

### **Ain't Gonna Shuffle No More (1964-1968)**

**AMIRI BARAKA:** I know it's hard to be black, and we're all controlled by white folks. DuBois said we always have the double consciousness. We're trying to be black, and meanwhile you got a white ghost hovering over your head that says, "If you don't do this, you'll get killed. If you don't do this, you won't get no money. If you don't do this, nobody'll think you're beautiful. If you don't do this, nobody'll think you're smart." That's the ghost. You're trying to be black and the ghost is telling you to be a ghost.

**NARRATOR:** For almost four centuries, American Negroes were judged by white standards of beauty, culture and learning. To be expected, many downplayed their African features and rejected their cultural heritage. But times were changing.

**LAST POETS:** Poetry is black, poetry is black people. You know, black people like black poetry, black people like you and me movin' and groovin' and black, doing the shigalig and...

**NARRATOR:** In the 1960s, Negroes celebrated their own standards. They were blacks in America, and black was beautiful.

**SONIA SANCHEZ:** Can you really imagine whole generations living and dying and never once having loved themselves, that's what we tried to change when we moved into the black arts, black culture, black consciousness movement. I said never again will I allow anyone to live and walk on the planet earth and not like what they are, what they've been.

**NARRATOR:** This struggle for black pride was galvanized by the national civil rights movement. Now, black Americans began to demand respect on their own terms. Among them was Cassius Marcellus Clay. Clay had won the Olympic gold medal in 1960. Four years later, he challenged Sonny Liston for the heavyweight championship of the world.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** I'm not gonna get knocked out. Not if he whups me, you tell this to your camera, your T.V. man, your radio man, you right there in the whole world. If Sonny Liston whups me, I'll kiss his feet in the ring. I'll bow down in the ring, on my knees, tell him he's the greatest, and catch the next jet out of the country!

**NARRATOR:** Liston was considered a devastating heavyweight. He had won the title with a first round knockout.

**SONNY LISTON:** I'm for real, man, I'm for real. You just get past Patterson. Come on, ring number two. Sloan's gonna fall in five. Or in four. Man, I don't get hit. I'm the fastest thing on two feet, man. Are you crazy?

**EDWIN POPE:** I thought Liston would absolutely take this kid apart and just kill him. I mean, Liston was an absolute thug and the very idea of this spindly kid from Louisville just out of the Olympics going in there with Liston, who'd had so many fights in and out of the ring and having a chance was impossible for anybody to digest.

**REPORTER:** I saw Sonny Liston a few days ago, Cassius.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Ain't he ugly? He's too ugly to be the world's champ. The world's champ should be pretty like me.

**REPORTER:** Well, he told me to bet my life that you wouldn't go three rounds.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Well, if you want to lose your money, then bet on Sonny.

**REPORTER:** What percentage of the fans are coming to see you fight Sonny Liston? What percentage of the fans do you feel will be coming to see him, and what percentage do you feel will be coming to see you?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Well, a hundred percent will be coming to see me, but 99 percent will be coming to see me get beat.

**REPORTER:** Do you really feel that way?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** They probably think I talk too much.

**KAREEM ABDUL JABBAR:** I remember when I was in high school, the teachers at my high school didn't like him because he was so antiestablishment and he kind of thumbed his nose at authority and got away with it. And they didn't like that at all. The fact that he was proud to be a black man and that he was -- Had so much talent and could enjoy it in a way that was not seen to be -- It didn't have the dignity that they assumed it should have. I think that was something that really made certain people love him and made other people think that he was dangerous.

**NARRATOR:** For many, Clay's friendship with Malcolm X was especially threatening. Malcolm X was the national spokesman for a black religious organization, the Nation of Islam.

**MALCOLM X:** We choose to obey the law. We teach you carry yourselves in a respectable way. But at the same time, we teach you that anyone that puts his hand on you, do your best to see that he doesn't put it on anybody else.

**NARRATOR:** The Nation of Islam taught black pride, self reliance and self defense. Many saw it as a militant, separatist group. One of the fight promoters got nervous.

