



## Meeting Flyers

As a major American city, Philadelphia was the site of important conferences and a destination for key figures in the civil rights and Black Power movements. The Thelma McDaniel Collection includes flyers announcing two very different meetings that took place at Philadelphia churches in the 1960s.

In his autobiography, *Other Sheep I Have* (1994), Father Paul Washington recalls his decision to support those calling for an end to white participation in the civil rights movement. “There is a time for separation (not segregation). Wholeness cannot exist unless there is integrity of its parts,” Washington explains. Having come to this realization, he agreed to have the Church of the Advocate, of which he was pastor, host a Black Unity rally in July 1966. This event took place just weeks after Stokely Carmichael, then the leader of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), initiated the call for “Black Power” while speaking in Greenwood, Mississippi. A *Philadelphia Tribune* article about the Philadelphia rally describes an interracial crowd of about 1,000 people who gathered to hear Carmichael as well as singer Nina Simone and other speakers. Carmichael’s comments were typically candid and provocative. “What black people in this country need is to talk to each other and stop talking to and for white people,” he proclaimed. Then, addressing the young white members of the audience: “You are rebelling to wear a beard and smoke pot and we are fighting for our lives.”

In his autobiography, Father Paul Washington describes very little of this July 1966 rally. However, he recalls in much greater detail a similar event that took place one month later. This time, the crowd was about twice as large, so Carmichael spoke outside on the church steps. Expressing his outrage about a series of police raids on three SNCC meeting places in Philadelphia, Carmichael declared, “Philadelphia is a racist city run by police Gestapo. The next time racist Rizzo tries to march 1,500 cops into our community, he’s not going to get away with it.” These remarks preceded Carmichael’s imminent departure from SNCC and his increasing disillusion with the integrationist ideals of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr.

Although Thelma McDaniels was a collector of the artifacts of the Black Power movement, her collection also includes documentation of more mainstream organizations. In October 1968, a mere six months after witnessing the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Andrew Young, executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), came to Philadelphia to speak at Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church. Mother Bethel had been the site of numerous significant gatherings, including a huge 1832 community meeting to determine whether or not to pursue colonization in Africa and a gathering to recruit black soldiers to the Union Army at which Frederick Douglass was a featured speaker.

At the time Andrew Young came to Mother Bethel in 1968, the nonviolent tactics favored by the SCLC had fallen out of favor with many black activists. Martin Luther King, while speaking in Philadelphia's Convention Hall in September 1966, declared that confusion over the meaning of the term "black power" had led to a significant decrease in contributions to mainstream civil rights organizations such as the SCLC. A month later, King told the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, "I've taken a stand against black power because it is the path to isolation." As Matthew Countryman demonstrates, however, the African American community in Philadelphia was drawn to the black power ideology. Indeed, in spite of the prominence of both Andrew Young and Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, the 1968 event did not receive coverage in the local press, not even in the African American *Philadelphia Tribune*.