

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

JESSE JACKSON

a candid conversation with the fiery heir apparent to martin luther king

In the 19 months since the murder of Martin Luther King, only one man has emerged as a likely heir to the slain leader's pre-eminent position in the civil rights movement: Jesse Louis Jackson, the 27-year-old economic director of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The Reverend Jackson's first national exposure, in fact, came as a result of his closeness to Dr. King. He was talking to King on the porch of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis when the fatal shot was fired and cradled the dying man in his arms. The very next day, at a Chicago City Council meeting, Mayor Richard Daley read a eulogy that pledged a "commitment to the goals for which Dr. King stood." The Reverend Jackson had flown in from Memphis without sleep to attend the ceremony; he stood up in a sweater stained with Dr. King's blood and shouted to the assembled Chicago political establishment, "His blood is on the hands of you who would not have welcomed him here yesterday."

That gesture demonstrated both the militant indignation and the dramatic flair that mark Jackson's charismatic style. The New York Times has written that he "sounds a little like the late Reverend Martin Luther King and a little like a Black Panther." It added that "almost everyone who has seen Mr. Jackson in operation acknowledges that he is probably the most persuasive black leader on the national scene."

Jackson's personality is possibly even more in tune with the present black

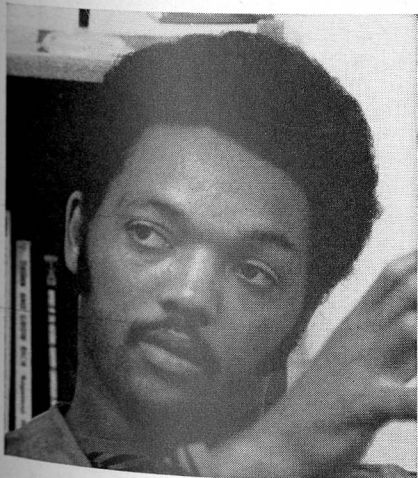
mood than Dr. King's was, because, as Richard Levine pointed out in Harper's, "Dr. King was middle-class Atlanta, but Jesse Jackson was born in poverty in Greenville, South Carolina." Jackson calls himself a "country preacher," but he combines his down-home style with a sharp intellect. He attended the University of Illinois for one year but dropped out in 1960 to attend the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina in Greensboro, where the first black sit-in had taken place earlier that year. He was an honor student, quarterbacked the football team and organized civil rights demonstrations. After graduation, Jackson went North to study at the Chicago Theological Seminary, where he devoted most of his extracurricular time to local civil rights work.

It was Dr. King himself who originally spotted Jackson's leadership potential during a massive civil rights drive in Chicago in the summer of 1966 and appointed him to head all of SCLC's economic projects in the North. In the three years since that appointment, Jackson has concentrated most of his efforts on the Chicago-based project called Operation Breadbasket and made that pilot program the most impressive demonstration of black economic and political power in the United States. Breadbasket's organizational methods are now being applied under Jackson's guidance in 15 cities ranging from Los Angeles to Brooklyn.

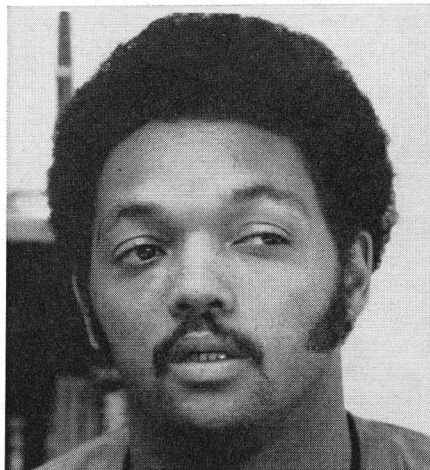
The project's primary goals are to create jobs for blacks and to encourage them to

own and operate businesses. Boycotting, or the threat of it, is Breadbasket's most potent weapon. The effectiveness of this technique was most evident in a breakthrough victory over the huge Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, which operates 40 stores in Chicago's black ghetto. To avoid the financial loss that a boycott would have caused, the A & P signed a pact guaranteeing jobs for blacks and the distribution of black products on A & P shelves. As Business Week reported in a story about Operation Breadbasket, "Nationally, the organization's efforts have resulted in about 5000 jobs and \$40,000,000 in annual salaries to Negroes. But the Chicago campaign [against A & P] represents Breadbasket's most significant victory, for it is the biggest settlement with a chain in a single city, and set a precedent for other food-chain negotiations across the country."

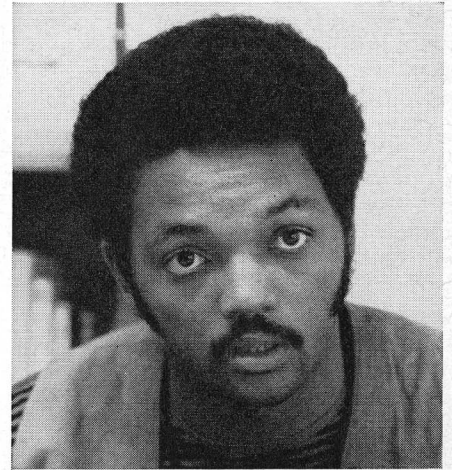
The A & P pact was especially significant because—in addition to a guarantee of over 700 jobs for blacks and marketing more black businessmen's products—the company also agreed to use black-owned janitorial and exterminating companies in its ghetto stores, to bank in black-owned banks, to advertise in black media and to have black construction firms build its ghetto stores. Monthly meetings between representatives of A & P and Breadbasket are designed to assure that the company is not shirking. On the personal level, sensitivity seminars attended by A & P executives attempt to awaken management to the



"A providential way of seeing our slavery is that we are missionaries sent from Africa by God to save the human race. We are the only group in the world with the power to redirect the destiny of America."



"Whether we are called Operation Breadbasket or Panthers or niggers, we know who the enemy is. We'll gain freedom by being more willing to die for it than the slavemaster is to die to keep us enslaved."



"False racial pride has divided the lower class. We should define ourselves by our economic position and shift the fight from a confrontation of poor black vs. poor white to one of have and have not."

existence and effects of prejudice. Similar agreements have been signed with more than half of all the major food distributors in the ghetto.

The Reverend Jackson created an even more far-reaching program last spring, when he initiated the Illinois Hunger Campaign. Believing that hunger is the one issue that could unite the black and white poor, Jackson led a caravan to all of the poverty areas of Illinois, ending with demonstrations at the state capitol in Springfield. The pressure thus exerted on the Illinois legislature was so great that a planned cut of \$125,000,000 in welfare funds was restored at a time when New York and California were making sizable cuts in their welfare payments. An impassioned appeal by Jackson, from the steps of the capitol building, inspired a bill to provide school lunches for all of the needy children in the state. Jackson also extracted a promise from the state legislature to prevail on Washington for special surplus-food allotments for the poor. The Illinois Hunger Campaign was conceived by Jackson as an extension of the Poor Peoples' Campaign begun by Dr. King, and there are plans for similar efforts in other states next year.

No matter what his other commitments may be, Jackson always attends the Saturday-morning meeting of Operation Breadbasket. The location has been changed three times this year, because the congregation continually outgrows its premises, and Breadbasket presently resides in a 6000-seat movie theater on Chicago's South Side. The lobby of the theater is filled with tables displaying black merchandise, and the auditorium itself is hung with signs that exhort the gathering to BUY BLACK PRODUCTS and USE BLACK SERVICES. The first hour of the meeting is devoted to Gospel music by the Operation Breadbasket orchestra and choir, interspersed with the business for the week—either boycotts or special “buys.” PLAYBOY's Associate Articles Editor, Arthur Kretchmer, who conducted this interview with Jackson, describes the remainder of a recent meeting.

“After Breadbasket's projects were out of the way, a frail old lady, whose face was ravaged by time and much else, was given the stage. In a quiet voice, and with great dignity, she briefly described the humiliation she had suffered during an interview with a welfare worker the previous week. Then she said she had come to the meeting to gain the strength that would enable her to block her door in the future. ‘They can starve me,’ she said, ‘but I’ll die before they come back with their damn forms and their damn questions.’ With that, she slowly raised her fist in the black-power salute and the audience gave her the most sympathetic ovation I’ve ever heard.

“Then Jackson was introduced—and greeted by ten minutes of standing, clapping, stamping love. He is a big man

with an imperial manner. The head is leonine and the facial expression at once fierce and sullen. He was dressed, like a Mod black emperor, in a brilliantly colored dashiki, bell-bottom jeans and high-top country shoes. Biologist Desmond Morris has written that a leader never scrabbles, twitches, fidgets or falters, and Jackson qualifies. For over an hour, he delivered a passionate sermon that described the black man's plight in white society. It was filled with street talk, down-home slang and quotations from the Bible—but its effect was Greek tragedy with soul.

“The sermon was punctuated by piano and organ riffs similar to a rhythm section's backing of a good jazz soloist. Halfway into an eloquent plea that blacks not waste their energy fighting among themselves, he called on one of the choir members, Sister Theresa, to sing ‘I Can See the Promised Land,’ because ‘I need it,’ he said. At one point in the sermon, he paused, clearly exhausted, and turned to the audience to say, ‘Yes, I’m tired.’ An old woman's voice called out, ‘Take care of him, Lord. We need him too bad for You to let him die.’

“Everyone around Jackson is acutely aware of his poor health. He has suffered this year from traces of sickle-cell anemia and assorted viruses brought on by lowered resistance. He's been hospitalized a half-dozen times but never missed a Saturday at Breadbasket. It is common for a parishioner to greet him with, ‘Hello, Reverend Jesse. Are you taking your medicine?’

“After Jackson finished the service, the Operation Breadbasket orchestra played a dozen choruses of a syncopated, soulful ‘We Shall Overcome,’ while all 6000 people in the audience—a number of whom were white—stood holding hands and swaying back and forth in one of the oldest, most moving rituals of the civil rights struggle. The effect of the morning was catharsis and rejuvenation. I don't think anyone who entered the theater that morning could have left without shedding some of the despair that seems to be afflicting the black liberation movement.

“A few moments later, I had a completely different, but indelible, impression of Jackson's impact. I was waiting to see him in a small dressing room. He was resting in an armchair, talking to a very pretty, shy black girl of about 20 who was standing near him. She said to him, with some embarrassment, ‘Reverend, I just want to tell you how much you mean to all of us.’ He slowly raised his head and said, ‘Hell, that's just a lot of talk. If I was really important to you, you'd take pity on my old tired body and invite me home, so your momma could fix a fine meal for me.’ She was immediately flustered and said, ‘Oh, Reverend. You're just having fun with me.

You don't mean it. You wouldn't come to my house.’ He looked at her with a stern expression that he couldn't quite prevent from turning to a smile and said, ‘You tell your momma I'm coming over Thursday night. Tell her to do some fixin’.’ She looked at him, trying to tell if he were serious, and her eyes widened, her hands began to fuss and her jaw dropped open. Finally, she said, ‘Would you really? Would you really come? If you do, I'll charge my friends admission at the door. A half a dollar to see you and a dollar to touch you!’ Jackson looked at the girl and then at me, laughing his appreciation. Actually, on those rare occasions when he's in the city, Jackson is well taken care of by his beautiful 25-year-old wife, Jacqueline—and harassed by his three energetic children.”

Because of Jackson's heavy schedule, Kretchmer couldn't get enough time with him until both took refuge in a rural retreat where the “country preacher” was free to explore at length the militant new mood of the black struggle and his own role in it. Since Dr. King's death had seemed for many to signal the end of the nonviolent phase of the civil rights movement—a philosophy Jackson continues to champion—the interview began with that topic.

PLAYBOY: Though the mood of blacks has changed markedly since the death of Martin Luther King, are you still committed, as Dr. King was, to nonviolence as the only way to win racial justice?

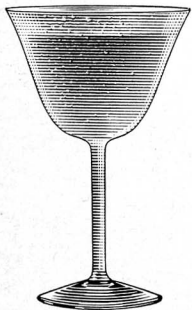
JACKSON: We will be as nonviolent as we can be and as violent as we must be. We should not choose violence first, because it is an inhumane way of dealing with problems. We also do not have the military resources to deal with the American power structure. There's no sense in facing tanks with a .22 pistol. Our circumstances and terrain would not give us the freedom to use a violent strategy. The ghettos are built like a military stockade. America never needs to actually come in. The lights can be turned off, the water shut off and the food supply stopped. We could be eliminated in the ghetto without anyone even crossing the railroad tracks to get us.

PLAYBOY: Do you mean to imply that if you did have the military resources, you would wage war against white Americans?

