2.3 Strategies of previous Black Social Movements in Canada

The availability of literature on effective strategies of Black social movements and Black activism in Canada is limited compared to the United States. The Canada League for the advancement of Coloured people (CLACP) was created in the 1920s as an extension of the NAACP in the United States (Calliste, 1995). The vice president of the NAACP, Asa Philip Randolph, supported the CLACP and helped them organize a Black movement to confront employment discrimination (Calliste, 1995). Following the March on Washington for Jobs that was led by Black movements in the United States, the CLACP threatened the Canadian federal government with a similar strategy if discriminatory employment laws were not addressed (Calliste, 1995). By Canadian Black movements threatening similar strategies as Black movements in the United States, they were creating public fear within White Canadians, who liked to believe that the anti-blackness in the United States did not exist in Canada (Calliste, 1995; Austin, 2007). Thus, to avoid being portrayed like White Americans, Calliste (1995) states that the Canadian federal government created the Fair Employment Practices (FEP) act.

Self-described militant Black social movements also existed in Canada. Most of them were influenced by the Black Power movement in the United States, which promoted Black nationalism and self-sufficiency (Calliste, 1995). In 1969, the Afro-Canadian Liberation Movement

(ACLM) was created under the guidance of Black Power leader Stokely Carmichael (Calliste, 1995). The ACLM believed in racial equality by any means necessary. This included the 1969 sit-in at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, where over 400 students refused to leave the computer lab in protest of a White professor that was unfairly grading racialized students (Calliste, 1995). This strategy resulted in nationwide media attention, with 45 students being arrested and property damage worth over two million dollars (Calliste, 1995).

Rioting was also a strategy that was used by Canadian Black social movements. In 1992, the Yonge Street riots broke out in Toronto after the police officers who brutally beat Rodney King in Los Angeles were acquitted, and the murder of Raymond Constantine Lawrence by a Toronto officer (Tompkins, 2009). Originally planned as a peaceful demonstration by the Black Action Defense Committee, the protest turned violent as protestors grew angry over the treatment of Black people and ended up smashing glass at the old city hall courthouse, looting stores, and throwing rocks at police officers (Tompkins, 2009).

In 1968, Black Power groups gathered for a Congress of Black Writers, where hundreds of Black people came together to discuss Black consciousness (Austin, 2007). This gathering gained national attention because it put racism within Canada on a national, public platform, with media outlets such as Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the Montreal Gazette covering the conference. Elsewhere, the Nova Scotian chapter of the Canada league for the advancement of Coloured people (NSAACP) intentionally acquired the media's attention through conferences, press statements, and public speeches (Calliste, 1995). The group conducted their own research on racial discrimination within Nova Scotia, and then exposed the information during their public appearances (Calliste, 1995). The media attention that the NSAACP brought to the lack of resources Black Canadians were given due to discriminatory laws, pressured the government to create an Education Incentive Fund (Calliste, 1995).

3.0 Methodology

The choice of methodology was qualitative interviews, because the data in this research is meant to reflect the unique perspectives of the participants, as well as the meaning they give to their perspectives (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The interviews were cross-sectional, meaning they were all completed in one sitting (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). The time of the interviews ranged from forty minutes to two and a half hours, with the range in interview time being based on the semi-structured style of the interviews. This style of interviewing involved me coming into the interview with interview questions, while also allowing the interview to flow away from the initial questions and to whatever direction the interviewee took it (Brinkman, 2020). As a result, based on comfortability, knowledge, and communication skills, among other things, some research participants were more specific and detailed with their reflections.

