

COINTELPRO: Teaching the FBI's War on the Black Freedom Movement

By URSULA WOLFE-ROCCA

STUDENT-SELECTED AND STUDENT-RUN current events discussions are a daily ingredient of my high school social studies classes. The first 20 minutes of every 90-minute class period, we read an excerpt from a recent newspaper article and discuss its significance. In the last few years, the discussions have been dominated by names that have piled up with sickening frequency: Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland. My students, mostly Asian American and white, live in Lake Oswego, one of the wealthiest cities in Oregon and a community that benefits from mostly

positive relationships with police. They struggle to understand a society that continues to allow Black lives to die at the hands of law enforcement.

This year, student attention has turned to how activists are responding to the racism in the criminal justice system, particularly the Black Lives Matter movement. In November 2015, a student brought in an *Oregonian* article, "Black Lives Matter: Oregon Justice Department Searched Social Media Hashtags." The article detailed the department's digital surveillance of people solely on the basis of their use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. My students thoughtfully discussed



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and debated whether tying #BlackLivesMatter to potential threats to police (the premise of the surveillance program) was justifiable, with most students agreeing with the Urban League and the American Civil Liberties Union that the U.S. Department of Justice acted improperly and potentially unlawfully.

But what was not noted in the *Oregonian* article was the historical resonance of this story, which recalls the ugly, often illegal, treatment of Black activists by the U.S. justice system during an earlier era of our history.

My students had little way of knowing about this story behind the story because mainstream textbooks almost entirely ignore COINTELPRO, the FBI's counterintelligence program of the 1960s and '70s that targeted a wide range of activists, including the Black freedom movement.

COINTELPRO offers me, as a teacher of classes on government, a treasure trove of opportunities to illustrate key concepts, including the rule of law, civil liberties, social protest, and due process, yet it is completely absent from my school's government book, *Magruder's American Government* (Pearson).

One of the options for U.S. history teachers in my school district is *American Odyssey* (McGraw Hill). In a section titled "The Movement Appraised," the book sums up the end of the Civil Rights Movement:

Without strong leadership in the years following King's death, the civil rights movement floundered. Middle-class Americans, both African American and white, tired of the violence and the struggle. The war in Vietnam

and crime in the streets at home became the new issue at the forefront of the nation's consciousness.

Here we find a slew of problematic assertions about the Civil Rights Movement, plus a notable absence. Nowhere does *American Odyssey* note that, in addition to King's death and Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement also had to contend with a declaration of war made against it by agencies of its own government.

American Odyssey is not alone in its omission. *The American Journey* (Pearson), another U.S. history textbook used in my school, also ignores COINTELPRO.

The only textbook in my district that does mention COINTELPRO is *America: A Concise History* (St. Martin's), a college-level text used to teach AP history classes. Its summary and analysis takes exactly one sentence: "In the late 1960s SDS and other antiwar groups fell

victim to police harassment, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and CIA agents infiltrated and disrupted radical organizations." Without context, without emphasis, without a real-life illustration of what "harassment," "infiltrated," and "disrupted" actually meant in the lives of those targeted, this sentence is suffocated into meaninglessness.

Why do textbook writers and publishers leave out this crucial episode in U.S. history? Perhaps they take their cues from the FBI itself. According to the FBI website:

The FBI began COINTELPRO—short for Counterintelligence Program—in 1956 to disrupt the activities of the Communist Party of the United States. In the 1960s, it



Graphic illustration of the impact of COINTELPRO by Black Panther Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, 1976.

was expanded to include a number of other domestic groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Black Panther Party. All COINTELPRO operations were ended in 1971. Although limited in scope (about two-tenths of one percent of the FBI's workload over a 15-year period), COINTELPRO was later rightfully criticized by Congress and the American people for abridging first amendment rights and for other reasons.

Apparently, mainstream textbooks have accepted—hook, line, and sinker—the FBI's whitewash of COINTELPRO as “limited in scope” and applying to only a few organizations. But COINTELPRO was neither “limited in scope” nor applied only to the organizations listed in the FBI's description. Under then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, COINTELPRO included legal harassment, intimidation, wiretapping, infiltration, smear campaigns, and blackmail, and resulted in countless prison sentences and, in the case of Black Panther Fred Hampton and others, murder. This scope of operations can hardly be described as “limited.” Moreover, these tactics were employed against every national civil rights organization, the antiwar movement (particularly on college campuses), Students for a Democratic Society, the American Indian Movement, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, and others.

A better way to understand the wide net cast by COINTELPRO is the final report of the Church Committee. In the early 1970s, following a number of allegations in the press about overreaching government intelligence operations, a Senate committee, chaired by Democrat Frank Church of Idaho, began an investigation of U.S. intelligence agencies. Their 1976 report states: “The unexpressed major premise of much of COINTELPRO is that the Bureau [FBI] has a role in maintaining the existing social order, and that its efforts should be aimed toward combating those who threaten that order.” In other words, *anyone* who challenged the status quo of racism, militarism, and capitalism in American society was fair game for surveillance and harassment. Rather than “limited,” the FBI's scope potentially included all social

and political activists, an alarming and outrageous revelation in a country purportedly governed by the protections of free speech and assembly in the First Amendment.

Bringing COINTELPRO into the Classroom

I post a recent headline on the overhead screen: “Top Officer in Iraq: ‘We must neutralize this enemy.’” I ask my 11th-grade U.S. history students, “So what does the word *neutralize* mean in this headline?” Well-schooled in the popular culture of war and violence, they have no trouble with this task.

“Kill.”

“Destroy.”

“Eliminate.”

“Get rid of.”

I write their definitions on the board and explain we will come back to them in a bit. I say that in this lesson we are going to look at a bunch of old documents from the FBI. I try to build excitement by telling students that these documents were classified top secret and not meant to be seen by everyday folks like us. I continue: “In fact, we only found out about them because a group of peace activists broke into an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, and stuffed suitcases full of documents—selecting the night of a much-anticipated Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier fight so the security guard would be distracted.”