JACKSON: I am just pointing out that there is a strong pragmatic case for nonviolence. I am philosophically committed to nonviolence because I think it is the creative alternative and should be used as long as it helps protect and sustain life. It is a creative alternative to the Pentagon, for example. Just as there are forces in this world with a design for killing, so must there be forces with a design for healing. **PLAYBOY:** Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver, among others, say that unless blacks create their own design for

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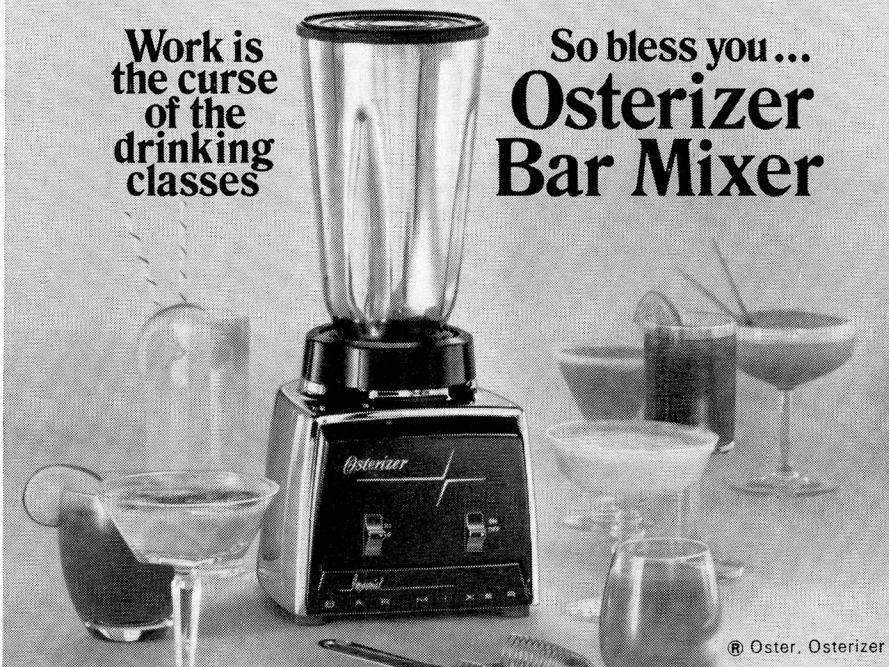


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killing, they are going to be killed themselves. Is this an irrevocable split in the black movement?

JACKSON: No. The competition to non-violence does not come from Stokely or Eldridge; it comes from America's traditions. It comes from little children seeing cowboys solve their moral problems by killing. The competition to nonviolence comes from the military draft, with its nine weeks' training on how to kill. The trouble is that nonviolence is so often defined as refusal to fight, and that is the American definition of cowardice. In fact, marching unarmed against the guns and dogs of the police requires more courage than does aggression. The perverted idea of manhood coming from the barrel of a gun is what keeps people from understanding nonviolence.

PLAYBOY: If your life were endangered, could you use a gun?

JACKSON: Yes. Nonviolence does not demand that one develop an absolute, universal commitment to pacifism. That old notion of being in a dark alley and having a man step out with a gun does not apply. Of course, I am going to do whatever I must to get rid of the man and his gun. I preach nonviolence because it's the better alternative. In that alley, there is no alternative. But peace is the alternative to war, and nonviolence should be seen as the antidote to violence, not simply as its opposite. Nonviolence is more concerned with saving life than with saving face. It is the most sensible way to combat white society's military oppression of blacks.

PLAYBOY: Do you think white America is actually waging war on black America?

JACKSON: Yes, it's a war. Sometimes it's waged by a white army in full military gear, as any weapons count among special riot police would show. But it's also a war of attrition, a siege, in which the violence takes other forms. To me, violence is starving a child or maintaining a mother on insufficient welfare. Violence is going to school 12 years and getting five years' worth of education. Violence is 30,000,000 hungry in the most abundant nation on earth. White America must understand that men will steal before they starve, that if there is a choice of a man's living or dying, he will choose to live, even if it means other men die. These are human reactions, and we cannot assume that black people are going to be anything less than human.

PLAYBOY: Is there a point at which you feel violence would be justified?

JACKSON: If I saw that there was no other way for us to be liberated, yes.

PLAYBOY: For many white people, the most disturbing incident of potential black violence this year was portrayed by a news picture of armed students at Cornell. What do you think about their use of weapons?

JACKSON: They *didn't* use them, except in the symbolic sense of warning groups

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that had threatened them that they were capable of their own military defense. I have doubts about the enduring success of the technique of military defense, but I appreciate the feelings that brought such a desperate mood into existence.

PLAYBOY: Another group that has endorsed violence as a tactic is the Black Panthers, which J. Edgar Hoover has called "the greatest threat among the black extremist groups to the internal security of the United States." Do you support the Panthers?

JACKSON: I'm very sympathetic to the Panthers. They are the logical result of the white man's brutalization of blacks. The remarkable thing about them is that they have not conducted any military offenses. They have not gone to downtown America to shoot up white-owned stores. The Panthers are a defense for justice, just as the Ku Klux Klan is an offense for injustice. That's a qualitative difference between picking up a gun to keep from being brutalized and picking up a gun to *inflict* brutality. As far as Mr. Hoover's opinion goes, I don't think that his perspective is relevant when it comes to the problems that are facing this society—which is surprising, when you consider all the good information he gets. He certainly knows what I'm thinking about and talking about most of the time.

PLAYBOY: Does the FBI keep you under surveillance?

JACKSON: Yes. It's admitted tapping Dr. King's phone, and I used to speak with him at least twice a week. The persons he spoke with were also frequently tapped, and I don't imagine they've untapped me, as my activities have increased since his death. But anything they've heard me say, if they come around, I'll be glad to repeat out loud to them. I want to add that I consider Mr. Hoover himself to be one of the greatest threats to our national security. His wire tapping and other surveillance methods violate the principles of democracy. The FBI director doesn't account to anyone, not even to the Attorney General; and, in reality, he heads what is very nearly a secret police.

It's on this subject of abusive police power that the Panthers are profound. No white community in America has a majority of black police, but black communities are militarily occupied by white police. The Panthers are right to say that the white police should be gotten out, just as the Americans were right in saying, "Get the Redcoats out." We are saying, "Get the bluecoats out."

PLAYBOY: Aren't you really saying, "Get the white bluecoats out"?

JACKSON: No. We don't want white bluecoats, but we don't want black bluecoats, either. We don't want to be policed by a supreme white authority, even if the agents of the authority are black. We're saying that the black community should,

police itself; the authority for the police should come from the home area, not from city hall, which is alien to us, has never been sympathetic to us and openly supports the police who oppress us.

PLAYBOY: Do you think, as some radicals seem to, that America is a police state?

JACKSON: For black men, it is. Nobody in the black community who's had the experience of being made to spread-eagle over a car for no reason, or because of a simple traffic ticket, would disagree with that. Some black folks disagree, but that's because of their lack of experience. If they just keep on living, they'll confront the reality soon enough. The reality is tyranny, and the tyrant must be opposed. Whether we are called Operation Breadbasket or Black Panthers or niggers, we know who the enemy is. We will gain our freedom by being more willing to die for it than the slavemaster is to die to keep us enslaved.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree with the controversial Panther demand that all black prisoners be released from prison?

JACKSON: Yes, but there are probably some black men who have been so broken, whose lives have been so twisted that they would be dangerous to all other men, both black and white, and I suppose they should not be released from confinement, though I would hope that genuine rehabilitation would replace detention. But just as the black community is a colony of white America, and those of us within that colony should be liberated, so should those of us who have been especially victimized by the viciousness of the colonial rules, and tried by the white slavemaster, be released. All of the black community should be liberated, and that includes those behind steel bars as well as those behind economic and social bars.

PLAYBOY: The subject of black crime preoccupies white America and, in the opinion of some commentators, helped elect Richard Nixon President. Many whites feel that their fears of black crime are completely justified, particularly in the light of your previous statement that black prisoners should be freed. How would you respond to that?

JACKSON: The Crime Commission appointed by Lyndon Johnson showed that most black crime is against blacks. The white folks who exploit us are as safe as a baby in a womb. The black man's hostility comes from the deprivation and frustration and tension of the ghetto. Most people handle that hostility surprisingly well; and those who don't, take it out on the nearest target—other blacks. Another reason black men hurt other black men is that the punishment is less than when you hurt a white man. The price for hostility against whites is too high. To talk back to a white boss is to be fired. And to make violent gestures against white people is to invite instant death. So the hostility that is bred in the

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ghetto leads to suffering—but mostly by blacks, not whites.

PLAYBOY: The incidence of property crimes by blacks is very high and is increasing. Do you think the white middle class is wrong to be concerned about protecting its possessions?

JACKSON: That property usually belongs to blacks, not whites. It is the ghetto resident whose home is robbed, sometimes two or three times in the same month. Black crimes against property are the result of desperation. I said earlier that a man will steal before he starves. Black crime is crime because of need; whites commit crimes of *greed*. Black folks do not set up elaborate kidnappings for a million-dollar ransom. The financial value of all of the property crimes committed by blacks in one year doesn't equal the money lost in the famous salad-oil swindle. Blacks are not out for a big score; they are out to stay alive. And when he's caught, the black man can't afford bail and a good attorney. Already wounded and probably crippled by the system, he spends more time than whites inside the jail system, where he is further destroyed by it. His criminality is molded by the police state. I was especially aware of this in the South, where I grew up. The police were an absolute power; they were not merely enforcers of the law; they *were* the law. They could do anything they wanted, because the judges and the legal system were thoroughly racist.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any recollections of personal confrontations with the police when you were young?

JACKSON: I remember that they seemed to get a kick out of breaking down the front door if you didn't answer quickly enough. When I was a little kid, we'd run and hide under the house at the sight of a police car. Later on, they locked us up for things like vagrancy or cursing. In time, they would kill a few of the guys I grew up with, and it was always "in the line of duty." There were some humorous incidents, too. One cop in Greenville, South Carolina, became famous for locking up a black man for "reckless eyeballing"; he had been staring at a white woman about 100 feet away. And I remember we weren't allowed to stand around the store windows while they were changing clothes on the white store dummies. My Northern friends get a big kick out of that, but it's symbolic of the awesome pattern of Southern oppression.

My own most frightening experience, though, didn't involve a policeman. There was a store on our street run by a white man named Jack. The customers were all black, and it was a comfortable place. Jack used to play with us kids all the time, and we'd run errands for him. One day, I went in and the store was full of people, but I was in a big hurry, the kind of hurry a six-year-old is always in. I said, "Jack, I'm late. Take care of me." He didn't

hear me, so I whistled at him. He wheeled around and snatched a .45 pistol from a shelf with one hand and kneeled down to grab my arm in his other fist. Then he put the pistol against my head and, kneading my black arm in his white fingers, said, "Goddamn it! Don't you *ever* whistle at me again, you hear?" I didn't think he was really going to shoot me, even then; the thing that got to me was that none of the black people in the store did or said anything. My impression of the superpower of whites to do absolutely anything they want and get away with it right in the middle of blacks was a traumatic experience that I've never recovered from.

PLAYBOY: Are such experiences for blacks still part of the Southern heritage?

JACKSON: Yes, but less frequently, and I think Dr. King is the reason for the change. The significance of his movement can be seen only against a Southern background. He taught us that even if the police—the law—say you can't sit down, sit down anyway. In most communities until then, there weren't five men who had that kind of courage. He challenged us to stand up to the police we used to run from. In Montgomery, Alabama, the cradle of the Confederacy, he rose up and declared that black men deserve their full rights of manhood. There wasn't enough money to buy him, and there weren't enough jails to hold him. Death itself isn't enough to stop black men from being free, for crucifixion leads to resurrection.

PLAYBOY: One of the seeming ironies of the civil rights movement is that while the Southern black has gone far toward winning freedom, the ghetto black in the North is in an increasingly frustrated mood. How do you explain this?

JACKSON: The Southern movement fulfilled some of the hopes it raised. We achieved our goals in the bus boycotts and the freedom rides. The public-accommodation and voting-rights bills were passed. We haven't had corresponding success in the North. The Northern black has seen *some* progress, but his advancement doesn't compare with the advancement of white society. The economy quadruples while blacks creep along with unemployment as high as 35 and 40 percent in some black communities. When the white unemployment rate was 20 percent in 1933, it was a Depression that required massive aid. But the black unemployment rate is ignored.

The most frustrated are those who have worked hardest but remain unrewarded. A black man in Chicago with a master's degree earns less than a white man with a high school diploma. You can't tell a man who has been to college that he's not educated enough to qualify for a job that goes to white high school dropouts. If you do, you castrate him. And the Northern black is more frustrated because the indifference of white colonialism in the North is more vicious than the paternalism of the South. The North-

ern industrialist doesn't have any emotional relationship with the black; he maintains only economic contact. In the North, you get white smiles while the shops are open, but the hypocritical charade is over when the shops close and whites take the money out of the ghetto. It's no coincidence that those stores are the primary targets in a riot.