The research participants consisted of ten members of Black social movements, with five people being from Canada and five people being from the United States. Of my research participants in the United States, four identified as male and one identified as a female. Of my research participants in Canada, three identified as male and two identified as female. All research participants defined themselves as Black, being a member of a contemporary Black social movement, and being an adult. Other than that, participants ranged in age, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and education level. All the interviewees from the United States were African American, meaning their families had been in the United States for over three generations. The interviewees from Canada came from a range of African and Caribbean ethnic backgrounds, such as Jamaica, Ghana, Dominica, Trinidad, and Guyana. Two interviewees were first-generation Canadians, two interviewees were second-

generation Canadians, and one interviewee was a third-generation Canadian. To uphold the confidentiality of all my participants, they were given pseudonyms (Northey et al., 2012). The names of the research participants from the United States are Khalil, Cameron, Lisa, Josh and Sam. The names of the research participants from Canada are Jackson, Scott, Victor, Monica, and Patricia. This research received approval from York University's Research Committee.

All my research participants were recruited using exponential discriminative snowball sampling, where an original subject I already knew connected me with one or more people that fit the criteria for my research, and then in certain instances, the referral connected me with other referrals, and so forth (Simkus, 2023). However, not every person referred to was finalized as a research participant, as suitability was based on several things including the individuals' level of experience within Black social movements and their willingness and availability for an interview (Simkus, 2023). How the information was collected and analyzed was based on constructivist grounded theory. This meant that I went into the interviews with a flexible research question and constructed codes based on the most predominant ones that arouse (Sebastian, 2019). Thus, my findings came from the most common themes and ideas that organically emerge during my interviews (Martin & Turner, 1986).

Because I only interviewed five people from the United States and five people from Canada using non-random sampling, my findings have limited generalizability because the sample does not represent every Black social movement in Canada and the United States (Simkus, 2023). As well, as a result of using constructivist grounded theory, the findings the findings may have low reliability because it reflects how I, as the researcher, interpreted the data. This may not reflect how other researchers would (Sebastian, 2019).

4.0 Findings

4.1 Repression

4.1.1 Repression in the U.S.

Khalil spoke about how his movement supports abortion and planned parenthood facilities in Black communities, with him working as a volunteer to safely escort women in and out of the facilities and protect them from the aggressive protestors. He disclosed that on multiple occasions, protestors yelled racial slurs through large microphones and threatened his life. He noted there were police around, but because these protestors were upholding the values of the state, the police never intervened. In one instance, a protester recognized him based on his place of employment (outside of the Black social movement), recorded him, and put the video on YouTube with all his personal information to torment him. This included where he lived, his occupation, and his family's personal information that they found through social media. As a result of this, threats were made to him and his family. Khalil also discussed how he regularly receives death threats via email, he feels as if he is followed, and his movements' media apparatuses have been shut down for countering America's mainstream media propaganda. Khalil, who became emotional during our interview, stated that he has had to end relationships in fear of putting the people he loved in danger as a result of what he does, saying that he does not want people to be a consequence of his actions. Reflecting on his father, who had to flee the American South in the 1950s because of the extreme violence, including the burning of his car, that he was subjected to for dating a White woman, Khalil concluded that when you are a part of Black activism and are radically going against the state's rules, you will be subjected to violence.

Cameron, who is incarcerated in a California prison, discussed how anything in prison that is seen as pro-Black is deemed a threat. In his prison, his Black social movement was labeled a homegrown terrorist group by the correctional staff. Cameron explained that

although his movement was non-violent, and most of his work involved uplifting and educating Black men about their rights, once he associated himself with a pro-Black movement, his prison conditions got worse. Eventually, over twenty prison guards came to get him and put him in solitary confinement. He was told he was a threat to the safety and security of the institution, and despite being sent to solitary confinement for non-disciplinary reasons, he was told he would be there for an indeterminate period. Cameron ended up being in solitary confinement for nine years. Cameron noted how this contrasted significantly from previous years, where he was put into solitary confinement for disciplinary reasons, such as fighting, but was only sentenced there for a determinate period of a couple of years. Upon reflection, Cameron emphasized that when he became conscious and attempted to better the Black community, instead of harming it, he became the biggest threat to the state. Therefore, he believes the prison put him in solitary confinement to isolate him from others.