I post the first document on the overhead for the class to analyze together. It's a memo sent by Hoover in 1967 to FBI field offices throughout the country: “Black Nationalist—Hate Groups” (see Resources). In it, Hoover instructs his agency “to assign responsibility for following and coordinating this new counterintelligence program to an experienced and imaginative Special Agent well-versed in investigations relating to black nationalist, hate-type organizations.”

At this point in the unit, students have compared the activism of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Malcolm X,

and the Black Panther Party, analyzing the tactics and social critiques brought to bear by different strands of the movement. Students draw on this background when I ask them to predict which organizations will be targeted under Hoover's counterintelligence program. "So guys, who are the 'hate-type organizations' referred to in this document?"

A number of hands shoot up—students think they've got this one. Invariably, their first guess is that the FBI must have targeted the Black Panthers. They explain that the Panthers advocated Black Power and self-defense, and encouraged members to own firearms. Students plausibly predict that if the FBI were to treat any Black activist groups as a potential threat, those with the most revolutionary rhetoric and those bearing arms would have been first in line.

"Well, you're right," I say. "So, were the Black Panthers a threat to American security? Did the FBI have a justifiable reason to be tracking them?"

There are always some students who bristle at the militancy of groups like the Black Panthers. Whether it is the Panthers' use of the term "pig" to describe law enforcement, or Malcolm X's reference to "white devils," or the philosophy of self-defense, my students struggle with a discomfort they do not feel when we are talking about SNCC's sit-ins. I try to help students separate their discomfort about the group's rhetoric from the question of whether the threat they posed to the U.S. government was a security threat or a political one.

I remind students of prior lessons—the Panthers' 10-Point Program, their careful adherence to state gun laws to protect them from being charged on weapons infractions, their street patrols to monitor police violence, their breakfast for children programs, their freedom schools.

After some discussion, a consensus usually emerges among my students: White America may not have liked their message or their tactics, but the Black Panthers represented a political challenge. They weren't doing anything to merit the FBI response.

I continue: "But the Black Panthers were not the only ones targeted. Let's take a look at the other groups on the FBI's list."

I reveal the next page of the document, which states the groups to which "intensified attention under this program will be afforded," and I ask students to call out other organizations they see listed that we have studied in this unit.

"SNCC!"

"SCLC!"

"CORE!"

I add some humor by acting confused: "Wait a second, can you guys help me out here? Remind me again, who was the head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference?"

Before I am even done with my act of feigned ignorance, students are shouting, "King! King was the leader of SCLC!"

"Oh yes, that's right! Now help me again because I can't seem to remember: Was he a member of a 'hate-type' organization?"

Students roll their eyes at my poor acting and adamantly confirm: "No! He was all about nonviolence!"

Now I get serious and pause for some analysis and questioning: "OK, folks, what is going on here? Why would the FBI target activist organizations, including those that were explicitly nonviolent, like SCLC and CORE?"

Students offer a few suggestions:

"Maybe Hoover was really racist and didn't want the Civil Rights Movement to succeed."

"Maybe the FBI worried that the nonviolent organizations were going to become more militant."

But this discussion usually ends soon after it begins. Students are flummoxed. They have grown up in a world that glorifies and mythologizes King; they cannot make sense of the notion that U.S. security agencies viewed him as a threat.

In spite of its brevity, this discussion is important. It frames the inquiry to come by cultivating students' curiosity and confusion.

Now I present to students the final part of the document. This is where Hoover reveals the goal of COINTELPRO:

The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities

of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder.

I ask a student to read this quote aloud since hearing the words *disrupt, misdirect, discredit*, and *neutralize* underscores their sinister meaning.

I remind the class of the earlier definitions of neutralize on the board. I ask, “So what is the FBI saying it wants to do to SCLC, SNCC, CORE, and the Black Panthers?”

Students look at the board, but they can’t quite believe what is written there, so they add question marks.

“Kill?”

“Destroy?”

“Eliminate?”

“Get rid of?”

Most years, there will be a student who interjects at this point to suggest that maybe neutralize means something different in this context; surely it can’t be as bad as I make it sound. This disbelief is the perfect tone to set for the next step of the lesson, when students delve into the documents and see for themselves what the FBI meant by *neutralize*.

The Documents

I arrange the desks into groups of four. I provide students packets of declassified memos (see Resources) from the COINTELPRO era. These documents are a representative sample of the scope and tactics of the program, and reveal the FBI’s use of infiltration, psychological warfare, legal harassment, and media manipulation against activists and organizations.

I also provide a note-taking worksheet to complete as students read and discuss. It asks them to identify which organizations and individuals are targeted and the tactics and methods of harassment

described in each document. I encourage students to tackle the documents together, reading aloud, talking, deciphering, and questioning as they go. These documents can be tough and the copy quality, with lots of redacting, is not always great. Since students are generally very engaged during this lesson, it can get loud.

I spend the class period circulating among the tables answering clarifying questions, checking for understanding, and encouraging groups

to consider how what they’re reading relates to earlier lessons. For example, the memo dated 9/27/68 says the Black Panther Party “is the most violence-prone organization of all the extremist groups now operating in the United States.” I might ask, “What activities by the Panthers are not mentioned anywhere in these documents?” Students recall the social dimensions of the Panthers, their community

programs, like health clinics, nutrition classes, and free breakfasts for children. My interjections remind students to read with a critical eye and to challenge the FBI’s language and characterizations.

COINTELPRO and Martin Luther King Jr.

Midway through the packet, students read about the FBI’s program of harassment against Martin Luther King Jr. When they arrive at these documents, I always know, because I start to hear a lot of this:

“Wait, what is this?”

“I am totally confused—this letter was sent to King?”

“Ms. Wolfe, we don’t understand document 6 at all.”