PLAYBOY: Los Angeles mayor Sam Yorty once stated on television that he thought riots were caused by the mass media. He said that blacks rioted in imitation of the disruptive behavior they saw on television and that if there had been no television coverage of Watts during the first hours of the trouble there in 1965, there would have been no riot. Do you feel that's true?

JACKSON: That's absurd. The riots are expressions of the unheard. The rioters are the mass of black people who invest hard labor on nasty chores—they are floor cleaners, shoeshine boys, hospital attendants—and they find that they have almost no share, no investment, no dividend in a 900-billion-dollar economy. Riots are a reaction to pain and a sense of hopelessness. There are black people whom no President's program has ever reached. My grandmother has lived through every President from 1900 to 1969, and the sum total of their grass-roots programs has not been able to teach her the 26 letters of the alphabet. Riots do not solve problems, but they indicate what those problems are. It is the responsibility of an aching man to tell the truth about his pain. It isn't to his advantage to give the appearance of happiness when he is hurting. In the past, we passively accepted the immoral acts of white society to prove that we were nice, decent folks, but that was our foolishness. Black folks assumed that Pharaoh was going to help them simply because it was the right thing to do. Now we know that Pharaoh's commitment is to property, not to persons. He must be made to do the right thing.

PLAYBOY: It has been alleged by some observers, however, that the riots reveal a kind of death wish on the part of blacks.

JACKSON: It's true that there is in the young generation an inclination toward nihilism. To challenge a police headquarters with a handful of bricks is a suicidal act, but it is also a blow for freedom. What the riots really reveal is the beastliness and sadism of white police. Nearly all of the people who died in riots were blacks killed by whites whose ethics dictate that nickels and dimes are more important than flesh and blood.

PLAYBOY: There are whites who say that activists such as yourself foster the riots, that without you, there'd be racial peace.

JACKSON: White folks don't want peace; they want quiet. The price you pay for peace is justice. Until there is justice, there will be no peace or quiet.

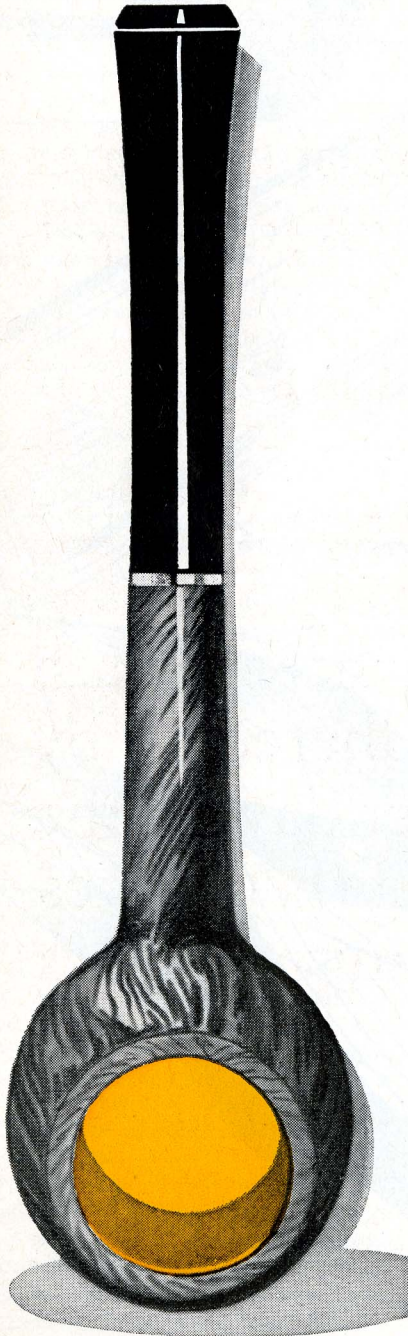
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many blacks said that white America had lost its last chance to solve the race problem without destroying itself. Do you think that's true?

JACKSON: No, I don't, although I was one of the first people to make that statement. It seemed to me then that Dr. King's death ended America's last chance to be redeemed. But it is not for us to determine the chances of redemption. There are still people being born with hope, still people fighting with hope. God has not yet damned this country, though one may wonder how long the wicked will prosper. America at this point is the most violent nation in the world.

PLAYBOY: Isn't that a cliché? Don't other nations have wars and assassinations?

JACKSON: Of course. But no other nation wants so clearly to be the world's policeman. No other nation comes down so consistently on the wrong side of every revolutionary movement for liberation from tyranny. Wherever there is a rebellion, our conservative industrialists are helping to end it, whether it's in Angola or Venezuela. Any place we buy oil or rubber, or sell a little Coca-Cola and chewing gum, we've got to protect the old order. We spend \$900 per second to kill the Viet Cong but only \$77 per person per year to feed the hungry at home. We maintain soldiers in 20 countries around the world, yet we always talk about the Russian threat or the Chinese threat. China does not have a standing army outside of China; Russia has two. Yet we assume that someone's after us, that the "free world" is threatened simply because people want the chance to control their own economic market so they can participate in the world decision-making order. They don't want to go Communist or to crush democracy; they just want to end their serf status; and that's all blacks want here at home.

PLAYBOY: It might seem incongruous to some that you can make this sweeping indictment of America, an indictment that could easily serve as the lead paragraph in one of SDS' revolutionary pamphlets, and yet, as economic director of SCLC and leader of Operation Breadbasket, you are leading blacks who clearly want to buy into the American dream.

JACKSON: It's very simple. For all its faults, America is the only country with the capacity to save the world, even at the very moment that we seem bent on destroying it. We can produce more food, medicine, trained and educated people than anyone else. We try to export our killers, but people have stopped wanting them; they would accept our doctors, scientists and creators, but our armies are outdated. We could liberate nations from their poverty and their pestilence if our value system would allow us to do so. The irony is how close we are to being something great. One fifth of our nation is starving, yet we have the capacity to overfeed it. We

could end the starvation in India, heal the sickness in Africa. But the tragedy is that we are as close to destroying the world as we are to saving it. We spent 78.4 billion dollars to kill this year but only 12 billion to heal. Those who are silent now, or are neutral now, must make a decision before the opportunity passes forever.

PLAYBOY: Are you encouraged by the young white radicals who seem determined to change America's value system?

JACKSON: The issues that move them are qualitatively different from the ones that concern blacks. Many of the radical whites say that materialism is no good, that one must seek a new level of spiritualism. Well, we lived for years with spiritualism but without any materialism. Now we'd like to try to balance the two. Many of the young whites are living on the prerogatives of the materialism they shun. They confront their school in the winter, but in the summer, they go off to Sweden or Hawaii. Their discussions of America's corruption take place over steaks. They spend \$5000 a year to attend the schools they shut down. We often have the same moral ideals, but the perspective is very different.

I have also been disappointed that we were unable to get any mass help from young whites on the hunger caravan we recently concluded in Illinois. The students were so radical that feeding starving people didn't constitute revolution to them, because "a man needs to do more than eat." But while they were saying that, they were eating very well. To us, they tend to be superfluous.

PLAYBOY: Weren't the strikes at both Harvard and Columbia concerned mainly with accusations by white students that those schools abuse the black community?

JACKSON: I do not mean to condemn their creative protests. They accurately reflect Jesus' position that man cannot live by bread alone. They come from houses with boats and cars and more money than they can spend, yet they find their lives empty. There is beauty in their hearing the heartbeats of other humans. What I'm saying is that there is a lack of depth in their protest, in terms of the black community's real and immediate needs. But I think I must reserve judgment on those whites who are living off the prerogatives of wealth. If they are legitimately concerned, they will take what Daddy leaves and pay back some of that money in reparations to blacks.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree with James Forman's proposal that the churches pay reparations to blacks?

JACKSON: Yes, and eventually the demands will not be limited to the churches. The black community in America is an underdeveloped nation, a victim of America's cold war against her own black people. In that war, all of our supply lines have been cut—educational, commercial, political and psychological. We've been

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the victims of an unjust war and are due reparations from those who launched it. Business owes us reparations, first for enslaving us, then for refusing to give us work or hiring us for only the lowest-paying, most grueling jobs. And even when we have an opportunity to do the same work as white men, we are paid less for it. The labor unions, for whom we fought, owe us reparations for locking us out. The church is also liable, because it has disregarded its own moral imperatives and cooperated in creating and maintaining a racist society.

PLAYBOY: Do you expect these demands to be met?

JACKSON: For the most part, no.

PLAYBOY: Then isn't the plea for reparations a rhetorical gesture rather than a serious proposal?

JACKSON: The demands are perfectly serious. If they were met, it would mean a great step toward unifying the two separate and unequal societies that the Kerner Commission described after it studied the Newark and Detroit riots. The point is that SCLC and I are not naïve enough to think that the businessmen who control the assets of corporations, labor unions and churches will voluntarily act from some inner moral impetus. America's god is money. God is your ultimate concern, what you give maximum sacrifice for, what you will die for. God is what you worship. The American ideal is maximum profit and minimum person; there is no impulse to share the wealth, to raise up those less fortunate. What counts is the name on the front of the building. Well, I say what counts are the hands that do the work inside.

PLAYBOY: Isn't money also one of Operation Breadbasket's major concerns?

JACKSON: Yes. It's a concern because it's a reality. But the essential purpose of Operation Breadbasket is to have blacks control the basic resources of their community. We want to control the banks, the trades, the building construction and the education of our children. This desire on our part is a defensive strategy evolved in order to stop whites from controlling our community and removing the profits and income that belong to black people. Our programs are dictated by the private-enterprise economy in which we find ourselves. In my heart, however, I know that the entire system is a corruption. To me, the earth belongs to everybody; it's just a very successful rumor white folks have going that the earth belongs to them. The earth is the Lord's and no man creates anything that didn't come from other things that God put here. No man really takes anything away, either. No man can claim that he made soil or wool or milk. White folks can make airplanes, but they can't make mountains. They can make syrup but not water. *Genesis* says that the Lord created the earth and everything therein and gave man, not

white man, dominion over it and created a dominion sufficient for everyone to be able to survive and prosper. Now the concept of *Genesis* has obviously been destroyed, and it is our concern to rid America of some of her arrogance and control of God's resources by saying that the food belongs to all the people.

PLAYBOY: Do you think farmers and suppliers should give their food away?

JACKSON: I don't care how the people get food, as long as they get it. The Government can buy the food and give it away in a large-scale version of the present inadequate surplus-food and food-stamp programs. Or it can give the poor enough money to buy the food themselves.

PLAYBOY: Many middle-class whites think that the poor would only buy booze and guns if they had the money.

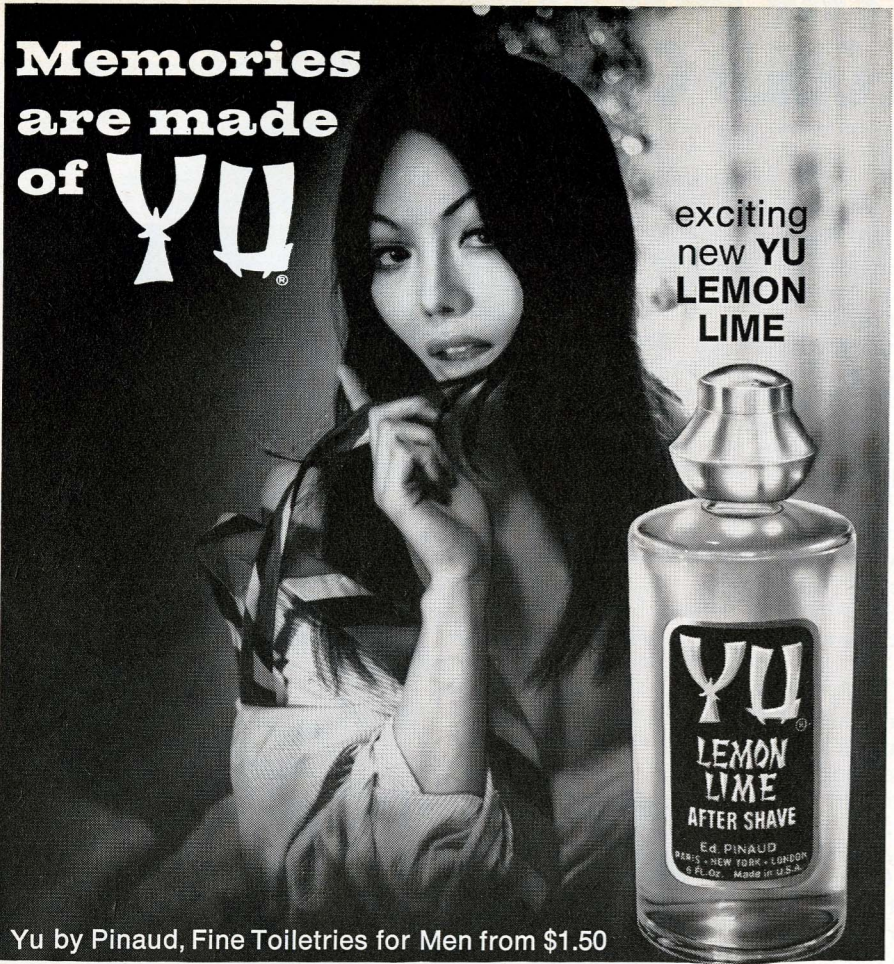
JACKSON: I challenge anyone with that belief to tour the reeking, rat-infested tenements of Harlem or Chicago's South Side and count the number of alcoholic welfare mothers. There won't be many. Welfare people do not account for this nation's high number of alcoholics. Nor are most guns bought by the black poor. In a home where the children are eating wall plaster because they are hungry, a gun isn't looked upon as an important commodity. But I don't care if the Government wants to give out food instead of money. I would bless any device it might come up with, as long as it does *something*. The country is producing more food than it needs. There is inherent evil in a system that induces men to plow crops under while others starve.