4.1.2 Repression in Canada

Scott detailed that during his early days of organizing, an organizing veteran warned him that "they'll make your life a living hell, they'll make it so you can't work, [...] they'll make it so that your loved ones start to distance themselves from you." Scott explained that this proved to be true, as he spoke about how after being a part of a strategy that involved the occupation of a police force headquarter, he and other members were targeted by police. He said a cop car was stationed outside of his home where he had family staying with him, and he felt as if he was being followed. This caused him to feel scared, paranoid, and cynical of the people around him, because he was unaware if someone was working with the police. Scott said it did not take him long to realize that he had to be very careful, due to the negative effects his activism could have on the people around him. Scott detailed having to warn his family about the dangers that could come out of his choice to be a part of a Black social movement. Monica, who focuses on institutional racism within a university space, spoke about how people informed her that her non-Black superiors were making threats against her life. As well, when she disagreed with the way her superiors were going about anti-racist work, she was verbally abused and harassed. Eventually, Monica claimed that she feared she would be killed if she spoke her truth. From this experience, Monica declared that if you are doing radical anti-Black work, you have approximately four years, if you're lucky, before they will completely tear you down to the point of debilitation.

Jackson, who was a part of a Black social movement within a federal political party, spoke about the microaggressions and covert racism Black people were subjected to. He revealed that a Black political leader, who was voted in by the majority, faced extreme hostility and animosity as the rest of the political party tried to oust them from the political space. This Black politician was sued and constantly under review for leadership. They were associated with negative Black stereotypes, such as being bossy and uncooperative, and it was not uncommon for them to silenced by upper management, including being muted on zoom calls. In addition, Jackson shared that all the Black people in this movement, including Jackson, were subjected to racial harassment online and in person. As a result of this experience, Jackson contended that Black people being in a political space to increase racial representation does not mean that change will occur because you can still be silenced and deal with extreme resistance.

4.2 Effective Strategies of Black Social Movements

4.2.1 Media Strategies

Create their own media apparatus. It was common knowledge among most of my interviewees in both the United States and Canada that the mainstream media does not always accurately depict what is going on. Victor clarified

that what we see in the media is not what is going on in reality. Scott furthered this idea in his interview by emphasizing how the state controls what people think is true, whether it is or not, through mainstream media outlets. This was made evident through Jackson's lived experience, where the media spewed false, hateful comments towards him and his fellow Black activists, such as they were lying about racism existing within their political movement. Lisa touched on how the inaccurate media portrayals have created a distrust between Black people and media outlets. For this reason, her Black social movement does not talk to mainstream media outlets because they fear they will twist their words to villainize them. Lisa concluded that in America, the mainstream media is just a reflection of America's agenda.

Some of the Black social movement members I interviewed formed their own media apparatuses. Khalil told me his Black social movement created a media platform to counter and challenge the United States' narratives. They have their own podcast, Instagram, and newsletter that they utilize to raise the political consciousness and debunk the mainstream media's propaganda about topics such as capitalism, equality, and reform. Khalil's movement used their media platform to support a worker's strike in Alabama, where Black people were striking because they were not receiving hazard pay, among other things, during covid. The mainstream media presented the strike as if Black workers were just simply unhappy with their pay. But Khalil and his movement went to Alabama to counter that narrative and they made it clear that this was an issue rooted in racial capitalism and Black suppression. They spread this information to television outlets, put out press releases, handed out pamphlets, told other organizations to speak about it, and blasted it all over their own social media platforms. By doing this, they were able to help the Black workers in Alabama unionize. From this process, Khalil explained that he learned that if people understood the truth about the inequality that existed, it would be easier to organize. Thus, he believes creating media apparatuses to raise the consciousness of

people so that they understand what's going on is important because the media plays an important role in the political consciousness of the mass public.