This is my cue to stop the group work and read the King documents together as a class, documents that reveal that through illegal wire-tapping, the FBI collected evidence of King’s extramarital affairs and used this evidence to try

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(unsuccessfully) to blackmail him. The documents show that the FBI not only attempted to discredit King, but also to get him to commit suicide.

It is hard to overstate how dumbfounded the students are by these revelations. How could the U.S. government participate in this level of harassment of a man they have been taught to embrace as a near-deity?

This is a perfect teaching opportunity to help establish the truth about King: He was not the watered-down, Hallmark-holiday caricature that has come to dominate our culture; in the eyes of people like Hoover, he was a dangerous radical who needed to be targeted.

The FBI and Hoover saw King as the radical who, in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” called out racial moderates for their gradualist approach to injustices that required immediate action; the radical whose opposition to the Vietnam War, famously expressed at Riverside Church, led him to describe the U.S. government as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today”; and the radical who warned Americans, “When machines and computers, profit motives, and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”

I do not always address all of these dimensions of King with my students, but even just one of these examples helps delineate the breadth of his critique of U.S. society and establish for students why the FBI might see him as a threat and a target of COINTELPRO.

King Was Human

At this moment in the lesson, students want to talk about King’s infidelity.

“Ms. Wolfe, please tell me it is not true that King cheated on his wife!”

“Wait, the FBI made that up, right? To make him look bad?”

I try to limit the length of this conversation, since it is obviously not directly related to the goals of my lesson, but I think it would be a mistake to shut down these heartfelt student questions.

“Yes,” I say. “It’s true, King did cheat on his wife.”

Most students seem saddened by this news and sometimes question whether King’s infidelity discredits and undermines his heroic status. I challenge kids to move beyond this all-or-nothing moral position: “Look, humans are multidimensional. We can be fantastic in one situation, but miserable in another. Imagine if your entire life’s accomplishments were ignored and you were judged only on the basis of the worst thing you ever did. Would that be fair?”

Students begrudgingly take my point but are still sad, as though they have just learned a dark secret about a close family member.

I wonder if there may be a hidden lesson in critical thinking when we reveal King’s moral imperfection to students. If we insist that our activist heroes demonstrate moral perfection—or if we hide their blemishes—do we not in some way transmit the message to young people that heroic action is something for a small elect, the untarnished few, not for imperfect people like you and me?

The Murder of Fred Hampton

We’ve clarified the goals of COINTELPRO and learned about the actual strategies, methods, and targets of the program. But, so far, COINTELPRO has been revealed only on paper. Now it is time to show students how the program damaged and destroyed people’s lives.

I show students an excerpt of the documentary *Eyes on the Prize*—part of the episode “A Nation of Law?” that details the story of Fred Hampton. Hampton was a former NAACP youth organizer who became the chair of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968. Hampton embodied what was powerful and promising about the Panthers. At just 20 years of age, he helped the Panthers establish a breakfast for children program and a free medical clinic on the South Side of Chicago. He taught political education classes and was working to create a multiracial “rainbow coalition” of Chicago youth groups that included the Blackstone Rangers (a



"You can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail the revolution." —Fred Hampton, a leader of Chicago's Black Panther Party who was killed during an FBI-sponsored police raid.

street gang), the Young Lords, and the Young Patriots, an organization of working-class white youth, often migrants from Appalachia. Howard Saffold, a member of the Chicago Police Department at the time, eloquently sums up law enforcement's concerns about Hampton's coalition-building:

The Panthers were pursuing an ideology that said we need to take these young minds, this young energy, and turn it into part of our movement in terms of Black liberation and the rest of it. And I saw a very purposeful, intentional effort on the part of the police department to keep that head from hooking up to that body. It was like, you know, do not let this thing become a part of what could ultimately be a political movement, because that's exactly what it was.

Like most of the leaders of the Black freedom movement, Hampton drew the interest of the FBI and COINTELPRO. In 1969, following months of harassment, Hampton was shot and killed as he slept in his bed, his pregnant partner beside

him, during a police raid on his home. He was 21 years old.

As they watch the documentary, students take notes on the facts of the Hampton case, and we stop the film often to discuss what we see and hear. I help them tease out the COINTELPRO dimension of the story: an FBI informant infiltrated the Chicago chapter of the Panthers and earned Hampton's trust. He proceeded to provide a floor plan of Hampton's apartment, noting which room he slept in. This information was used by the raiding officers who killed him.

Following the film, students complete a viewer response journal to talk back to the film, a way to process the horror, shock, and grief many of them feel after watching the deadly consequences of COINTELPRO. Aiden grapples with Hampton's innocence: "The police had no reason to come to Hampton's house like that and open fire. He wasn't hurting anyone and he hadn't done anything wrong." Carrie echoes an elderly woman quoted in the film: "The tragic death of Fred Hampton was 'nothing but a Northern lynching.'" Avery writes: "A mob of people came

into Fred's home, for no reason, and murdered him. The fact that these were police officers only made it more unbelievably awful."

The Hampton murder also serves as a moment to bring students back to our earlier discussion of the word *neutralize*. Did the FBI target Hampton for murder? Although FBI agents did not pull the trigger on the weapons that killed Hampton, they provided critical information to those who did. It is clear to students that murder was an *acceptable* outcome in the larger project of destruction undertaken by COINTELPRO.

Indicting COINTELPRO

I usually end this lesson with students writing a piece related to the Church Committee report. The report concludes, in part:

The findings which have emerged from our investigation convince us that the government's domestic intelligence policies and practices require fundamental reform. . . . The Committee's fundamental conclusion is that intelligence activities have undermined the constitutional rights of citizens.

After reading this statement, I lead a quick discussion of which constitutional rights the report might be referring to; students have recently studied government, so it doesn't take long for them to recall the Fourth Amendment's privacy protections, the First Amendment's speech and expression protections, and the Fifth Amendment's due process protections. We also use this discussion to recall examples from our investigation of the COINTELPRO documents that demonstrate the government infringing on these rights. Finally, I ask students to use the committee's statement as the thesis for some in-class writing.