Not only does the food belong to the people but the industrial profit also belongs to the people. If the employees of General Motors left tomorrow, it would have to stop. If the entire board of directors died tomorrow, nothing would stop. What's indispensable are the laborers, not the directors. The laborers can rise from the ranks and direct their fellow laborers. Because they are the basic need, they ought to reap the basic benefits. But in America, about six percent of the people control the basic wealth, and there's something infinitely demonic about that. It's no wonder that America needs the largest military in the world to protect the wealthiest superrich class from people who would rebel against it. There's no basic conflict among the *peoples* of the world; Russian bus drivers aren't mad at American bus drivers. But the controlling groups are always in conflict with the people—whether it's the Government of the United States, which refuses to adequately protect the poor, or the boards of directors at GM and Ford, which encourage blacks to go into debt to buy automobiles but don't allow blacks to participate in the profitable manufacture and distribution of cars.

PLAYBOY: Can blacks afford to buy automobile agencies?

JACKSON: The companies will lend us the

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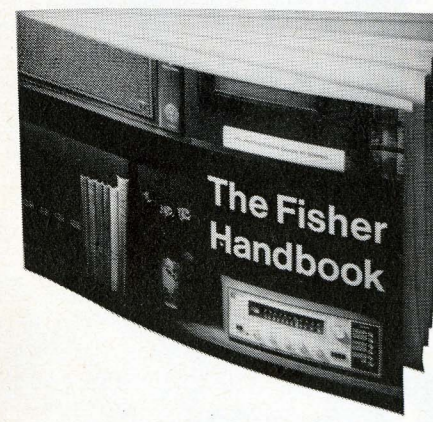


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money to buy cars, which leads to profits for them only. They could lend us the money to buy agencies, but they won't, because that would let us profit also.

PLAYBOY: Aren't there some black car dealers?

JACKSON: About 14 dealerships out of 28,000. We are grossly underrepresented in all areas of the economy. There are no black TV stations, for example, and only seven black radio stations. Most of the stations that are beamed toward the black community and play black music are white owned. We can't get FCC outlets, and I'm convinced that there is a conspiracy to keep us from communicating with one another on a mass scale.

PLAYBOY: Do you mean that the Government fears a nationally directed riot?

JACKSON: I don't know what they think; all I know is we can't get licenses when we apply.

PLAYBOY: What does Operation Breadbasket intend to do about this sort of economic underrepresentation?

JACKSON: We have the power, nonviolently, just by controlling our appetites, to determine the direction of the American economy. If black people in 30 cities said simultaneously, "General Motors, you will not sell cars in the black community unless you guarantee us a franchise here next year and help us finance it," GM would have no choice. We can affect their margin of profit by withdrawing our patronage and resisting the system instead of enduring it.

PLAYBOY: Can this really work? And, if so, why hasn't it been done already?

JACKSON: It hasn't been done because we weren't sophisticated enough to see it. This is a step that we haven't been ready to take. But it will certainly be done now, because we are organizing to do it. Black people purchase about 35 to 40 billion dollars' worth of goods each year. We represent the margin of profit in many industries. America depends on our cooperation with her economy, and we shall become the enemies of those businesses and industries that work against our interest by unfair hiring practices, by discriminating against black products, by not making investments in the ghetto to correspond with the profits taken out of it. There is an analogous situation in politics: The black people have not yet realized that we can determine who gets elected President; in 1960, it was the South Side of Chicago that turned in the vote that made John Kennedy President. The newspapers all said that Mayor Daley had once again come through with his Cook County machine, but that vote was black. The ghetto, however, has seldom voted in its own self-interest. It has even voted for black politicians who are contemptuous of blacks.

PLAYBOY: Why does the ghetto vote so inefficiently?

JACKSON: Because it's so easy to intimidate or con the poor; they have no

recourse. On Election Day, the precinct worker comes around and says that if you don't vote his way, he'll have you thrown out of the housing project or he'll have your welfare check canceled. Or, if he's a benign type, he'll buy your vote with a chicken. The poor are also frightened out of coming to freedom meetings. But the poor themselves must learn that food is a right and not a privilege. We are marching to gain a subsidy for 30,000,000 hungry Americans who represent a human resource that is more important than any of the mineral resources that this nation subsidizes.

PLAYBOY: What form would that subsidy take?

JACKSON: A guaranteed annual income based upon the Government's own estimate of the amount of money people actually need to live adequate lives. They say that a family of four in a large city in the United States in 1969 requires \$5994 per year for minimum maintenance. If that's what's needed, then that's what they should get.

PLAYBOY: Wouldn't that be expensive, especially considering the present high tax burden?

JACKSON: The Senate committee on poverty headed by George McGovern stated, after doing field research throughout the nation, that it would cost ten billion dollars per year to feed the poor and fulfill their basic health, clothing and housing needs. I would guess that that's a low estimate. Let's double it and say that the cost would be 20 billion dollars per year. That's less money than we're spending to kill the Viet Cong. It's less money than we're about to spend on the ABM system. It is less than a third of the defense budget. If we wanted men to live as much as we want to see them die, we could do it without any new taxes.

PLAYBOY: But what motivation does the Government have to subsidize the poor?

JACKSON: Out of a spirit of humanity, one would hope; but that is naïve. Our job is to create enough pressure to force the Government to act. It is certainly not going to do so on its own. The imbalance of Southern power in the Congress has led to important committees being headed by pathological killers and by men with public commitments to racism. These men—such as Mendel Rivers, Russell Long, Jamie Whitten and Richard Russell—are the black man's burden. The truth is that the Mafia is probably better represented in the Government than blacks are. And numerous other special-interest groups are well taken care of. The situation on the agriculture committees is particularly loathsome to me because of the millions of dollars that are given away to gentleman farmers who don't farm, while children are starving. Contrast that with the Black Panthers' national breakfast program. They are serving thousands of people free food every week, and the only qualification is



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that the recipient be hungry. If the Panthers can serve breakfast to 3000 children a week in Chicago or 1500 in San Francisco, with their lack of resources, what could those cities' governments be doing if they had the same interest?

PLAYBOY: If you were the mayor of a major American city, what would you do?

JACKSON: I would declare the poor communities in a state of emergency and deal with the unemployment rate, the high mortality rate and the high t.b. rate. I would set up medicine tents on the streets, and embarrass the Federal and state governments into opening up their food storehouses. I would declare war on disease and hunger. I would enlarge all the city departments that feed and heal people. The welfare of all the people would be attended to before any new golf courses or monuments or stadiums were built. I would force the Government to call out the National Guard to deal with the existing injustices, which make the ghetto a permanent disaster area. There's no reason why the Army couldn't be coming down the street with bayonets, looking for slum landlords. The Army would force trade unions to allow the minority groups in. And those who did not pick up the garbage would themselves be picked up. An Army like that wouldn't have any trouble getting volunteer soldiers because it would be engaged in a *relevant* war.

PLAYBOY: Is that statement a reference to Vietnam?

JACKSON: Let me just say that Vietnam is not a relevant war. It is a war in which the black poor are paying with their lives to protect the investments of a small, rich elite whose Asian investments are threatened by Hanoi.

PLAYBOY: Whatever interests are being served in Vietnam, do you think that you, as a citizen, have the right to pick the wars in which you will fight and those in which you won't?

JACKSON: Of course I have that right. I must reserve the right to decide which wars are just. And I would not fight in a war that I thought was unjust. Nor would I approve of anyone else doing so.

PLAYBOY: Would you encourage drafted blacks to refuse to go to Vietnam, even if it means jail for them?

JACKSON: Yes. And whites, too. Fighting in Vietnam is a step back into slavery for blacks, and into barbarism for whites. The road to jail has often been the road to freedom. Many men—Gandhi, Jomo Kenyatta, Dr. King—have learned that.

PLAYBOY: Although a disproportionate number of blacks have died in Vietnam, there have been few blacks active in the peace movement. Why?

JACKSON: To blacks, the peace movement is a luxury that presupposes you have the time to save somebody aside from yourself. Blacks are just too occupied with their own survival. They have not even been sophisticated enough to know

that they can oppose murder. A black man can be easily seduced; it's a revolution for him to go from one meal a day to three. Sometimes I think that blacks are so locked away from information that we could be duped into fighting in South Africa for apartheid, if America told us to do it. We certainly were down there shooting our Dominican brothers. I saw televised scenes of Dominicans lined up against a wall while black GIs held guns on them. But this is not because of ignorance but because of cultural suffocation and improper education.

PLAYBOY: Malcolm X once proposed that the UN send observers into the American black community to determine if blacks were being treated humanely. Do you think that's a practical idea?

JACKSON: Only for symbolic purposes; the UN doesn't have any power and is subject to the American veto.

PLAYBOY: Wouldn't exercising the veto prove so embarrassing to the U. S. that it would refrain from doing so?

JACKSON: I doubt it. And the countries that one might expect to pressure America into dealing humanely with its black minority—the countries of Africa—are themselves too dependent on America's trade and financial aid to wish to antagonize her. It is not in the enlightened self-interest of those countries to rise up in indignation when we're shot up in Detroit or Watts, because we don't affect their essential relationship with the world markets or the World Bank.

PLAYBOY: Both Malcolm and Dr. King worked to mobilize a world-wide conscience against racism before they were struck down. Do you share the view of some that both murders were part of a plan to deprive blacks of their leaders?

JACKSON: Not a single elaborate conspiracy, but it's clear that as we have moved closer to America's nerve center, closer to a position where we could vote men out of office, the killings have increased. And I don't think America has done anything to indicate that she is on the side of Dr. King rather than of his killers.

PLAYBOY: You used the plural. Don't you think that James Earl Ray acted alone?

JACKSON: I would be surprised if it wasn't a conspiracy involving many others.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any evidence to support that belief?

JACKSON: I think the circumstances were very suspicious. As you know, I was with Dr. King when the assassin's bullet was fired. We were talking with Operation Breadbasket's music director, Ben Branch, about songs for the next day's rally. Dr. Abernathy, Andy Young, James Bevel and Bernard Lee were very near. When Dr. King was shot, I hit the ground, along with the others. We scrambled toward the steps where he was and I looked back over my shoulder, because I was afraid that more shots were going to be fired. I saw so many police coming *from the direction of the shot* that I actually threw up

my hands, thinking that the shot had come from one of them and that I was going to be killed, too. There were hundreds of police in the area, some jumping from the hill where the shot had come from. I tried to tell them that the bullet came from that way.

Now, the hotel that Ray was in—is Ray was the killer—is next door to the fire department. With the shot having been fired and all those police in the area, the usual thing during an emergency in a Southern town would be for a siren to go off that stops the lights and traffic on Main Street, where the hotel is. It was six o'clock in the afternoon, the busiest time for traffic, and it all could have been brought to a halt. But no siren went off, traffic wasn't stopped and Ray escaped through downtown Memphis. The distance he subsequently traveled indicates to me that he didn't do it by himself and that he may have had some very highly placed help. But, of course, finding Dr. King's killers is secondary to getting at the roots of America's violent atmosphere—an atmosphere in which you conform or are broken, in which you take your subordinate place in the industrial hierarchy or are destroyed.

PLAYBOY: What do you think Dr. King would be doing if he were alive today?

JACKSON: Dr. King would still be dealing with the problem of finding a job for everybody; he would still be raising the questions of medical care for everybody, of a full-employment economy. He would still be on the basic issues, still be pointing out the stupidity of the war. He would be in general conflict with Nixon. He would still, as we say, be on the case.

PLAYBOY: Will there ever be another black leader as important as Dr. King?