**ANGELO DUNDEE:** And he came to me and said, "Angelo, unless Cassius Marcellus Clay refutes the reports out of Chicago that he's not a Muslim, I'm going to cancel the fight." So I said, "Well, jeez, I'll talk to the kid." And I said, "Better still, you go talk to the kid." And I made him go off into another area to speak to the fighter. So Cassius came back and I'm sitting in the office and he says, "Ang, I don't think we're going to have a fight." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, because they want me to say I'm not a Muslim and I am a Muslim."

**NARRATOR:** Clay refused to deny his religion, but with millions of dollars at stake, promoters went ahead with the bout.

**ANNOUNCER:** They might be stopping it, that might be all, ladies and gentlemen! Get up there, Joe. Get up there, get up in the ring!

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** After beating Sonny Liston and after becoming champion, I no longer had to talk to convince people that I was the best because they knew it.

**NARRATOR:** Clay publicly confirmed his membership in the Nation of Islam. Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad required his followers to drop the family names originally imposed by slave masters. Heavyweight champion Cassius Clay was no exception.

**HERBERT MUHAMMAD:** My father called me that night and asked me did I know how to get in touch with Cassius Clay. And he told me to get in touch with him if I could and let him know that his name has been changed, he's changing his name from Cassius Marcellus Clay to Muhammad Ali.

**SONIA SANCHEZ:** When Muhammad Ali joined the Nation, it was the continuation of what we knew was happening already. Everyone had seen Malcolm down in his camp, everyone had seen -- knew that he was teaching him and instructing him at that particular time. So when he changed his name, we said very simply, "That's his name." When people called him Cassius Clay, we would say, "That's not his name. Call the brother by his name, his name is Muhammad Ali. Go on, do it. Get it, walk on." And we were very pleased and very happy.

**ANGELO DUNDEE:** But what's in a name? The thing with me was the individual. But the tough, tough thing about it really was that it was such a pretty name. We had nurtured it and played it up, you know? Cassius Marcellus Clay, and then there was the rhyme on it, it was a beautiful name. And then he changed it Muhammad Ali. People resented that. You know, why? Why? A lot of people wouldn't call him -- But what's in a name? To me, he was still the same individual, same guy. And I actually -- I didn't know what a Muslim was, really, because I thought it was a piece of cloth.

**REPORTER:** Cassius Clay is the name no more, is that right?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Yes, sir. It's Muhammad Ali. Muhammad means worthy of all praises, and Ali means most high in the Asian African language.

**REPORTER:** How long have you had the name?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Well, for about two weeks now.

**REPORTER:** Anybody special give you the name?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Yes, sir. My leader and teacher, the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

**NARRATOR:** In the spring of 1964, Ali traveled through Ghana, Nigeria and Egypt.

**HERBERT MUHAMMAD:** They received him as though he was the president of a country or a king, actually. In fact, in Ghana I thought I might even get killed because so many people was running to Ali, I ranned away from him to get to save my life. And the same thing happened in Egypt.

**NARRATOR:** Ali returned to his boxing career in the States. In 1965, he entered a war of words with former heavyweight champion, Floyd Patterson.

**FLOYD PATTERSON:** I just expressed the way I felt about the things he believed, and he expressed the way he felt about the things I believe. I only did this because of some of the derogatory things he was saying about my beliefs. He called me a white man's champion, and I resented that.

**NARRATOR:** A devout Catholic, Patterson was seen as a humble and gracious fighter. For many in America, he was a more acceptable champion than the boastful Muhammad Ali, a black Muslim.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** So obviously I'm a better champion for America than Floyd Patterson, and I am the real champion. I go all throughout the streets everywhere, meeting all the people. Obviously, I'm the real champion.

**NARRATOR:** Ali and Patterson took their fight to the ring in November, 1965.

**ANGELO DUNDEE:** Well, it was a good guy/bad guy situation where Patterson was a well loved individual and he's fighting Muhammad Ali. And Floyd had the -- always had this thing about saying, "Cassius, Cassius, Cassius," you know. And it gets to be a rub after a while, and his name was Muhammad Ali.

The fight with Patterson, my kid was doing a number on him, he said, "What's my name?" [laughter] Pop. "What's my name?" Pop, you know? I felt sorry for Floyd because Muhammad did a number on him.