Use the media to get public attention. Cameron said he used his Black social movement's media platforms to help a woman get national attention about the killing of her Black son by the police, so that she could get justice. Scott also told me about an occasion where during a strike his movement was having in the winter, the group created a small fire to keep them warm. Eventually, the police showed up and threw a substance over the crowd to put out the fire. When the police became very aggressive and tried to march down on the crowd, people strategically live-streamed and recorded the police using extreme force to shut down a peaceful protest and posted it all over social media. Doing this, Scott said, ignited the general public's anger against the police and sympathy for the protestors. Thus, in the coming days, more people showed up to support them, including bringing resources, equipment, and food. When speaking on the use of media for public attention, Lisa said nobody pays attention if you are not making noise. In certain circumstances, that means doing things that are deemed outrageous to get national attention. Scott echoed this but noted that the media will only be able to put a Black movement or social issue into the spotlight for a moment. For this reason, activists should not be overly focused on getting the media's attention, because regardless, they will still need to know how to effectively organize to make a change.

4.2.2 Persuasion Strategies

Be intentional with mannerisms. In our interview, Khalil was adamant about the importance of using language that people were able to connect with to sway them. Due to people having different levels of political consciousness and language proficiency, he said he is always mindful of the audience and where they are at. Just

like you would not speak to someone fluent in French, in Mandarin, he said when he's speaking to a group of Black people, he speaks their language, and when he's in a room full of White people, he speaks their language. In one particular situation, his movement was trying to sway several White-dominant churches to support a police reform agenda that would implement a safety committee to hire, fire, and control the police budget as well as provide political education. He said recognizing that this was not something that this group of people would naturally agree with, he made sure that while speaking to them about the importance of this committee, he spoke to them using Christian sensibility. He referred to the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr. and Dr. Cornel West to connect Christianity with racial equality to sway the White churchgoers. Eventually, he was able to get several church's support. As well, during the Alabama worker's strike when Khalil's movement was trying to get the support of other working-class people, they also made sure that all their media apparatuses used language that was digestible for working-class people. However, Khalil made it clear that although speaking to people in a language they understand is necessary, do not dilute the message. He highlighted that this process is about reframing, not changing, the message in a language that will resonate with the audience best.

Similarly, Jackson said one of the failed strategies of his Black social movement in a political space, was using elitist language to try and get the support of the public. The information they presented to the public was too numbers and policy-focused, and they failed at connecting to the human part of political change. Looking back, Jackson acknowledged they should have used everyday language and focused more on providing information that showed how certain policies and numbers harmed the community, so that people would understand the relevance of the information more, and thus support them.

Khalil also touched on the importance of being studious, sharp, and presenting hard data. He disclosed that when you're speaking with gatekeepers of institutions such as police chiefs and governors, you must be able to out-talk them. This means you need to come to meetings prepped, planned, and prepared. Lisa repeated this during her interview, saying her movement always shows up on time, shows up with a plan, and shows that they are functional. Lisa gave an example of the community town hall meetings her Black social movement attends. She said at first, because of the anger they felt, they were loud, rowdy, and spent a lot of time talking. But that just got her group consistently kicked out of the meeting, and the organizers of the town hall created a new rule that people could only speak for a certain amount of time. Lisa decided to switch her strategy and started to attend the town hall meetings calmly, well-dressed, and well-behaved. Her group stopped interrupting others to speak, kept their anger to themselves, and only spoke for the allotted time that was allowed. They stopped putting their fist up as a symbol of Black Power and were more calculated with their body language. Lisa stated when they started doing this, they were no longer being kicked out of the town halls, and people started to pay more attention to what they were saying. From this experience, Lisa concluded that it is important for Black movements to be aware of their surroundings and understand how different spaces dictate the way they need to act to accomplish their goals.

Support the community. Lisa told me that a lot of people in the community are neglected. To address this, she and her Black social movement will have general conversations with people, letting them know that they matter and are human. When five young Black children were arrested for peacefully protesting, Lisa and her movement, along with others, sat outside the county jail for five days until their release. Lisa emphasized the importance of her community knowing that her movement supports them on a personal level, so that they feel inclined to support them in return. If things are to go bad for her group, especially because they are uprising against the government, Lisa expressed that she knows that if she shows the

community love and builds a relationship with them, and they feel cared for, they will have her movements back.