The prompt reads:

Based on the documents you read and the film you watched, write at least two supporting paragraphs for the excerpt from the Church Committee's conclusions. In order to do this you will need to:

1. *Identify protections in the Bill of Rights that were denied or abused by COINTELPRO.*
2. *Identify examples from the COINTELPRO documents or the film that prove that the rights of activists were abused.*
3. *Explain and analyze how the evidence in the documents proves that a constitutional injustice occurred.*

Admittedly, this is a rather dry academic exercise, but it requires students to formalize their thinking about COINTELPRO as they craft what amounts to an indictment. The task requires students to show, unequivocally and unambiguously, that COINTELPRO was not just unethical and unjust, but illegal too.

Final Thoughts

When I first started teaching about COINTELPRO back in the early 2000s, I ended the unit with a discussion of then-President George W. Bush's NSA surveillance program, which had recently been exposed and was being hotly debated; more recently, I have drawn connections to the Edward Snowden revelations. This year I will address government tracking of Black Lives Matter activists and the use of social media platforms to gather intelligence on protest movements and protest leaders. It seems that the questions of surveillance and government overreach are never out of date.

COINTELPRO is not just a surveillance story. It is a story about a duplicitous and destructive government-sponsored war against Black and other activists. And though the COINTELPRO documents have long been made public, it is a story history textbooks continue to ignore.

Textbook publishers' disregard for the history of COINTELPRO is one more example of the crucial importance of the Black Lives Matter movement, which lays bare the systemic dangers faced by Black people in the United States while simultaneously affirming and celebrating Black life. When activists use social media to show the nation the brutal strangulation of Eric Garner or

the mowing down of Tamir Rice or the deadly harassment of Sandra Bland, we cannot fail to recognize the injustice and racism of the criminal justice system. When that same social media shows us Garner’s wife pleading, “He should be here celebrating Christmas and Thanksgiving and everything else with his children and grandchildren”; or a photo gone viral of Rice as a shy, smiling boy; or a Facebook post of Bland looking joyful about a new job—we feel the human potential lost as a consequence of these injustices.

What I attempt in my classroom is a Black Lives Matter treatment of COINTELPRO, where we reveal the injustice of the program while simultaneously affirming and celebrating the promise of the activists it sought to silence. Just as Black Lives Matter activists use video footage to convince a disbelieving wider public of what African Americans have long known about police brutality, we teachers can use our classrooms to shine a light on history that has been available, but systematically ignored, by our textbooks and in our curricula,

a history that emphatically communicates: Black history matters. ■

Resources

Goldfield, David, et al. 2005. *The American Journey: A History of the United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 2. Pearson.

Henretta, James A., David Brody, and Lynn Dumenil. 2006. *America: A Concise History*. St. Martin’s.

McClenaghan, William. 2005. *Magruder’s American Government*. Pearson.

Nash, Gary. 2004. *American Odyssey: The 20th Century and Beyond*. McGraw Hill.

PBS. 1990. “A Nation of Law? (1968–1971)” *Eyes on the Prize*. Produced by Henry Hampton. Blackside.

Ursula Wolfe-Rocca (ursulawolfe@gmail.com) teaches at Lake Oswego High School in Oregon.



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COINTELPRO Note-Taking Sheet

| | Who or what is being targeted? | What methods and tactics of harassment are described? |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Document #1 | | |
| Document #2 | | |
| Document #3 | | |

| | Who or what is being targeted? | What methods and tactics of harassment are described? |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Document #4 | | |
| Document #5 | | |
| Document #6 | | |

COINTELPRO Documents

The following documents are included as handouts. They can be found online at FBI Vault and the National Archives.

| Page(s) | Document and Source |
|---------|--|
| 13–15 | 1. August 25, 1967, memo from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, initiating COINTELPRO against civil rights organizations. |
| 16 | 2. January 22, 1969, memo about FBI-created factionalism in the Nation of Islam. |
| 17–18 | 3. October 27, 1967, memo suggesting legal harassment of a Nation of Islam grade school. |
| 19–20 | 4. Sept. 27, 1968, memo from W. C. Sullivan to G. C. Moore, describing the Black Panther Party as the “most violence prone organization . . . now operating in the United States,” with FBI plans to create factionalism within the party. |
| 21–22 | 5. December 1, 1964, memo to W. C. Sullivan from J. A. Sizoo, about “taking steps to remove King from the national picture.” |
| 23 | 6. A clean, unredacted version of the letter sent to King encouraging him to commit suicide. |
| 24–25 | 7. March 8, 1968, memo suggesting misinformation leaflets be distributed in Baltimore to combat the influence of new SCLC offices opening there. |
| 26–27 | 8. October 10, 1968, memo from W. C. Sullivan to G. C. Moore, in which a “media source” is sought “to help neutralize extremist Black Panthers and foster a split between them and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.” |
| 28 | 9. July 10, 1968, memo proposing false information be used to “convey the impression that [Stokely] CARMICHAEL is a CIA informant” and “would spread the rumor in various large Negro communities across the land.” |
| 29 | 10. The floor plan of Fred Hampton’s apartment, as drawn by an FBI informant. |

SAC, Albany

August 25, 1967

Director, FBI

PERSONAL ATTENTION TO ALL OFFICES

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
INTERNAL SECURITY

1 - Mr. C. D. Brennan

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Offices receiving copies of this letter are instructed to immediately establish a control file, captioned as above, and to assign responsibility for following and coordinating this new counterintelligence program to an experienced and imaginative Special Agent well versed in investigations relating to black nationalist, hate-type organizations. The field office control file used under this program may be maintained in a pending inactive status until such time as a specific operation or technique is placed under consideration for implementation.