**NARRATOR:** In 12 rounds, Ali defeated Patterson and again proved his right to the title. His next major fight would take place outside the ring. By December, 1965, America had committed 180,000 troops to the escalating war in Vietnam. Four months after he defeated Patterson, America's heavyweight champion was drafted. Ali requested deferment as a minister of Islam and a conscientious objector. He added his voice to the small but growing opposition, black and white, to the war.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** The real enemies of my people are right here, not in Vietnam. And we who follow the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad take no parts in wars. As the Holy Koran teaches us, we take parts in no wars on the side of infidels or Christians or non-believers in Islam. No war unless it's declared by Almighty God, Allah Himself, or his messengers.

**NARRATOR:** Ali was training for an upcoming fight in Illinois. The State Athletic Commission demanded that he apologize for remarks they considered unpatriotic. If he refused, the commission would cancel the fight.

**COMMISSIONER:** What about your unpatriotic remarks that you made?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** I apologize for saying things to the newspaper that I should have said to the government officials or the draft board, rather, I mean to say. I apologize for opening my mouth and saying things that should have been taken up with them and not just with newspaper writers over the telephone.

**COMMISSIONER:** Commissioners, do you have any questions to ask of the witness?

**COMMISSIONER:** Mr. Clay, when you --

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Muhammad Ali, sir.

**COMMISSIONER:** Mr. Clay --

**ALI:** Muhammad Ali, sir.

**COMMISSIONER:** Mr. Muhammad Ali, either one --

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** Just Muhammad Ali.

**COMMISSIONER:** When you appear before the --

**NARRATOR:** The fight was canceled. Ali's next four bouts took place outside the United States.

**HERBERT MUHAMMAD:** When Ali made his statement that he was not going to be a party to an unjust war against the Viet Cong, Vietnam, the Viet Cong people, that it was a backlash from the white community. Some of them would call him all times of night, threatening to blow up his house, they would throw rocks at his house. Some would even drive by in cars, hollering and drunk and shooting at his place and different things like that.

**WHITE MAN:** We feel like if we send a boy from Owens County and draft him for the armed forces, we feel like what's good for the goose is good for the gander. They should go, the entertainers and the so-called ministers, should go, too.

**STOKELY CARMICHAEL:** Mr. Muhammad Ali is from Louisville, Kentucky. Did you know that? He was born in Louisville, Kentucky. Do you know what's happening in Louisville, Kentucky today? They're marching for open housing. They're marching for open occupancy. Now, here's a black man who can't live where he wants to live in Kentucky and the honkies are going to send him to Vietnam to fight for freedom.

**JACKIE ROBINSON:** I think that he's hurting, I think, the morale of a lot of young Negro soldiers over in Vietnam. And the tragedy to me is that Cassius has made millions of dollars off of the American public, and now he's not willing to show his appreciation to a country that is giving him, in my view, a fantastic opportunity, hurts a great number of people.

**NARRATOR:** Ali's requests for deferment were denied. He was ordered to report to the Houston draft board. Refusal to serve could mean five years in prison.

**REPORTER:** What might this do to your boxing career?

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** No comment on the boxing career, no comment on nothing. I just face the judge, that's all, I have to face the judge.

**HERBERT MUHAMMAD:** Before Ali was to appear before the induction board, he called me that morning, as he do most mornings and most nights and he was asking me, you know, like, what do you think going to happen? Not what he should do. I think Ali was already convinced in his own conscience that he was going to stand up for his principles, but he always liked to bounce it off to me how I feeled about it because we also realized the repercussion that this could have about his career.

**NARRATOR:** April 28th, 1967, Ali arrived at the Houston induction center.

**MAN:** Apparently, you still have a little bit of humor left in you.

**STEVEN DUNKELEY:** Muhammad Ali and the people who were to be inducted that day came in. I explained to them that as I called their name, they would take a step forward and that step forward would constitute their induction in the U.S. Army. Okay, so then I started down through the list, starting with the As. The Army always starts with the As and ends with the Zs, so I started with the As. And when I got down to the Ms, Muhammad Ali, I said Muhammad Ali, and I looked him in the eye, wondering if he was going to do it. And he didn't do anything. And then I called Cassius Clay and he didn't do anything, because we wanted to make sure that the name was correct that we were calling.