Khalil doubled down on this, voicing that it is essential for the community to know the movement. Specifically, he said there needs to be a felt presence on a local level. He recounted how a Black person tried to run for office, but most people in the community did not know him. Therefore, the Black politician had a hard time getting support from the community at the last minute, because he came off as a politician trying to use the community for his own interest. When Khalil reflected on this situation, he conceded that the politician messed up by running for office and then trying to mobilize and organize with the community, instead of organizing and mobilizing with the community first, and then running for office with that support. Khalil stated that working-class people usually do not involve themselves in politics because they feel uncared for. Hence, if Black politicians or groups want to earn the support of Black working-class people, they need to build a relationship with the community first. Khalil insisted that having a positive reputation in the community is a crucial part of gaining the community's trust, because people will like you if they believe you are serious about making a change in the community.

This was reiterated by Scott, who maintained that the best way to learn about how to liberate oppressed people is to talk to them because they know better than anyone what they need. Scott said oppressed people usually do not have a space to be heard, so it is important to create that space by asking them about their needs and listening to their words. The members of Scott's movement go into prisons and speak with inmates directly about how they want to be supported. Scott then told me they use the information acquired through these interactions to advocate on prisoner's behalf. In a similar effort, Josh mentioned that through conversations with the local community, it was clear they had a lot of issues with human trafficking and missing children. This information inspired Josh's movement to create a unit dedicated to helping the community find missing children. Josh and other members took a human trafficking course and used that knowledge to support local families by organizing search parties for children, and in some instances, going undercover to find the sex trafficking rings.

Almost all of my interviewees were adamant on providing mutual aid for the community. Patricia expressed that "people cannot hear you if they're worried about bills. People cannot hear you if they're hungry. People cannot hear you if they don't know how they're getting home." On that account, she stated that incentives are important, as people need to be acknowledged as holistic human beings before being asked to help a Black movement.

4.2.3 Leadership Strategies

***Have multiple leaders*.** The theme of Black social movements having multiple leaders came up with multiple research participants. Khalil asserted that movements should not be leaderless but should be leaderful. Cameron spoke on the demise of previous Black social movements, noting that Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the main leaders of the Civil Rights movement in the United States. As a result of this, once he was assassinated, his non-violent movement did not last. Therefore, Cameron concluded that movements should have several leaders that think and act the same so that if one is removed, the others know how to lead the movement in the same manner. This was reaffirmed by Scott, who spoke on Dudley Laws and Charles Roach, the founders of the Black Action Defense Committee in Canada. Scott claimed once they passed away, the movement fell apart and was not as successful. Thus, Scott argued that movements should not be centered around a handful of visible, exciting leaders, but have multiple leaders who all feel a stake in the cause and know how to lead the fight. This way, if someone is no longer a part of the movement, the movement can still sustain itself and continue fighting.

Create a collaborative environment. Lisa, who is a leader in her movement in the United States, spoke about how she always listens to the opinion of others. She stated that good leaders must listen to the people they are leading because mutual respect is important. Thus, she is not going to silence her members, and if their suggestions and/or opinions align with the core values of the movement, they will always be considered. Khalil attested to this during his interview, where he articulated that there is a false notion that leaders have the best ideas and, because of this, should be the only ones bringing ideas to the table. He advised leaders to not be domineering but base their movements on a decentralized structure that focuses on collectivism. The Black social movement Khalil is a part of has a national meeting that everyone from the local chapters can attend. During all meetings, anyone can ask to speak or get a representative to speak on their behalf. As well, issues that arise during local meetings can be brought to the national level.

In Canada, Scott contended that some founders believe they are the only ones who should have all the power, but this does not work effectively. Scott's movement invites different people into activity and allows people to be a part of the decision-making process. At the same time, they do not put too much pressure on people to contribute, because they don't want to make the environment daunting. Scott told me that they make sure people are comfortable and let them know they are welcome to contribute as much as they want to. Scott's movement has bi-weekly meetings where everyone is invited. People are also able to call meetings, and decisions are made as a collective. Correspondingly, Monica and Jackson both said their movements make decisions as a collective and aim for unanimous agreement.