The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder. The activities of all such groups of intelligence interest to this Bureau must be followed on a continuous basis so we will be in a position to promptly take advantage of all opportunities for counterintelligence and to inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant. The pernicious background of such groups, their duplicity, and devious maneuvers must be exposed to public scrutiny where such publicity will have a neutralizing effect. Efforts of the various groups

- 2 - Atlanta
- 2 - Baltimore
- 2 - Boston
- 2 - Buffalo
- 2 - Charlotte
- 2 - Chicago
- 2 - Cincinnati
- 2 - Cleveland
- 2 - Detroit
- 2 - Jackson
- 2 - Los Angeles
- 2 - Memphis
- 2 - Newark
- 2 - New Orleans
- 2 - New York

- 2 - Philadelphia
- 2 - Phoenix
- 2 - Pittsburgh
- 2 - Richmond
- 2 - St. Louis
- 2 - San Francisco
- 2 - Washington Field Office

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MAIL ROOM ☐ TELETYPE UNIT ☐

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN
OTHERWISE.

Letter to SAC, Albany
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS

to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or youthful adherents must be frustrated. No opportunity should be missed to exploit through counterintelligence techniques the organizational and personal conflicts of the leaderships of the groups and where possible an effort should be made to capitalize upon existing conflicts between competing black nationalist organizations. When an opportunity is apparent to disrupt or neutralize black nationalist, hate-type organizations through the cooperation of established local news media contacts or through such contact with sources available to the Seat of Government, in every instance careful attention must be given to the proposal to insure the targeted group is disrupted, ridiculed, or discredited through the publicity and not merely publicized. Consideration should be given to techniques to preclude violence-prone or rabble-rouser leaders of hate groups from spreading their philosophy publicly or through various mass communication media.

Many individuals currently active in black nationalist organizations have backgrounds of immorality, subversive activity, and criminal records. Through your investigation of key agitators, you should endeavor to establish their unsavory backgrounds. Be alert to determine evidence of misappropriation of funds or other types of personal misconduct on the part of militant nationalist leaders so any practical or warranted counterintelligence may be instituted.

Intensified attention under this program should be afforded to the activities of such groups as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Revolutionary Action Movement, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, Congress of Racial Equality, and the Nation of Islam. Particular emphasis should be given to extremists who direct the activities and policies of revolutionary or militant groups such as Stokely Carmichael, H. "Rap" Brown, Elijah Muhammad, and Maxwell Stanford.

At this time the Bureau is setting up no requirement for status letters to be periodically submitted under this program. It will be incumbent upon you to insure the program is being afforded necessary and continuing attention and that no opportunities will be overlooked for counterintelligence action.

This program should not be confused with the program entitled "Communist Party, USA, Counterintelligence Program, Internal Security - C," (Bufile 100-3-104), which is directed

Letter to SAC, Albany
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS

against the Communist Party and related organizations, or the program entitled "Counterintelligence Program, Internal Security, Disruption of Hate Groups," (Bufile 157-9), which is directed against Klan and hate-type groups primarily consisting of white memberships.

All Special Agent personnel responsible for the investigation of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and their memberships should be alerted to our counterintelligence interest and each investigative Agent has a responsibility to call to the attention of the counterintelligence coordinator suggestions and possibilities for implementing the program. You are also cautioned that the nature of this new endeavor is such that under no circumstances should the existence of the program be made known outside the Bureau and appropriate within-office security should be afforded to sensitive operations and techniques considered under the program.

No counterintelligence action under this program may be initiated by the field without specific prior Bureau authorization.

You are urged to take an enthusiastic and imaginative approach to this new counterintelligence endeavor and the Bureau will be pleased to entertain any suggestions or techniques you may recommend.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (100-448006)

DATE: 1/22/69

FROM: SAC, CHICAGO (157-2209) (P)

SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(NATION OF ISLAM)

Reurlet, 1/7/69; Chicago letters 12/24/68 and 1/14/69.

ReBulet has been thoroughly studied and discussed by the SAC, the Supervisor, and Agents familiar with facets of the NOI which might indicate trends and possible future direction of the organization. The Bureau's concern is most understandable and suggestions appreciated.

Over the years considerable thought has been given, and action taken with Bureau approval, relating to methods through which the NOI could be discredited in the eyes of the general black populace or through which factionalism among the leadership could be created. Serious consideration has also been given towards developing ways and means of changing NOI philosophy to one whereby the members could be developed into useful citizens and the organization developed into one emphasizing religion - the brotherhood of mankind - and self improvement. Factional disputes have been developed - the most notable being MALCOLM X LITTLE. Prominent black personages have publicly and nationally spoken out against the group - U.S. District Court Judge JAMES BENTON PARSONS being one example. The media of the press has played down the NOI. This appears to be a most effective tool as individuals such as MUHAMMAD assuredly seek: any and all publicity be it good or bad; however, if the press is utilized it would appear it should not concentrate on such aspects as the alleged strength of the NOI, immoral activities of the leadership, misuse of funds by these officials, etc. It is the opinion of this office that such exposure is ineffective, possibly creates interest and maybe envy among the lesser educated black man causing them out of curiosity to attend meetings and maybe join, and encourage the opportunist to seek personal gain - physical or monetary - through alignment with the group. At any rate it is felt such publicity in the case of the NOI is not overly effective.

2 - Bureau (RM)

1 - Chicago

JRS:bab

(3)

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

DATE: 10/27/67

FROM : SAC, WFO (157-1292) (P)

SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
IS

Re Bureau letter 8/25/67.

Prior to the institution of this program, the WFO had received information in August 1967 from a Nation of Islam source, that Muhammad's Mosque #4, (MM#4), Washington, D. C. planned on starting a regular daily grade school at the Mosque. The Attendance Department of the District of Columbia Board of Education was advised of these contemplated plans.

The Attendance Department on 10/11/67 advised that on 9/27/67, two representatives of that department visited MM#4 and found a regular daily grade school in operation; the Minister of the Mosque advised that about 150 students attended the school. He was advised that under District of Columbia regulations he would have to register with the Board of Education for the operation of such a school. This registration consists of filling in a rather lengthy detailed form. The Minister was also given a number of background cards to be filled in for each student attending the school. When and if these forms are filled in, they will be made available to the WFO.