JACKSON: I don't think so, though, of course, no man can say. But it was Dr. King who crossed the frontier, who made a permanent break with the past. I grew up in the period from 1955 to 1965, and that time was dominated by his courage and strength, as opposed to the previous mass docility of black men. Dr. King was a surprise for a lot of whites who had conned themselves into believing that Negroes were really inferior. He was intelligent, moral, eloquent and courageous. The contrast of his eloquence with the lack of it in those whites he was forced to deal with gave us a rallying point. Even more important was the way he stood up to white military power in the South. Dr. King wasn't afraid of the cop's billy stick, guns or dogs. He overcame the stigma of jail cells; in fact, he *dignified* the jail cell and wrote great words from it. He was willing to die for black people, and finally did die, not on some lofty mountainside or in the company of ambassadors but kissing garbage men, trying to set them free.

PLAYBOY: In the weeks before he died, did Dr. King express any particular

optimism or pessimism about the future of the movement?

JACKSON: He expressed both. SCLC was at that time involved in making its decision about the Poor Peoples' Campaign in Washington, D. C., that ultimately led to Resurrection City. Many of Dr. King's friends and some board members said that we should not go to Washington because of the possibility of a riot. The final decision was his. He was going through a bad time and he showed it at one of the last staff meetings he would ever attend. He was despairing that morning and Andy Young tried to tell him to relax, that things were going to get better. And Dr. King told Andy, "Don't say 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace. The country is swinging to the right and our President is obsessed with the war. Maybe I ought to turn around," he said. But then he stopped; and when he continued, his voice was more firm. "But we've gone too far to turn around. There were dark days during the sit-ins, and in Selma and Birmingham. We've come too far."

Then he changed again. "But I'm still disturbed by the division in the country. Maybe I ought to just fast. And when I get to the point of death, perhaps we could have a summit meeting of blacks. Maybe that would bring us together." But then he seemed to resolve the argument in his mind. He said, "I've seen where we've got to go. We are going to fight the good fight; we are going to liberate our brothers and raise up the poor. We're not going to turn around. It's all very clear to me now." And I think Dr. King at that moment was as sure as he had ever been of the ultimate victory of his movement. Once you've been to the mountaintop, it doesn't matter if James Earl Ray is in the bushes waiting for you.

PLAYBOY: Do you share Dr. King's vision?

JACKSON: In my stronger moments, I have no doubts. I'm even able to love those who persecute me. There must be some force that's committed to redemption, even though it's painful. The alternative is that we will destroy ourselves—"die together as fools," as Dr. King said once. He and Gandhi and Jesus reached a spiritual state that liberates the self. Dr. King did not represent ordinary men. That's what made people love him so much. But what finally happens to the extraordinary men is what happened to Jesus. We admire them but we don't follow them, and finally we kill them because they become such a threat to us.

PLAYBOY: In what way?

JACKSON: Most of us cannot live up to the ideal of the noble and virtuous. Such men make us aware that we must settle for the real and the expedient. We are diminished by their purity, which is a threat to our self-esteem. The idealist keeps our consciences awake, but the pressure on our conscience is so great that it can be relieved only by murder.

PLAYBOY: Dr. King was criticized for placing too much emphasis on conscience. David Halberstam wrote that Dr. King left Chicago in 1966, for example, because he could not inspire a moral consciousness, and Mayor Daley was able to dissipate his campaign with high-sounding but unspecific resolutions. Do you think that Dr. King was too concerned with the moral rather than the tactical aspects of the civil rights movement?

JACKSON: No, I think that even as recently as 1966, Dr. King was correctly analyzing his problem as the need to change the psyche of the black man. You couldn't impress black folks unless you impressed white folks first. Dr. King had to make the movement as large as possible in white eyes to get respect for blacks. I think that we are inclined to lose perspective on how much things have changed since 1955. There was no black consciousness then. Dr. King was dealing with "Negroes"—put quotes around that—whose minds, desires, ambitions and images were white inspired. Aretha Franklin couldn't have made it in 1955. It was Dr. King who moved the "Negro" farther and farther out; and the farther he got from that white shore, the blacker he became.

Dr. King had the most national influence of any black leader, and his concern was to change national policy. The strategy was always to form a coalition of conscience between the black community and a segment of the white community. An issue had to be defined along moral lines, because the white community will split on the basis of moral against immoral, liberal against conservative. Without that white help, there is no chance for us to have an impact on national policies. Dr. King used to point out that there is not a black college in the country that could remain open six months on black contributions. That's a reality we must face. Even now, there is no civil rights organization of any consequence that functions on black money.

PLAYBOY: Does Operation Breadbasket accept white money?

JACKSON: SCLC accepts any money, and it finances us. But we get more black money out of Chicago than any other civil rights organization has ever gotten out of the black community.

PLAYBOY: What does SCLC think of white participation in the leadership of Breadbasket and other programs?

JACKSON: We discourage it. We need and want to encourage the technical and financial aid of whites in the civil rights movement, but we should make our own decisions. Whites should spend their physical energy liberating *white* America, because white folks need someone to help them understand blacks or they're going to continue to be paralyzed by their paranoia. Whites suffer from nightmares and irrational anxiety. When a black family moves onto a white street,

the white girls are not magically impregnated by a black boy. Those fears are unreal. But whites do not allow enough communication with blacks to learn the truth. So other white folks must defend our humanity, even though our skin color is different and our hair grows differently and we have a different heritage.

PLAYBOY: Why is there a preoccupation now with black studies and Afro styles?

JACKSON: The so-called natural movement is simply trying to say that I may not know who I am psychologically and historically, but I'm not going to be defined by white folks any longer. I want to see how I'd look if I just grew. If I didn't use anything white folks gave me to fancy myself up with, what would I look like? Most of us have never given ourselves a chance to find out. We're in search of our existence as a new people—Afro-American. White people forced us to suppress our beauty; now we want to glorify it. The fact that our natural selves conflict with the comfortable, stereotyped white image of the black man is not our problem.

PLAYBOY: But this new emphasis on blackness seems to lead to some paradoxical situations. In spite of the need for expanded opportunities for blacks to attend college, a number of strikes were initiated last year by black college students who demanded black-studies programs at their schools. Are black-studies programs so important that it's worth closing down a school to get them?

JACKSON: I think so. History plays a large role in a people's growth. The white man took away our history because it was one more way for him to control us. Without a group identity, we had no group loyalty; we were separated from our past to make it easier to control us in the present. It is one thing to see ourselves as a people only 300 years old, born as slaves and moving toward freedom. But, in fact, our forebears date back to the origin of man, and we have always been a creative and productive people; we were enslaved, but now we are returning to freedom—and it's good to come back home. We need the pride and dignity of knowing that we are part of a great continuum. Anthropologists say that mankind originated in Africa. We are the people who carved out the great civilizations of Kush, Songhai, Ghana and Mali. We smelted iron; we mined copper and gold. For us to know this is to know that we can look forward to a great destiny.

PLAYBOY: It's the idea of exclusively black studies that bothers many white people. Other ethnic groups don't have special study programs, do they?

JACKSON: But they do, and the schools recognize them as such. If you are an Italian, for instance, your history courses will cover the entire history of early Rome and then Renaissance Italy, and they will stress the worth of the Italian contributions. But no ancient-history

courses emphasize the blackness of the great early civilizations. And American-history courses generally ignore the black man. If the schools had done their job, they wouldn't have the problems they are now confronted with—and richly deserve. **PLAYBOY:** Many athletes and entertainers—Bill Cosby, for example—have adopted Afro hair and clothing styles; but aside from this sort of symbolic identification, do you think successful blacks have been as involved as they should be with the movement?

JACKSON: I think the symbolism is important; it shows a new sensitivity. The black athletes and entertainers who are wearing natural hair styles and Afro clothes are specifically defying the white measurement apparatus. But the fact is that the black artist has never been as far away from the black community as the white press sometimes portrays him. Every black man, for example, knows where Sammy Davis' heart is. The black entertainer moves into a white community because the houses are bigger and better there. He is just taking advantage of a new freedom. Historically, the black athlete and entertainer have been in a precarious position where, if they over-identified with the racial situation, they couldn't play in the major night clubs, couldn't get into a movie or were blackballed from a league. Black athletes who take a militant position on the race problem endanger their jobs, even though teams are dependent on their participation. Jackie Robinson broke into baseball in 1945. In 1969, blacks dominate the game. The stars of the National Basketball Association are nearly all black, as are many in the National Football League. But we'd be doing even better in sports if there were not still some discrimination there.

PLAYBOY: What kind of discrimination?

JACKSON: Before I entered college, I was offered a contract to pitch for the Chicago White Sox. They wanted to give me less money to sign than the white boys I was striking out. I'm sure that's generally true, and many black boys can't afford to leave the farm or the factory to try to make it with a team. More indicative of the racism still alive in sports is the fact that in all of major-league baseball, there isn't one black executive or manager.

PLAYBOY: If a black baseball player clearly shows himself to be managerial material, don't you think he'll get a shot at a manager's job?

JACKSON: What does that mean? Is every white manager "managerial material"? Then how come they're always being fired? In America, a white man, no matter how dumb, is expected to boss a black man; but no black man, no matter how highly qualified, is allowed to give orders to a white man. If a white ball-player like Eddie Stanky is argumentative and aggressive, he's considered fiery. Therefore, he's a managerial prospect.

But Jackie Robinson was fiery as hell, only they called it arrogance. He was an "uppity nigger." When Robinson left baseball, his accumulated knowledge about running bases, pitching, hitting and fielding went with him. It was a waste of a great baseball mind.

PLAYBOY: You seem to be saying that unless a black man is docile, he can't survive; yet the mood of young blacks—including you—is anything but docile. Haven't the times changed?

JACKSON: We have changed; I don't know about the times. White society still tries to impose a different code of behavior on blacks than on whites. What to me is an expression of confidence is to white folks an expression of defiance. The country is so used to black people smiling and bowing and acting unsure of themselves that when whites meet someone who confronts them and challenges their standards, they make harsh judgments. Now things are changing so fast that the hostility of white society toward a black man may lead to respect for him from the black community. For a white man to embrace you is for a black man to hold you suspect.

PLAYBOY: You have been accused of cynically manipulating that new mood in your personal choice of dress and hair style. Do you think that if you didn't wear sideburns and a *dashiki*, but dressed conservatively and looked somewhat like a young Martin Luther King, that you could make it as a black leader today?

JACKSON: Style—whether it's Afro or Ivy League—isn't crucial. Hell, there are kids around who look like Ché Guevara, but they still need their mommas to get them across the street. Because of all the losses we have suffered, black people are looking for *winners*; that's the only way to get their respect. And a winner is someone who successfully defies white America. The reason Joe Louis will always be respected in the black community is that at a time when other blacks couldn't even talk back to white people, Joe Louis was beating them up, knocking them down and making them bleed. When I do a TV show, I'm aware that every black watching is scoring me against the white opposition, as if I were in a fight. Every black man who has won the loyalty of his community has indicated some expression of defiance for the white man. Malcolm X is a good example. He could look Whitey straight in the eye and tell him he was lying. And Malcolm showed that even the most brutalized experience could be overcome.

PLAYBOY: You obviously don't agree with those who felt that Malcolm was a disruptive force.

JACKSON: Malcolm had become an apostle of peace after his trips to the Near East. America has a knack for killing her men of peace, while men of war continue to thrive. Malcolm's death also pointed up the futility of thinking in

exclusively white-black terms. Blacks killed Malcolm, just as a black man betrayed Marcus Garvey and a black woman once tried to stab Dr. King. Black is not always good, just as white is not always bad. We confirmed that lesson at Resurrection City, where white Appalachians shared the mud with us while some blacks on U Street were asking The Man to run us out of town. And it was a black woman who started many of Adam Powell's troubles.

PLAYBOY: The consensus among white liberals is that Adam Powell deserved his fate—and that he was a hindrance to the civil rights movement. Do you disagree?

JACKSON: Absolutely. First of all, and to set the record straight, as head of the House Education and Labor Committee, Adam Powell was responsible for passing over 60 pieces of significant social legislation—more than any other of his virtuous colleagues have ever done. But Adam is even more important, for a depressed black psyche, as a defier of white rules. Something happened to my dad in World War Two that illustrates this. He was serving in France and Strom Thurmond came to speak to his all-black regiment. The Senator's message was that they were there to fight the War, that they were not to bother any women; they were to know their place. In other words, it was all right for my father to risk his life to serve America, but he was still a nigger. So when Adam Powell walked down the halls of Congress with two white women on his arm, just the outrageous defiance of it gave us gratification. The appeal of that defiance will never be lost.

PLAYBOY: That story touches on the strong sexual aspect of racism. Both Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver have expressed elaborate theories in which white sexual fears are cited as a fundamental cause of race hatred. Do you agree?

JACKSON: Although sex is a crucial underlying cause of prejudice and racial hatred, it is not relevant to the black liberation movement. We will not allow the white man's sexual problem to stand in the way of our freedom.

PLAYBOY: Can you just ignore it?