Khalil echoed the importance of incorporating the community in a Black social movement's decision-making process to keep things a democracy. Khalil recalled a personal experience he had where they did not consult the community before canceling an annual event because of the lack of community funding. His movement assumed this reflected the communities attitude towards the event. However, after letting the community know it was canceled, the community informed them that they did want the event, they just didn't know about it. Then, they asked for donations for the event and were able to get the money needed within twenty-four hours. Khalil added that from this situation he learned that organizers cannot advocate for the community if they are not in contact with them.

Organize people based on their capacities. To get people to join and want to stay in a Black social movement, my interviewees told me it is important for the leaders of the movement to meet people where they are at. Cameron is the leader of his movement and expressed that it is important to recognize where people fit in the movement. This includes who can be on the front-line, who is able to be in the background helping out, who is charismatic and will be liked by people, and who is not afraid to speak the truth. From getting to know people, Cameron explained he deciphers where people will fit, and then grooms and molds them so they excel in that area. Scott enlightened me on his movement's 80/20 rule, where leaders listen 80% of the time, and speak 20% of the time. This allows the leaders to learn more about potential recruits or existing members, including what they are interested in and what their strengths and reservations are. Once they have a better understanding of what their abilities are and where they fit, Scott and other leaders support them in pursuing that. Scott discussed the wide range of positions that people can be responsible for, including public speakers, first-aid, chant leaders, and people who help set up sound at events. Regarding looking for people who have the potential to be leaders, Scott told me this is based on who attends movement's events often, who's recruiting people, and who is genuinely passionate about the issues.

Similarly, Jackson elaborated on his movement's "ladder of involvement," where they slowly expose people to different aspects of the

movement to see what they are comfortable with. Upon concluding, Jackson stated to not tell people what they have to do but find a way to ask them what they want to do or how they want to be involved and try to merge that with what the movement needs. That way you will have a movement filled with people who have a genuine interest in what they are doing, which will reflect in the quality of their work.

Accountability within the constituency. During our interview, Khalil spoke about how a lot of organizations operate based on a board of directors that dictate everything. He specifically pointed to contemporary Black social movements that use a non-profit industrial complex, meaning the movements must answer to their funders, who for the most part consist of White people that are liberals. He said because of this, constituencies are limited in what they can do, as they are being controlled by wealthy White funders who have no contact or understanding of the needs of everyday, working-class Black people. Likewise, Jackson said in the institutional setting of a political space, he had a lot of difficulties making change because the White people who oversaw things did not truly want to engage in anti-Black work. He disclosed that although they claimed they wanted to support the Black movement, in actuality they wanted to uphold the status quo because it benefited them. He discussed how the White overseers connected themselves to a Black movement as a form of representation to make themselves look better, because they received backlash for the lack of diversity in the space, But they had no real intention of supporting the Black community. Jackson went on to say he had a completely different experience in a Black social movement that was created and led by Black activists who were dedicated to anti-racist work and had full control over the decision-making process. He stated that in this space there was a lot of solidarity felt with the members, and they had the freedom to address important issues Black people face without resistance.

Monica had a similar experience within an educational institution, where she detailed how at first, she was the co-chair of an anti-racist committee and did not have to answer to anyone. Her group had the freedom to brainstorm and act on a range of strategies to address the mistreatment of Black people. However, after things changed within the institution, she had to report to Human Resources and top management, which was mainly White people, about their activities. Monica claimed once this switch occurred, her group was now restricted from doing a lot of things, as the people she had to ask permission from were looking for her to "take direction and work within the parameters and goals that White people were comfortable with." She shared that her White overseers only wanted to change on their terms, which did not include addressing racial capitalism or abolition as a solution. During the interview Monica expressed her frustration, explaining that the anti-racist work she was expected to do was for performative purposes. From this experience, Monica concluded that it is important for the leaders of Black social movements to not have to answer to people outside of the constituency, so they have the freedom to effectively push for Black social change without being restricted.