The Attendance Department was not satisfied with the health and safety factors in regard to the school, and notified the District of Columbia Zoning Board of these conditions. The Zoning Board indicated that it would look into this situation and this would

3 - Bureau
(1-25-330971) (NOI)
2 - WFO
(1-100-22829) (NOI)

REC 67

PEM:dab
(5)

let. WFO
10/11/67

NOV 1 1967



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Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

WFO 157-1292

Normally include an inspection by the Health Department and the Fire Department. The Attendance Department with whom the WFO has had confidential dealings in the past, advised that they would notify the WFO of additional information received in this matter.

During the course of the interview of the Minister of the Mosque on 9/27/67, he advised the representatives of the Attendance Department that the school was supported by the congregation and was non-profit. The Tax Division for the District of Columbia would be interested in this matter, and in accordance with instructions set out in referenced Bureau letter, Bureau authorization is requested to pursue this matter further by contacting a responsible individual in the Tax Department with whom this office has had dealings in the past.

- 2 -

22

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. W. C. Sullivan

DATE: 9/27/68

FROM : G. C. Moore

SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(BLACK PANTHER PARTY)

1 - Mr. C. D. DeLoach
1 - Mr. W. C. Sullivan
1 - Mr. G. C. Moore
1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]

PURPOSE:

To obtain authority for the attached letter to those field divisions having Black Panther Party (BPP) activity instructing that the counterintelligence program against this organization be accelerated and that each office submit concrete suggestions as to future action to be taken against the BPP.

The extremist BPP of Oakland, California, is rapidly expanding. It is the most violence-prone organization of all the extremist groups now operating in the United States. This group has a record of violence and connections with foreign revolutionaries. It puts particular emphasis on not only verbal attacks but also physical attacks on police.

OBSERVATIONS:

The information we are receiving from our sources concerning activities of the BPP clearly indicates that more violence can be expected from this organization in the immediate future. It therefore, is essential that we not only accelerate our investigations of this organization, and increase our informants in the organization but that we take action under the counterintelligence program to disrupt the group. Our counterintelligence program may bring about results which could lead to prosecution of these violence-prone leaders and active members, thereby thwarting their efforts to perpetrate violence in the United States.

Enclosure
100-448006

CONTINUED - OVER

JGD:rmn (7)

Memorandum to Mr. W. C. Sullivan
RE: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(BLACK PANTHER PARTY)

SCOPE OF PROPOSED COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM:

As stated above, the attached letter will instruct the field to submit positive suggestions as to actions to be taken to thwart and disrupt the BPP. Instructions are and will be reiterated that no action is to be taken without prior Bureau authority.

These suggestions are to create factionalism between not only the national leaders but also local leaders, steps to neutralize all organizational efforts of the BPP as well as create suspicion amongst the leaders as to each others sources of finances, suspicion concerning their respective spouses and suspicion as to who may be cooperating with law enforcement. In addition, suspicion should be developed as to who may be attempting to gain control of the organization for their own private betterment, as well as suggestions as to the best method of exploiting the foreign visits made by BPP members. We are also soliciting recommendations as to the best method of creating opposition to the BPP on the part of the majority of the residents of the ghetto areas.

RECOMMENDATION:

That attached letter , in accordance with the above, be approved.

WCS

Date: December 1, 1964
To: Mr. W. C. Sullivan
From: J. A. Sizoo
Subject: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Mr. Conrad | _____ |
| Mr. DeLoach | _____ |
| Mr. Mohr | _____ |
| Mr. Bishop | _____ |
| Mr. Casper | _____ |
| Mr. Callahan | _____ |
| Mr. Conrad | _____ |
| Mr. Felt | _____ |
| Mr. Gale | _____ |
| Mr. Rosen | _____ |
| Mr. Sullivan | _____ |
| Mr. Tavel | _____ |
| Mr. Trotter | _____ |
| Tele. Room | _____ |
| Miss Holmes | _____ |
| Miss Gandy | _____ |

Reference is made to the attached memorandum DeLoach to Mohr dated 11/27/64 concerning DeLoach's interview with [redacted] and to your informal memo, also attached.

[redacted] stated to DeLoach that he was faced with the difficult problem of taking steps to remove King from the national picture. He indicates in his comments a lack of confidence that he, alone, could be successful. It is, therefore, suggested that consideration be given to the following course of action:

That DeLoach have a further discussion with [redacted] and offer to be helpful to [redacted] in connection with the problem of the removal of King from the national scene;

That DeLoach suggest that [redacted] might desire to call a meeting of Negro leaders in the country which might include, for instance, 2 or 3 top leaders in the civil rights movement such as James Farmer and A. Philip Randolph; 2 or 3 top Negro judges such as Judge Parsons and Judge Hasty; 2 or 3 top reputable ministers such as Robert Johnson, Moderator of the Washington City Presbytery; 2 or 3 other selected Negro officials from public life such as the Negro Attorney General from one of the New England states. These men could be called for the purpose of learning the facts as to the Bureau's performance in the fulfillment of its responsibilities under the Civil Rights statute, and this could well be done at such a meeting. In addition, the Bureau, on a highly confidential basis, could brief such a group on the security background of King [redacted]. The use of a tape, such as contemplated in your memorandum, together with a transcript for convenience in following the tape, should be most convincing.

The inclusion of U.S. Government officials, such as Carl Rowan or Ralph Dunche, is not suggested as they might feel a duty to advise the White House of such a contemplated meeting. It is believed this would give us an opportunity to outline to a group of influential Negro leaders what our record in the enforcement of civil rights has been. It would also give them, on a confidential

jas/nls

enclosures

(CONTINUED - OVER)

#3

Memo to Mr. Sullivan
RE: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

basis, information concerning King which would convince them of the danger of King to the over-all civil rights movement. [REDACTED] is already well aware of this. This group should include such leadership as would be capable of removing King from the scene if they, of their own volition, decided this was the thing to do after such a briefing. The group should include strong enough men to control a man like James Farmer and make him see the light of day. This might have the effect of increasing the stature of [REDACTED] who is a capable person and is ambitious.

