

## **The Black Power Movement and the Contested Nature of American Democracy**

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The research project sheds fresh light on the Black Power movement and the contested nature of U.S. democracy between the 1960s and the 1990s. Although Black Power has seen growing interest among historians, many historiographical gaps remain. The research project goes beyond the most familiar groups and the most common topics, focusing instead on conflicts between competing ideals of U.S. democracy during the Black Power era and its post-1970s ramifications. It focuses on the question of how struggles over racial equality during the Black Power era affected interpretations of what constitutes a just and democratic society.

The core of the project consists of three Ph.D. projects. The first subproject examines tensions and collaborations between the Black Power movement and the Gay Liberation movement, asking how different interpretations of what its members deemed a just and democratic nation helped or hindered the two movement's quest for full equality. Subproject two focuses on the critics of Black Power during the 1960s and 1970s, analyzing their condemnations to better understand how race, racism, and racial equality shaped various social groups' understanding of American democracy. The final subproject will be the first history of the National Black United Front, an African American organization that was founded by former Black Power activists in 1980 in New York. It examines how activists' understanding of U.S. democracy and their tactics to bring about racial equality evolved after the demise of the Black Power movement in the mid-1970s.

These projects are complemented by an ongoing Ph.D. dissertation, which is entitled "Prayers and Protest: How Religion Shaped the Black Power Movement," and a general history of the Black Power movement, which will synthesize the deluge of historical studies on post-1945 African American activism that have been published over the course of the last twenty years. Together, these various subprojects provide crucial insights into America's particular history of conflict over how to define and practice democracy.