4.2.4 Sustainability Strategies

Ask for long-term support from donors. Patricia told me that when organizations/corporations give donations and resources, her movement challenges them on how they plan on supporting them long-term. Specifically, her movement asks them to support the movement long-term, and not just once. An example she gave was after the murder of Freddie Gray and her movement received a lot of donations. When this happened, Patricia's movement asked for longevity in the financial support coming from big donors, including continued support over a five-year period. Overall, Patricia voiced that asking for long-term commitment from donors is necessary for a movement's long-term sustainability in anti-racist

work. Although not every donor may agree with this, Patricia noted that this allows her movement to be selective and intentional about who to do partnerships and collaborate with, making sure they only work with people who are truly committed to anti-racist work.

Create permanent responses/spaces. Khalil advised that Black social movements should aim for a permanent revolution. Scott talked about this also, elaborating on how Black movements only focus on rapid response, meaning something will happen in the world and movements will focus on gathering people together and responding quickly, but not focus on organizing people long-term. In a Black movement Scott was previously a part of, he recounted how when something happened in the world, they would have one rally until something else happened in the world that would trigger another rally. He emphasized that they were not continually organizing, and the rapid-response strategy was not effective long-term. Thus, he concluded that sustained organizing needs to be a prime objective of Black social movements. Within his current movement, they've created permanent responses to deal with prison conditions. His movement has a campaign that first educates people on what goes on in prisons, including the expensive phone system and prisoners not being allowed out of their cells. They do this through webinars and classes. Once people have the basic knowledge, people are immediately pushed into activity, which includes writing to their MPPs (Members of Provincial Parliament) and donating to the cause. Lastly, people are asked to recruit more people to go through the same process, so that people are continually being brought into the activity.

In addition, Scott's movement has created a permanent space that people can always access when they need help. In this space, organizers from the movement use their knowledge to support people who have pending charges by providing them what they need, brainstorming ways to fight back, and sharing resources. Scott emphasized how this space was intentionally put together to

continually build, protect and support the community.

Get allies of other races. My interviewees in the United States spoke on the importance of having White allies to sustain the movement. Lisa argued that if a Black movement does not have White allies, it will be portrayed as a terrorist group. She asserted that a group of Black people working together will be deemed a gang, and thus harmed. On the contrary, Lisa pointed out that with White people around, society is less likely to harm a Black movement because they value the lives of White people. In addition, she advised that White allies are able to get the attention of White people who are in positions of power, in a way that Black people cannot. Referring her own movement, Lisa specified that a White person can only be an ally if they are willing to be on the front lines, screaming, chanting, getting tased and pepper-sprayed with her movement. However, Lisa clarified that White people are not allowed to be members nor have a controlling stake in her movement because she does not believe they should be the ones speaking on how things should be for Black people. Coincidingly, Josh let me know that although not all White people are racist, his movement only allows White people who are dedicated to fighting white supremacy fight with them as allies.

Building on this, Cameron elaborated on his movement's fight against the conditions of solitary confinement, including the extended period of time they were put in there for. When this led them to planning a state-wide hunger strike in 2013, pro-Black movements in the prison knew that they would need the support of Mexican inmates for it to be impactful because they made up a large number of the inmates in California's prisons. Cameron also mentioned that the state did not care about Black people and thus, Black people solely protesting would not get that much attention. For this reason, pro-Black groups united with Mexican and White groups in prison, including the Mexican Mafia and White Aryan Brothers, to pull off a hunger strike that protested the inhumane prison conditions that effected all

races. This strike involved inmates in solitary confinement and general population, denying their meals and notifying their families outside of prison about what was going on. The 2013 California prison hunger strike was the largest in California's history, and ended up getting national attention, including the attention of the media, lawyers, and the federal government. The hunger strike and the solidarity between Black, White and Mexican inmates was effective and led to a lot of solitary confinement units in prisons being shut down, the banning of indeterminate solitary confinement sentences, and an overall decrease in the number of people in solitary confinement.