There are refinements which, of course, could be added to the above which is set forth in outline form for possible consideration.

very

- 2 -

KING,

In view of your low grade, abnormal personal behavior I will not dignify your name with either a Mr. or a Reverend or a Dr. And, your last name calls to mind only the type of King such as King Henry the VIII and his countless acts of adultery and immoral conduct lower than that of a beast.

King, look into your heart. You know you are a complete fraud and a great liability to all of us Negroes. White people in this country have enough frauds of their own but I am sure they don't have one at this time that is anywhere near your equal. You are no clergyman and you know it. I repeat you are a colossal fraud and an evil, vicious one at that. You could not believe in God and act as you do. Clearly you don't believe in any personal moral principles.

King, like all frauds your end is approaching. You could have been our greatest leader. You, even at an early age have turned out to be not a leader but a dissolute, abnormal moral imbecile. We will now have to depend on our older leaders like Wilkins a man of character and thank God we have others like him. But you are done. Your "honorary" degrees, your Nobel Prize (what a grim farce) and other awards will not save you. King, I repeat you are done.

No person can overcome facts, not even a fraud like yourself. Lend your sexually psychotic ear to the enclosure. You will find yourself and in all your dirt, filth, evil and moronic talk exposed on the record for all time. I repeat - no person can argue successfully against facts. You are finished. You will find on the record for all time your filthy, dirty, evil companions, male and females giving expression with you to your hideous abnormalities. And some of them to pretend to be ministers of the Gospel. Satan could not do more. What incredible evilness. It is all there on the record, your sexual orgies. Listen to yourself you filthy, abnormal animal. You are on the record. You have been on the record - all your adulterous acts, your sexual orgies extending far into the past. This one is but a tiny sample. You will understand this. Yes, from your various evil playmates on the east coast to and others on the west coast and outside the country you are on the record. King you are done.

The American public, the church organizations that have been helping - Protestant, Catholic and Jews will know you for what you are - an evil, abnormal beast. So will others who have backed you. You are done.

King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do (this exact number has been selected for a specific reason, it has definite practical significance. You are done. There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation.

FBI

Date: 3/8/68

Transmit the following in _____

(Type in plaintext or code)

Via AIRTEL

REGISTERED MAIL

(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (100-448006)
FROM: SAC, BALTIMORE (157-2520)
SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE

*G.M.
DADD*

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) has recently opened an office in Baltimore, Maryland, in connection with the proposed march on Washington by SCLC. A racial source of this office has advised that prominently displayed in the office are photographs of MARTIN LUTHER KING, MUHAMMED ALI, CASIUS CLAY. Copies of the publication "Muhammed Speaks" and other literature of the National of Islam (NOI) are available in this office. Additionally, there is indication that a representative of the NOI in Baltimore has been in contact with SCLC representatives here.

It is recalled that in 1966, KING and ELIJAH MUHAMMED were not able to resolve their differences at a widely publized meeting of the two.

At the present time, the SCLC is making very poor progress in either getting organized, finding sufficient people with funds to back the project, and in general finding enough residents in Baltimore to go along with the idea of such a march. Again according to our source, the leaders of the SCLC here are talking of picking a particular area of the City of Baltimore and concentrating on that area to gain support with the thought that thereafter to spread to other parts of the city.

*1-2-68
7:30 PM
157-2520*

1 - Bureau (REGISTERED MAIL) (Encl. 1)
1 - Baltimore
EG:rlj

REC-4

157-2520

E. C. Bishop

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Approved: _____
Special Agent in Charge

Sent _____ M Per _____

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BA 157-2520

Sources have advised this office that the presence of literature and photographs connected with the NOI, along with KING, have raised the question as to where all the money is going to in connection with this and other projects.

Attached to this airtel is a sketch of a suggested leaflet. It is requested that this be considered by the Bureau and that a refinement of this sketch be made with either a photograph or possibly a caricature and that a sample copy be furnished to this office. It is specifically noted that this office does not desire to use this leaflet at the present time; but, if the SCLC does make any headway in a particular section in Baltimore City then this office would make a recommendation of anonymous distribution of this leaflet in quantity.

- 2 -

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

ROUTE 111 ENVELOPE

TO : Mr. W. C. Sullivan *W*

DATE: October 10, 1968

FROM : Mr. G. C. Moore *gc*

SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(BLACK PANTHER PARTY)

PURPOSE:

To recommend attached item be given news media source on confidential basis as counterintelligence measure to help neutralize extremist Black Panthers and foster split between them and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

BACKGROUND:

There is a feud between the two most prominent black nationalist extremist groups, The Black Panthers and SNCC. Attached item notes that the feud is being continued by SNCC circulating the statement that:

"According to zoologists, the main difference between a panther and other large cats is that the panther has the smallest head."

This is biologically true. Publicity to this effect might help neutralize Black Panther recruiting efforts.

ACTION:

That attached item, captioned "Panther Pinheads," be furnished a cooperative news media source by the Crime Records Division on a confidential basis. We will be alert for other ways to exploit this item.

Enclosure
100-448006

- 1 - Mr. C.D. DeLoach
- 1 - Mr. W.C. Sullivan
- 1 - Mr. T.E. Bishop
- 1 - Mr. G.C. Moore

1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]
1 - [REDACTED]

610 (100-448006)

6 OCT 23 1968

PANTHER PINHEADS

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers, two black nationalist extremist groups, are still feuding. Stokely Carmichael has gone over to the Panthers and the Panthers seem to be upstaging the older SNCC group.