JACKSON: Let me explain it with some awful history. In the South, when a slave ran away—thereby expressing his manhood and independence—and he was caught, the punishment for his first offense was whipping or branding. If he ran away again, which was the clearest way for him to assert himself, his punishment was likely to be castration. The slave was told that he was inferior, less than human and completely unappealing to the white woman; but The Man still castrated him. That says a lot about the psychosexual dilemma of the Southern white male. The other part of that dilemma was that because of his fear of black men, the white man had to desensitize white women. The white woman had to spiritually kill herself. For a

white woman to see Jim Brown and not think of him as an attractive male means that the nerves are dead within her being. She dehumanized herself, because white men wanted it that way. But when the white man destroyed his relationship with his women, he got his satisfaction from the pursuit of money. So the white man perverted himself and his women.

If some great psychoanalyst had emerged 300 years ago, he might have solved some of the white man's problems and prevented the brutalization of blacks by whites. But we were not rescued, and the intervening 300 years have served to diminish the importance of sexual antagonisms and replace them with a more crippling form of racism. Today, racism is integrated into the ideology of capitalism. I said that the sexual aspect is irrelevant because even if sexual tensions disappeared tomorrow, capitalism would still require a racist ideology in order to maintain a cheap labor base. Racism provides a mechanism by which the slave-master assures that society will have a ready supply of inferiors who can serve as slaves. Racism is as important to America's domestic colonialism as it was to foreign colonialism; it is an excuse to exploit and enslave a people because they have been defined as inferior. Colonialism is not built upon emotions; it is built upon behavior patterns that are designed to get a profit.

PLAYBOY: Do you think, as some revolutionaries do, that capitalism will have to be destroyed in order to end racism?

JACKSON: It is futile for us to think about ending racism; that is a psychological problem that seems beyond our attempts to affect it. We are fighting to end colonialism—oppression and exploitation. That requires power. The civil rights movement is a lifetime struggle for power. A man who is impotent, no matter how courteous and pleasant looking he is, is told to wait in the lobby. But if you have power, you can be an illiterate boor with tobacco juice running down your face and they will open the door for you. As I said earlier, we are going to organize to exert power on the big corporations. We are going to see to it that the resources of the ghetto are not siphoned off by outside groups. Right now, black exterminating companies don't even get the contracts to kill the ghetto's rats. But that's going to change. If a building goes up in the black community, we're going to build it. And we're going to stop anyone else from building it. If we can't get into those construction unions, they're not going to get into our neighborhoods.

PLAYBOY: But other neighborhoods don't control their business according to ethnic separation. They try to become part of what is traditionally called the American melting pot.

JACKSON: I hear that melting-pot stuff a lot, and all I can say is that we haven't been melted. We've been getting burned

on the bottom of the pot. We don't want anything that's different from the experience of the other ethnic groups. If you go into an Irish neighborhood, most of the businesses are run by Irishmen. The same is true in a Chinese or Jewish or Italian neighborhood. The difference between all of them and us is that they are all separate and independent groups, while we are separate and *dependent*. We want to control the vital elements of our lives: the school boards, the churches, the businesses, the police. The other groups are separate and control themselves, but they are separate and control *us* as well. That is a colonial situation. And the slums will exist as long as the colonists continue to turn a profit on them. As in any other revolution, we must fight for our independence.

PLAYBOY: But Dr. King once said that his aim was to "break open the city," so that ultimately there would be no separate black and white communities. Have you forsaken that goal?

JACKSON: No. But we recognize that a major part of the black community must first gravitate around itself, as other ethnic groups have done. In these areas, where our living together provides collective security, we ought to have the right to control it. But just as we have the private right to stay where we choose, we should also have the public right to participate in the public arena the way other people do. A man should choose where he wants to live, based on his income, or the fact that a house is close to his job, or because there's a good school nearby; he should not be refused because of his color. He should not be afraid of being bombed out by white bigots or of being harassed by police when he returns from work.

PLAYBOY: Aren't the open-housing laws changing this?

JACKSON: No. There is still segregation. In Chicago, blacks are 30 percent of the population, but they live on ten percent of the land. That congestion is inhuman and a prime target for exploitation by slumlords. People are cramped in body and spirit, and those who can't afford it are paying more for the space in which they live. We are locked away from the resources of the community. Black children who are sick are untended and left to play in their own filth in understaffed, ill-equipped hospitals. Four- and five-year-olds who were lucky enough to enter Head Start programs substantially raised their learning capacity, only to have it fall again as soon as they entered public school. Yet the teachers call the children incompetent. We have no choice about schools and hospitals, because public mobility is denied us. When a white mother decides to move because her neighborhood doesn't serve the needs of her children, the broker asks her where she would like to live; when a black mother faces that problem, she *knows* where she can live—and where she can't.

In white communities, there are about 3000 people per square mile; in the ghetto, there are 30,000 people in each square mile. The overcrowding produces bent and perverted people. They are made to suffer so much pain that they feel no need to conserve themselves or their neighborhoods, so they decide to destroy. These are the unheard—until they riot.

PLAYBOY: The majority of those who have participated in riots are in their teens or early 20s. Why?

JACKSON: These kids have an awful lot of reasons for hating America. Their experiences with the dominant culture are nearly all negative; whether it be in school or a courtroom or applying for a job, they are being either deprived or discriminated against. This sense of resentment is acute, and it's just a matter of time before they give up on themselves and this country. Many of them already have. If Richard Nixon really cared about America's future, he'd be showing up at Operation Breadbasket meetings and offering to join us in the fight to reclaim these kids' minds and souls, because they are going to have a large effect on that future. He might at least give us equal time and attention with the moon shot.

PLAYBOY: Weren't you impressed by the moon landing as a scientific achievement?

JACKSON: The only thing that moon shot did for me was turn my stomach. I was in a migrant worker's shack in Georgia a few weeks before the launch. It was about 115 degrees inside in the daytime. It had no toilet—not even an outhouse. No refrigerator, no running water. There was greasy butcher's paper over the space where there should have been windows. The shack was temporary residence for a family of four and they actually paid rent for it. If they hadn't rented it, they wouldn't have been allowed to work the harvest. They were all hungry. The kids' bodies were bloated and discolored. And they suffered from worms. This was *good* time for these people. When the harvest ends, they have to move on and they have nowhere to go. That Sunday night of the moon walk, in my mind's eye, I could see those poor, broken people walking four miles to the company store to watch the two astronauts jump around. Each step Armstrong took cost enough money to feed that family for 100 years.

America has spent 57 billion dollars since 1957 for the ego gratification of planting her flag on top of everyone else. One *tenth* of that was spent in the same period to inadequately feed the hungry. The psychological state of this nation is revealed by the fact that the men whose egos are swelled by putting a flag on a dead rock would not feel the slightest sense of accomplishment from the more humane task of feeding hungry people.

PLAYBOY: Are you encouraged by Nixon's proposals about black capitalism?

JACKSON: Not very much. It is a limited vision to make a few people rich, whereas SCLC's Poor Peoples' Campaign proposes a decent economic base for all people. Dr. King died talking about raising the level of dignity for all men. The difference between Dr. King and Mr. Nixon is the difference between a prophet and a politician. I don't believe the Government has plans for the extensive development of the black community. If it did, then the Job Corps would not have been curtailed recently. Even more serious is the Government's lack of understanding of the problems of the potential black businessman and its failure to develop programs to help him.

PLAYBOY: White businessmen object to such demands on the grounds that blacks don't deserve Government considerations that aren't extended also to whites.

JACKSON: The Government aids white businesses all the time—in the areas in which they are endangered. It subsidizes airlines and railroads. It sets up tariffs to protect textile businesses from cheap foreign imports. The black man is endangered as a businessman because of his substandard education, and the Government should be offering technical and advisory services to blacks.

PLAYBOY: What kind of services?

JACKSON: There are some basic areas where the black businessman can use Government help. One is feasibility studies that will tell a man if his idea is sound. Another, of course, is capital, which should be lent according to the soundness of a business idea, rather than withheld reflexively in accordance with impossibly strict notions of what constitutes "a bad risk." If a black man came up with the idea for the next generation's Xerox, he probably couldn't get the money to develop it. Next, the Government should help him get his foot in the market's door, so that the black man can at least have a fair chance. This is one area in which Operation Breadbasket has been very successful; we've gotten chain stores such as Jewel and A & P to give shelf space to black products. Then the Government should provide real vocational training. Even if a black kid, who never intends to go to college, graduates from high school, he can't fix the wiring in the house, can't run a machine, can't lay a brick.

And the vocational training should apply also to those who are already running a black business. We helped increase a black man's business from \$12,000 to \$160,000 in four months. But he couldn't grow with it. He had to pull his business back down to the size of his mind; he had to feel the money, count it in his hands. He couldn't handle a balance sheet, couldn't write notes for working capital before his receipts came in. That man can't go to Harvard Business School—but if the Small Business Administration and President Nixon were serious,

there'd be an operation Head Start for the black entrepreneur. The way it is now, a black with talent has to choose to work in the security of a big white company. And his sapped spirit will never produce anything on its own. Black businesses, on the other hand, are a step on the road to freedom. Black products are a focus for a pride in black ability. We can't just consume what the white folks decide to make for us. Consumption leads to fatness, but production leads to freedom. A producer is free to make decisions, but a man who only consumes is a prisoner whose decisions are made by others.

PLAYBOY: Breadbasket's aims, if fulfilled, seem likely to create more middle-class blacks. Do you think there will be strong class divisions between black middle and lower classes as the former get farther away from the ghetto?

JACKSON: I don't think we will have significant class divisions. No matter how wealthy he gets, the black man can rarely buy a house where he wants to; he is still subject to the whim of any white policeman who doesn't like his looks; he is still going to be tried, if accused of a crime, by a jury of his white nonpeers. And these facts bind him firmly with his destitute brother.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the young militants' derisive notion that every successful black is an Uncle Tom?

JACKSON: I think it's important to be sensitive to who Uncle Tom is. Uncle Tom is not our enemy. He grew up in the ghetto; he went to bad schools. He's a successful black hustler who bends and smiles before the white man in order to provide for his children. He's not a man who sits around thinking up ways to hurt black people. There's nothing wrong with a Southern boy who grew up in a shack with an outhouse wanting a real home. The jobs we once picketed to get are now being derided as Uncle Tom jobs. But the black *bourgeoisie* is still very close to the roots, if for no other reason than the fact that in the colonial system, he can't get too far. Blacks don't move to white society for joy, fulfillment, good music or tasty meals. They move to get away from bad schools and apartments where the trash isn't collected. They aren't moving away from blacks but from the rats.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that there's no disunity among blacks?

JACKSON: There is an unfortunate division among blacks now that is set off by a certain self-righteousness, a competition for being the blackest. But we must never forget that Nat Turner was middle class, as were Frederick Douglass and Dr. King—and even Stokely Carmichael. We will not be trapped into glorifying ignorance and poverty. That will not improve the lives of black people.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree with young radicals who feel that blacks who are assimilated into the economy will become new

cogs in the corporate machine?

JACKSON: We want to create a new value system that will produce a generation of black liberators, not exploiters. You can't ask a black man not to work because America's value system is perverted. But I would hope that when the black man gets a job in a company that is part of the military-industrial complex, he will organize in a union that is as concerned with basic values as it is with decent wages. Instead of producing war matériel for an unjust and immoral war, the union could pressure the company into producing goods that will help and heal people. The virtuous and vicious aspects of our economy are interrelated. We produce more food and clothing—and guns—than we need; we have the capacity to save more people from malice and disease than any other nation in the history of the world, and to *kill* more people than any other nation in the history of the world. No one attacks our ability to build X-ray machines or washing machines. Our national priorities are the real problem.

PLAYBOY: Can blacks change them?

JACKSON: This is the challenge of Operation Breadbasket. The businessmen we help, for example, are discouraged from getting rich and leaving the ghetto. We develop profit sharing; we try to make it *our* company as much as the owner's. We encourage a dialog between owner and employee, and we encourage participatory democracy.

PLAYBOY: Can Breadbasket help blacks outside the ghetto as well as within it?

JACKSON: Yes. Let me give you an example of how it can work—a case of real soul power, where blacks had the integrity to stick out a crisis and aid one another over thousands of miles. When the most recent Voting Rights Bill was passed, black Alabama farmers found that they weren't able to find markets for their products anymore. Whites were retaliating for their new political power. On top of that, George Wallace prevented them from borrowing money, so they couldn't expand economically, because of the combined pressures of racism and capitalism. There were 1500 of them—all farming small plots. Instead of quitting, they formed the Southwest Alabama Farmers' Cooperative. They planted and harvested their crops and then brought them to Chicago. We at Breadbasket then went to the supermarkets in the ghetto and told the owners that they would either put the brothers' products on the shelves or face boycotts. They accepted the produce. The brothers in Alabama could farm there and have an open outlet in Chicago. We were able to do this out of a sense of "peoplehood." That's my kind of black nationalism—blacks helping one another on a national scale.