Have a disciplinary process. During our interview, Cameron told me that discipline is one of the most important things for the structure of a Black social movement. In his own movement, he created a code of conduct, and consequences if someone violates the rules. He revealed that it was created so people will fear acting outside of the movement's values because they know that they will face repercussions. Cameron's movement exists within a prison, which he informed me requires the enforcement of strict rules to make sure the movement survives in that setting. An example Cameron gave me was the way Black members of his movement interact with other races in the prison, stating that they are not allowed to disrespect another race because that can turn into something deadly for the whole group. As well, because of the immense resistance the movement receives from the Department of Corrections, one person doing something wrong, such as unnecessarily getting into a fight, will be used to discredit and potentially shut down the prison organization. With that being said, a code of conduct that does not allow the members to act in ways that will harm the whole movement, helps the movement to remain active by limiting backlash. Lisa, who is the leader of her movement, also discussed how her members need to be able to follow the rules that have been put in place and take orders. She contended that for a movement to be taken seriously and last, there needs to be

obedience and cohesion among the members, meaning everyone is on the same page regarding the way they should behave.

4.2.5 Protection Strategies

Self-defense. The topic of self-defence organically came up with four of the five interviewees from the United States. Khalil, Lisa, and Josh all carry firearms while they do work within their Black social movements. Khalil told me the first principle of his movement is self-defence and indicated that this was because of the resistance Black activists face. He pointed out that peace does not mean there is no conflict, and he and his movement are ready to defend themselves if they need to. Lisa told me that her movement prefers its members to be armed, and members of her movement practice how to shoot and use a gun properly. Lisa clarified that this is important because the work they do against the American government puts a target on their back and their lives in jeopardy. Although Cameron is unable to carry a firearm because he is incarcerated, he did make it clear that he does not practice non-violence and encourages his movement to defend themselves from their oppressors if they are being unfairly harmed.

Scott was the only Canadian interviewee that touched on violence. Like my interviewees in the United States, Scott spoke about how historically, using violence has been one of the main reasons Black people have progressed in the fight for change. Hence, he declared that Black people will not get what they want if they are having safe, obedient interactions with the oppressor because the oppressor does not want to give up their power and privilege. Instead, Black people need to force equality by making things uncomfortable for the oppressor.

5.0 Conclusion

There were a lot of similar experiences and strategies between previous Black social movements and the contemporary ones I

interviewed for my own research. My research participants spoke about being repressed by the state, which was very similar to the repression faced by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and previous movements in Canada. My interviewees spoke about the necessity of creating their own media apparatuses, including social media and newsletters, which reflected what the Black Panther Party did with their own newspaper. My research participants also spoke about not allowing White people to have a controlling stake in the constituency because they may restrict the progress of the movement. This was also a big concern of Black activist during the Civil Rights Movement who disputed Martin Luther King Jr.'s way of organizing. Lastly, non-violence came up with four of my interviewees from the United States and one of my interviewees from Canada, with all of them declaring they do not believe in non-violence. This mimicked the perspective of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the Black Panther Party.

Before conducting my interviews, when thinking about what my findings would answer, I was expecting to conclude whether action strategies such as rallies, protests, and petitions were effective. But to my surprise, when I conducted my interviews in a semi-structured, exploratory fashion and facilitated conversation, most of my research participants discussed effective ways to organize. This is evident in my findings section which includes effective strategies to persuade, sustain, lead and protect a movement. Khalil told me that when it comes to action strategies for Black movements, you must have a tool kit and not a hammer. My research participants taught me that one method, such as a rally or petition, will not always be effective because the circumstance heavily dictates the action. For this reason, an action could be successful in one situation, but unsuccessful for another. The data concludes that effectively organizing, especially internally, is important for Black social movements because if a Black social movement has internal cohesion, understanding, and solid foundational structures in place, it will be more equipped to address external situations that arise and call for different responses.

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