Now SNCC is retaliating by circulating, sub rosa, this little item:

"According to zoologists, the main difference between a panther and other large cats is that the panther has the smallest head."

In short, the Panthers are pinheads!

Mr. Tolson _____
Mr. DeLoach _____
Mr. Mohr _____
Mr. Bishop _____
Mr. Casper _____
Mr. Callahan _____
Mr. Conrad _____
Mr. Felt _____
Mr. Gale _____
Mr. Rosen _____
Mr. Sullivan _____
Mr. Tavel _____
Mr. Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Miss Holmes _____
Miss Gandy _____

MAIL ROOM ☐

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO: 
FROM: 
SUBJECT: 

DIRECTOR, FBI (100-448006)

DATE: 7/10/68

SAC, NEW YORK (100-161140) (P)

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST-HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE
(STOKELY CARMICHAEL)

Rebulet, 7/1/68.

It is suggested that consideration be given to convey the impression that CARMICHAEL is a CIA informant.

One method of accomplishing the above would be to have a carbon copy of informant report reportedly written by CARMICHAEL to the CIA carefully deposited in the automobile of a close Black Nationalist friend. The report should be so placed that it will be readily seen.

It is hoped that when the informant report is read it will help promote distrust between CARMICHAEL and the Black Community. It is suggested that carbon copy of report be used to indicate that CARMICHAEL turned original copy into CIA and kept carbon copy for himself.

It is also suggested that we inform a certain percentage of reliable criminal and racial informants that "we heard from reliable sources that CARMICHAEL is a CIA agent". It is hoped that these informants would spread the rumor in various large Negro communities across the land.

(2) Bureau (RM)
1- New York

JJD:tf
(3)



SEP 1 1968

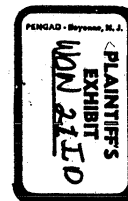
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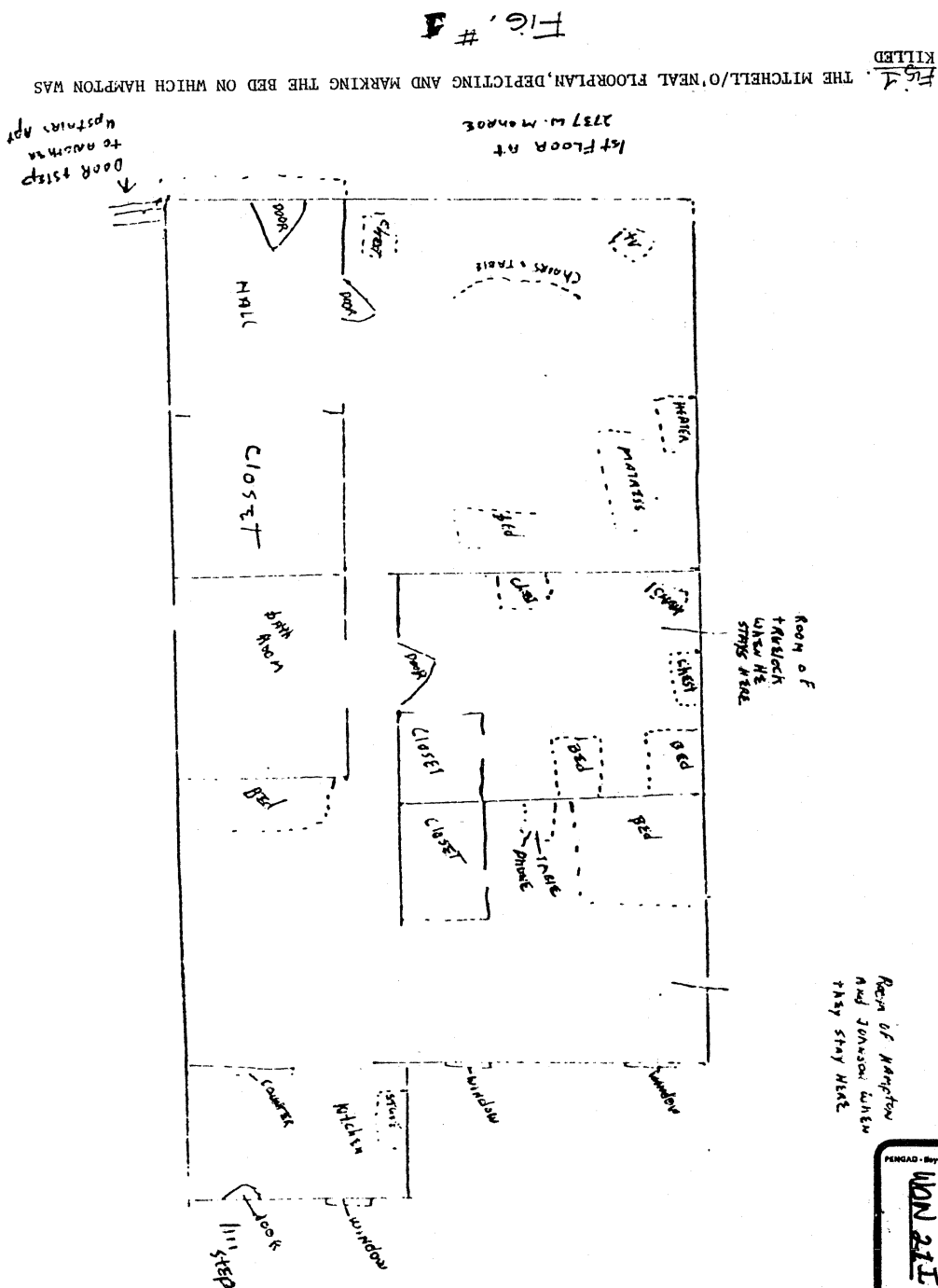
SPECIAL INQ. SECT.

291



Room of Hampton and Johnson when they stay here

Room of + Ruelock when he stays here



rethinking schools

This lesson was previously published in [Rethinking Schools magazine](https://rethinkingschools.org).

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