PLAYBOY: Isn't it one of the great fears of Southern whites that blacks—who outnumber them—will usurp their place in

society if they ever win enough economic and political power?

JACKSON: The problem here is that the poor white and the poor black have mutual fear. Poor blacks fear that if poor whites aren't eliminated, they won't be able to eat, and the poor whites feel just the same way in reverse. The historical difference is that poor whites in the South have controlled the police and the military and have thereby maintained power over the blacks. We in the Poor Peoples' Campaign believe that the basic anxiety of whites is an irrational fear of extermination—a fear that can be removed with a guaranteed income, with guaranteed medical care and education. Dr. King was firm in his resolve that black power must be secondary to peoples' power. When the economic base of all the people is raised, racism will decline. As the Poor Peoples' Campaign gets stronger, racism will lose its hold on the consciousness of the white poor.

PLAYBOY: Do you honestly think, as Dr. King did, that there's going to be a movement of the poor that will include whites, blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Indians?

JACKSON: It's inevitable. If our good sense doesn't connect us through affirmation, then America's greed will lock us together by negation. False racial pride has divided the lower class, but we must stop defining and separating ourselves because of skin color. We should define ourselves by our economic position and shift the fight from a horizontal confrontation of poor black versus poor white to a confrontation of "have" versus "have not." Dr. King could have been the suture that connected the various bones of the bottom classes. Just two weeks before his assassination, there was a meeting of a dozen representative ethnic groups in SCLC's Atlanta office. That was the beginning of something really new, and it is continuing. For just one example, Dr. Abernathy marched with César Chávez and Operation Breadbasket supports the grape strike as if it were our own project, by boycotting and picketing Jewel Tea and other stores where California table grapes are sold.

PLAYBOY: But do you really think that the white poor are going to join you?

JACKSON: The white poor have always been distracted from demanding their rights; they've been too embarrassed to admit their deprivation. They've nourished themselves on the meager psychic diet of racism. But during the Illinois Hunger Campaign, we offered poor whites food and they digested it. In East St. Louis, Illinois, a white man named Hicks addressed a congregation of hunger marchers. Mr. Hicks has nine children and works five and six shifts of day labor a week but still can't make enough to feed his family or even to put a shack over their heads. Mr. Hicks and his family were taken in by black folks. They

shared equally, and it was the first time in his life, he said, that he felt any sense of security. There are a lot more Mr. Hixses out there who just haven't realized yet that they don't have to suffer alone, that a massive cooperative effort by the poor class is the only answer. United in a class struggle, we can force the redistribution of wealth in America.

PLAYBOY: The idea of class war, hot or cold, has always been associated with the theories of socialism. Do you think of yourself as a socialist?

JACKSON: I adhere to the ideals of my religion—that the earth is the Lord's and its food was intended for all men. The trend of the world today—in Sweden, Guinea and Britain, for example—is toward some form of democratic socialism, where men eat because the ground is fertile. America stands in conflict with that trend by allowing a few people to control and distribute the food, rather than letting people eat because they are living. The truth, of course, is that this same America, where socialism is such a dirty word, is already operating in a sophisticated state of socialism for the rich, while the poor live in a crude state of classic capitalism.

PLAYBOY: Please explain that.

JACKSON: The people in this society who follow the Protestant ethic and work long hours by the sweat of their brow are the poor. They work at the hardest jobs and often still don't get enough money to pass the poverty level. Even when they try to break out, it's an attempt to start a street-corner business, where the rules of classic capitalism prevail. The poor storekeeper, for example, doesn't control his market through advertising; he can't float a bond issue and use other people's money to run his business. But the rich man has socialism. We've got 6536 farmers in this country who receive \$25,000 not to work. That's socialism. The campuses expand, chopping pieces of land out of black neighborhoods, with the financial help of the National Education Act. Even wealthy schools for rich men's sons are state supported. The interstate highway program, none of which benefits those who can't afford a car, is 90 percent Federally financed. There wouldn't be a trucking industry without Government help. The list is endless and includes the oil companies and their depletion allowance, the railroads, the airlines and airports, the power companies. The rich talk about tax shelters and tariff protections, while the poor talk about sweat and blood.

PLAYBOY: But isn't welfare a form of socialism for the poor?

JACKSON: As it now stands, welfare is a form of humiliation. It is demeaning and dehumanizing. Men use money; welfare recipients use stamps. Men have privacy; welfare recipients have no privacy and can be visited any time of day or night. Their most intimate relation-

ships can be called into question by people who are indifferent to them. Instead of abusing the poor, this nation has to understand that the welfare recipient is a product of the success of our economy. The unskilled black man whose job has been lost to technology today will be joined shortly by the unskilled white man whose job will be lost to the next technological advance. Either we see these men as having been freed by technology, perhaps to fulfill a creative role, or we see these men as having worked hard only to find themselves enslaved in poverty by the same technology. Whichever perspective one has, we must evolve a subsidy that will preserve these precious human lives, not destroy them as welfare has.

PLAYBOY: Were you encouraged by President Nixon's new welfare proposals?

JACKSON: I was thoroughly discouraged. I watched Nixon the night he delivered that welfare address. My anger was tempered only by my incredulity at the immensity of his con job. He lied for nearly an hour and didn't even crack a smile. He asked the country to think of him as a great humanitarian, but we weren't fooled. Behind all those promises is the single fact that the states are going to retain control of most of the Nixon program. When the states had the power, black people couldn't vote, couldn't ride in the front of a bus, couldn't drink from any public water fountain, couldn't use any john they wanted. Now Nixon says to Thurmond and Stennis, "Take care of them poor folks." Right this minute, there are 40 states violating the welfare laws. We don't need a redistribution of welfare-disbursement stations in this country; we need a redistribution of wealth. The President challenged the poor to go to work, without saying what he would do to improve the lot of those who *can't* work. I'll be encouraged when the President challenges the rich to show their humanity and grant to the poor their basic rights as human beings.

PLAYBOY: The white lower middle class is becoming quite vocal about its opposition to welfare in any form for those they characterize as too lazy to work. What's your reaction?

JACKSON: The fact is that the poor work the hardest and have always done so. We made cotton king, cooked other people's food when we had none of our own, stooped to clean bathrooms. Now we are unskilled, because the schools don't teach us, because less money is spent on the education of blacks than is spent on whites. A state of despair has set in for those in the black community who have been told no too often, and perhaps they can never be healed. When white people say they know a man on welfare who is too lazy to work, I say that may be so. But the man they see is a dried-up prune. I ask them, "Did you see that man when he was a boy? Did you see him when he

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said, 'Momma, do you have a piece of bread?' Did you see him before hope was snuffed out by despair?' The white middle class is paying less tax money to support welfare mothers than it is to support the farm industry. I don't hear them complaining about that. The bulk of their tax money goes to subsidizing the rich and fighting wars abroad—wars fought by the sons of welfare mothers, not by the middle-class kids who go to college. The middle class invests in America with its tax dollars, but the poor have to invest their lives.

PLAYBOY: Is it possible to raise a family on the funds provided by welfare? Many claim it isn't.

JACKSON: Let me put it this way: If I give you 22 cents for a meal, you know pretty well what you're going to get to eat. I thought I knew what poverty was all about until I went on our hunger campaign. I saw children eating red clay. Doctors call it pica when people who don't get sufficient food eat things that have the appearance of food. I saw a mother give her child saltines and onions for breakfast and send her off to school on that. I saw a white mother with four kids, one of whom, a boy, had leukemia. He drank all the milk the family was allotted on a food-stamp supplement, and it wasn't enough even for him. She took him everywhere in a little wagon, the kind kids play with. He was frail and helpless, and the mother was exhausted; the entire family looked bloodless and frightened, as if they would never have a moment's joy. I can understand why they might feel that way, living as they must with the fact that there is a ceiling on the welfare allotment but no ceiling on the rent or the food prices or the amount of tragedy a family can suffer. The insufficient welfare funds are especially damaging to babies. Eighty percent of the brain develops during the three months immediately before birth and the first three years of life. The minds of welfare children, who cannot get enough to eat, are stricken early.

PLAYBOY: Why don't welfare allowances provide adequate support?

JACKSON: Welfare allotments tend to be about one third of the minimal standard of living as defined by the Government. In Texas, New York and California this year, even that meager appropriation was cut. Furthermore, rents and food prices are higher in poor areas than in middle-class areas, so the poor must spend more, even though they have less. The result of this deprivation is that the black child goes to school without breakfast, cannot afford lunch at school and cannot look forward to a decent supper at night. His hunger is such a distraction that he is not motivated to learn. All of these elements combine to place him farther and farther behind in school. He has no goals, no

hero images, no sense of purpose or identity. He is physically weaker than his white contemporaries and probably sickly, because he doesn't get medical care.

PLAYBOY: Earlier, you referred to the dominance of professional sports by black athletes. That doesn't fit with the image of physical weakness you just presented.

JACKSON: Some men will thrive even in a prison camp, so it isn't surprising that you'll find an occasional black youth who overcomes his poverty. But the important reason for the dominance of black athletes is that a high proportion of black men—both those who ate well and those who didn't—directed themselves toward athletics because the field was more open to them than any other. More blacks tried to be boxers because there was no point in trying to be a bookkeeper or a mathematician. A black man whose mind might have had great aptitude for math wouldn't have been trained by a ghetto school. It made more sense for him to try to be a ballplayer, even a third-rate one, because it was so unlikely that he'd have a fair chance to be anything else.

PLAYBOY: A persistent part of the white stereotype of the black man is that he runs faster and jumps higher than whites. But some anthropologists have claimed recently that there actually are genetic differences between white and black. Will this new evidence worsen the relationship between white and black?

JACKSON: It won't affect us. The black man has never needed to believe that there are differences; that's a white man's problem. Our natures are the same. Our urges and drives as people are the same. Mankind has one father, and that's time. It has one mother, and that's nature. Both of these life processes are sound and consistent and universal. The third process is brotherhood, which is all messed up, because white folks have tried to withdraw from it. The eternal existential dilemmas of fate and death, guilt and condemnation, emptiness and meaninglessness are the same for all men. But our relationship, based upon distorted information peddled by white folks who reject the humanity of others, has been perverted.

PLAYBOY: What are the psychological and cultural differences between white and black, if any?

JACKSON: Slavery is our cultural heritage and it should have been a thoroughly destructive one. But instead of seeing ourselves as slaves from Africa brought over to serve the lusts and wants of white people, a providential way of seeing our slavery is that we are missionaries sent from Africa by God to save the human race. Who else is in a position so close to the Pentagon, the greatest threat to the world's existence? Who else is in a position to literally redirect the most powerful economy on earth? Who else in

the world is in the enemy's kitchen and his schoolroom? We are, perhaps, the only ethnic group in the world that has the power to redirect the destiny of white America. Neither China nor Russia nor France nor England could do it. I don't look for white folks to give me any direction. My experience has taught me that white people are spiritually impotent, by and large, because all they've really produced is a lot of goods and services and a lot of death.

PLAYBOY: That's a sweeping condemnation. Would you say that the late Norman Thomas, to name one of many men, was spiritually impotent?

JACKSON: No, he was certainly a spiritual man, and you could find others. The point is that such a man is not representative of the white American culture. In fact, the secondary roles that genuinely humane white people are forced to play is indicative of what I'm trying to say. Black society chooses to be led by its prophets, white society by its hustlers. The men of highest sensibility in white society find themselves rebelling from it—just as blacks must rebel. America is known not for her capacity to love and heal but for her capacity to organize and kill. America has an aristocratic, military definition of man. American men judge themselves by their wealth, status and power, not by their intelligence, compassion or creativity. That's why the idea of looking for racial equality here is a farce. To become equal to white folks would be to become part of the greatest tradition of killing in the history of the world.

PLAYBOY: That might sound to some not only like a blatant overstatement but like a proclamation of black supremacy.

JACKSON: I don't know what it sounds like, but I know what the record will indicate. There is no evidence of Africa invading Europe, of her early advanced civilizations killing or enslaving other nations. Historically, blacks have not been the aggressors in war, not even here in America. We did not mobilize to go to war for our long-overdue justice, but there have been wars of injustice waged against us. The profound men in this culture have been black—Frederick Douglass, for example, who was more pertinent than Lincoln on the subject of slavery and the liberation of mankind. And the crusader for justice in Mississippi was Medgar Evers, not Jim Eastland. In New York, Malcolm was pertinent, not Nelson Rockefeller, who did not bat an eye when he approved the welfare cuts. The one who cried out for peace in the world and meant it was not the white leader, President Johnson; it was the black leader, Dr. King. During the past 15 years, Dr. Abernathy has been more relevant than any American President. Blacks have striven for moral dignity and, by contrast with America's state of immorality, we appear to be moral

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW (continued from page 188)

supremacists, not black supremacists.

PLAYBOY: The war in Biafra seems every bit as brutal as any other war. Black life there seems to be as cheap to blacks as you say it is to whites in this country.

JACKSON: The Nigerians and Biafrans are fighting with white men's weapons. They are fighting a war that is based on a white man's division of Africa, and the cause of the division was an earlier economic colonialism. The war is an unfortunate aberration and the signs of white meddling are everywhere in it.

PLAYBOY: During the 1968 teachers' strike in New York City, there was evidence of deep-rooted black hostility toward Jews. Is anti-Semitism consistent with your claim of black moral supremacy?

JACKSON: In the first place, there were really few examples of black anti-Semitism, and these examples were blown out of all proportion by the teachers' union, which benefited by the dissemination of fear. More significantly, though, I don't think you can characterize blacks as anti-Semites. We have never been obsessed with the Jew as Christ killer. But our relationship with the Jew has changed as the black movement has changed. When blacks began to confront the Southern white power structure, most of which was WASP Baptist and Methodist, Jews gave us great support, both financial and moral, and a real kinship developed. But once the movement moved North and the problem was defined not just in terms of social segregation but in terms of economic colonialism, the Jew began to be revealed as landlord and shopowner. Of course, he is more conspicuous than the Protestant, because his name is likely to identify his ethnic background. And he is also more sensitive: It is much easier to embarrass or humiliate a Jew than either a Protestant or a Catholic, because, unlike the others, the Jew immediately identifies with suffering.

As blacks have emerged, the Jew has been there as teacher and shopkeeper, and there has been an inevitable friction. But I think the mood of the blacks is more one of anti-colonialism than of anti-Semitism. For blacks cannot afford to be anti-people; no matter who the people are, they must be anti-evil. I think the Jews who are most concerned about anti-Semitism, however, should keep in mind that blacks have not exploited Jews at all. We have not owned anything in the Jewish community—no clothing stores, banks, food stores. The Jewish community, like most others, has a left and a right wing—some who operate in a tradition of justice and others who violate that tradition. Rather than develop a persecution complex, perhaps it ought to expend some of the energy it spends complaining about black anti-Semitism on the Jewish merchants who

are known to be exploiters and tend to pull the reputation of the Jewish community down.

PLAYBOY: Jews, along with Irish, Italian and other immigrant groups, are often held up as an example that the blacks, if they were industrious enough, could emulate. The premise is that those groups were poor and lived in ghettos but were able to overcome that experience and join the American mainstream. Why hasn't that happened to blacks?

JACKSON: First, those groups came here voluntarily and were always free. We came here involuntarily and are still not wholly free. The other immigrant groups are white and could lose their identity and merge with the majority when it was necessary; with a few technical skills or a decent education, it was a simple matter for them to bypass prejudice. Their families were not destroyed and their sense of historical continuity was preserved. Most importantly, they did not suffer the tremendous color stigma of the white man.

Historically, there was a conspiracy to hold us down. We were enslaved, then locked into plantations, as we are now locked into ghettos. When America finally released our physical bonds in 1865, it was as if we had been in jail for 200 years and were let out without a road map or a dime to go to the city. There was no attempt to help us overcome the psychological or economic hardships of slavery. Many blacks didn't survive; and of those who did, most had to pervert their natures—become invisible men, as Ralph Ellison wrote, become hidden, for it was too dangerous to assert one's real identity, one's manhood. No other ethnic group was faced by a hostile white society that wanted to castrate it both physically and psychologically.

PLAYBOY: Then today's black militance is a quest to resurrect that manhood.

JACKSON: One thing that I have to say right off is that there's nothing to be learned from the white man's idea of manhood. An American man is identified by his weapon, by what he controls. American men are obsessed; they are gratified by making money they can't even spend, which is a kind of emptiness of the soul. Real manhood should be defined by the ability to help and to heal, by an extension of the mind, by knowledge exerting its power over ignorance. Real manhood comes from helping others be free, by breaking the bonds of slavery.

PLAYBOY: Do you mean that metaphorically?

JACKSON: Only partly. Many of us have internalized slavery and behave like slaves, responding to the slavemaster when he calls. In some communities, we must fight our own people because they maintain the

slave institutions. They are still in awe of Pharaoh and are afraid to confront him. That is a form of slavery. The slave psychology works on a subtle level that warps the black mind. It has been drummed into blacks that whites are the creators and producers and thinkers. Blacks whom we might have respected were taken from us. George Washington Carver's image is one of a docile creature—an old man in a laboratory, bowing to a white child. The fact is that he developed over 300 elements from the peanut and almost singlehandedly revived the Southern economy. A black man, Daniel Hale Williams, was the first open-heart surgeon. There are many, many other examples, but the point is that blacks never knew about them. It was easy to preserve the image of the dull-witted, slow-talking and -thinking black bumbler. There is still a need among blacks for white validation of their efforts. If Tommie Smith and John Carlos had a race tomorrow and both broke their records for the 220-meter dash, and the race were held on a black campus, where all the judges were black, black people wouldn't believe it—and neither would whites. But if it were a white track meet, there'd be no problem. As for our churches, they gave up their soul—and I mean that in both senses—to copy white church styles. That's why at Operation Breadbasket meetings, which are deeply based in religion, we have a band and a Gospel choir and consciously try to capture the rhythm of our people.

PLAYBOY: Is the slave psychology the reason for your own fieriness and emotionalism when you address a black congregation?

JACKSON: Certainly. I am seeking converts—not necessarily to religion, although there's that, too. But I want to make my people realize their own selfhood. I begin each service with a chant that says, "I am somebody." It also says, "I may be poor and I may be on welfare, but I am somebody." Because black people have to learn that they have rights just because they're alive. They've got to stop putting themselves down because of an induced inferiority complex. The slave psychology was apparent when Dr. King came out against the Vietnam war. He had all the credentials you could ask for: Nobel Prize winner, an international leader, a scholar and a Ph.D. But blacks said he had a lot of audacity; he's a preacher and should confine himself to civil rights. But when Robert Kennedy and Senator McGovern took the same position, then it was all right. And after Memphis, when SCLC's James Bevel expressed Dr. King's contempt for capital punishment, he was scorned by the black community. He said Dr. King would have wanted James Earl Ray rehabilitated, would have said to fight hatred but spare the hater. Bevel also pointed out the irony of trying to obtain

justice by sacrificing a two-bit waiter for a billion-dollar black prophet. But blacks said he was crazy. Then Ted Kennedy said that Sirhan's life should be spared because his brother Robert was against capital punishment. The black community immediately cited Teddy as a great man of justice who didn't become vindictive in the face of personal tragedy. This is a painful indication of our self-contempt. We must stop looking to whites to validate our worth; we must look within for beauty and strength and courage.

PLAYBOY: Your own self-confidence, as contrasted with Dr. King's humility, seems to be of formidable dimensions, and you've been accused of messianic impulses. Do you see yourself as the next great national black leader?

JACKSON: First of all, Dr. King was not humble; he was forthright and audacious. He was killed for challenging white power. As for me, I am confident of my abilities as a social analyst, but I have no illusions of grandeur. My job is to proclaim liberty, to preach unity, to bind up broken hearts. I am just taking care of my assignment. Besides, anyone in public life in this violent society who would make such long-range plans is a fool.

PLAYBOY: You certainly expose yourself to the risk of assassination as much as any man. Do you think that you may be subconsciously seeking martyrdom?

JACKSON: I want to live. I've got no hang-up with that. But a man must be willing to die for justice. Death is an inescapable reality, and men die daily, but good deeds live forever. An assassin believes that you can kill the dream by killing the dreamer; that is an error.

PLAYBOY: Would you have any special message to leave with black people if you were killed?

JACKSON: Yes. Don't send flowers. Don't come around with your tears. Picket. Go to P. T. A. meetings. Fight for higher wages. If I die tonight and you wake up tomorrow, make the most of it.

PLAYBOY: You've been quite sick a few times this year, once with a form of anemia, and also with some very debilitating viruses. Yet you hardly let up on your activities, rarely sleep and constantly drive yourself toward exhaustion. Why?

JACKSON: Because I have a sense of urgency about what has to be done. It is not the thought of death so much as it is the crying need for justice. Perhaps both facts motivate me simultaneously. I do feel that I have to fulfill my work in an appointed time. I would like to sleep, but ideas come to me in the night and wake me. I think I'm drawing my stamina from a spiritual source that has been allotted to me; for that reason, I have no choice but to keep on driving. You can't devote the energy necessary to confront Pharaoh unless you are spiritually consumed by the need for liberation. But that is social consciousness, not a messianic need to be worshiped. There are

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some aspects of glory attached to having the privilege to lead, but none of the agony ever gets publicity, because television cameras don't record people tossing and turning in their beds at night.

PLAYBOY: Inasmuch as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is basically a religious group, it's understandable that religion plays a large role in your life. But what appeal can the church have for a cynical 20-year-old kid from the ghetto?

JACKSON: The black church is relevant because it has provided a home for our rebellion. It has cherished our people. The white church, on the other hand, worships *worship*, not Christ nor love nor brotherhood. God is very sick here; the God of justice and liberty is almost nonexistent. Christianity is universal, but the American flag flies higher than the cross in American churches; and when wartime comes, universal love goes out the window. If Americans had a true God consciousness, they could not leave the church on Sunday and shield their eyes from the hungry.

But there is extraordinary relevance in the actual teaching of Christ. If you love people, you will not destroy them in war; if you love deeply, you will distribute the goods of the earth that the Father provided, so that people will be fed and housed. That is the Jesus I identify with. His was a program for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving company to the lonely.

PLAYBOY: In the past, some critics have

regarded Christianity as an impediment to black liberation; blacks were supposed to have been content to get their reward in heaven. Did you consciously evolve this activist approach to Christianity?

JACKSON: My religious philosophy can be summed up in an old Southern story about two farmers. One farmer was most concerned about his duty to God. He attended church every day and worked his fields in the afternoon. His neighbor never attended church and never paid any attention to religious rituals. The first farmer was just eking out a living; the second farmer was getting twice the harvest from a lot the same size. Finally, the first farmer said to the second, "Brother, I don't understand. I've been working this land and doing my duty for God and asking His help. I go to church each day. Yet I can't get ahead at all. You never take care of your religious obligations, yet you're getting all the bounty. What am I doing wrong?" The second farmer answered, "I don't know what you're talking to God all the time for. He doesn't know anything about farming. This place didn't produce *anything* when He had it all to Himself." That's the whole thing. God made it but man has to go out and do it.

PLAYBOY: In our interview with Dr. King four years ago, he said the aims of SCLC were removing the barriers of segregation, disseminating the creative philosophy of nonviolence and total integration of the Negro into American life. How

much have things changed since then?

JACKSON: Four years ago, SCLC was a Southern movement primarily concerned with social segregation. Blacks were defined as less than human and were not allowed to participate in public. We were "boys" and our goal was to be recognized as men. That drive was aimed at creating a moral consciousness, and one of our slogans was "Save the soul of America." I think that one of the reasons for impatience among blacks today, and the reason for the appeal of violence, is that we never before knew just how awful the secrets locked in America's soul really were. We didn't know then that America would bomb a people to pieces and side with the oppressors in order to preserve her financial investments. We didn't know then that the Northern liberal had better manners than Bull Connor but that his institutions were no less thoroughly racist. And we didn't know then that the capitalists who slandered us with cries of "Communist" were living high off the Government hog, while we were starving in the streets.

This education of ours has led to a change of mood. Our first concern now is not white America's soul; it is black America's body. We are justified in our impatience, because that body is hungry. When Moses had his illumination and realized that he could confront Pharaoh, the Bible says that Moses had to take his shoes off, because now he was on holy ground and the bushes were burning. Actually, the bushes were not burning; Moses was burning. His eyes were aflame—the skin had come off them. Black people today are burning; the skin is off their eyes. The movement is now in a resistance phase and we will no longer cooperate with the white slavemaster. Either we are going to live or America is going to die. The ghetto experience has not been a satisfying or a useful one, but it has given us inner resources—the ability to do much with very little.

I read in the white press how black people are dispirited and confused. White editorial writers claim that the civil rights movement is fragmented. That is not true; the movement is very together: The NAACP, which just saved the Voting Rights Bill, is doing its thing in Southern courts; the Urban League is doing its thing in industry; the Panthers are feeding kids in the streets; SCLC just had a political victory in Greene County, Alabama; Operation Breadbasket is thriving. It is white America that is at the crossroads. If she does not join us in the resurrection of her soul, in the fulfillment of her dream for all her people, then I foresee a day when little children in a schoolroom on the moon read in the history books about an empire that crumbled because all her power and might of arms could not cure the immoral greed that diseased her spirit.



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