**COL. MCKEE:** Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Muhammad Ali has just refused to be inducted into the United States Armed Forces. Notification of his refusal is being made to the United States Attorney, the State Director of the Selective Service System, and the local Selective Service Board for whatever action deemed to be appropriate.

**NARRATOR:** Ali was sentenced to five years in prison. He appealed the decision. For many, Ali remained a popular figure, but his struggle cost in the heavyweight title. Until the courts made a decision, he was effectively banned from boxing.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** I would like to say to those of the press and those of the people who think that I lost so much by not taking this step, I would like to say that I did not lose a thing up until this very moment, I haven't lost one thing. I have gained a lot. Number one, I have gained a peace of mind. I have gained a peace of heart.

**NARRATOR:** In 1970, the Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction. It was an expensive victory. Ali had lost three years at the height of his career, but four years later, he defeated George Foreman in Zaire. At the age of 32, Ali was once again heavyweight champion of the world.

**HARRY BELAFONTE:** He was the genuine product of the moment, he was the best example. He was the Negro kid who came up in a black moment who was Cassius Clay, then became Muhammad Ali, then took on all of the characteristics and was the embodiment of the thrust of the movement. He was courageous, he put his class issues on the line. He didn't care about money, he didn't care about the white man's success and the things that you aspire to. He brought America to its most wonderful and most naked moment. "I will not play your game, I will not kill in your behalf. You are immoral, unjust, and I stand here to attest to it. Now do with me what you will." And he was terribly, terribly powerful and delicious. And he made it, he made it.

**NARRATOR:** Muhammad Ali had forced America to recognize him on his own terms. In the mid-1960's, black students demanded that same recognition from Howard University in Washington, DC. Howard was a prestigious black institution and it provided leadership for the civil rights movement.

**TONY GITTENS:** The whole attitude of the civil rights movement was shifting and Howard wasn't shifting with it. The attitude was that one of integration, of assimilation. And the whole movement was beginning to shift towards one of self-identity and self empowerment. And Howard was resisting that as opposed to carrying that forward.

**MRS. E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER:** You've got to conform to the society in which you live. You have to within it or outside of it. You can't straddle the fence. Now, are you going to live outside of the American culture, or are you going to live within it? As long as you stay in America, you've got to conform. What else can you do?

**NARRATOR:** For nearly a century, Howard graduates had been trained to compete with their white counterparts on every level: educational, cultural, social. By the 1960's, half the nation's black physicians and a fourth of its black lawyers were Howard graduates. Known as the Black Harvard, Howard mirrored white schools in many ways, including curriculum. Few courses focused on black history or culture. Howard's annual homecoming celebration, October, 1966. Four months earlier, black power had become a rallying cry for many in the civil rights movement. At Howard, five women ran for homecoming queen. Among them was Robin Gregory.

**PAULA GIDDINGS:** She had an afro, which of course was the statement that she made physically. And Robin talked about the movement and Robin talked about black politics. Robin was not the traditional homecoming queen candidate.

**ROBIN GREGORY:** I felt it was real important at that time, you know, because the black power movement was new, that we as a people begin to accept ourselves, you know, just as who we were. Because over the years, there was a tremendous amount of shame. You know, we were made to feel ugly, especially by media images and things that people told us. And we did everything we could so that we wouldn't look like who we are, which was, you know, descendents of African people.

**NARRATOR:** The campaign lasted two weeks. On election night, the auditorium was packed.

**PAULA GIDDINGS:** I remember very much the evening when the homecoming queen was crowned. The lights went down, the candidates went back. Then you heard the curtains open, and you heard the crank of the revolving stage begin. And as the stage revolved and turned around toward the audience, the lights began to come up at the same time. Well, before you saw Robin, you saw the way that the lights cast a silhouette on the curtains and you saw the silhouette of her afro before you saw her. Well, the auditorium exploded and everybody exploded. It was a wonderful moment. People started jumping up and screaming and some were raising their fists.

Then spontaneously, a chant began. The chant was *umgawa*, black power, *umgawa*, black power. And a chain was created, people started to march to it, to the rhythm of *umgawa*, black power. And there was a line and it went all the way around the auditorium and more and more people joined the line, I did too, as it went around the auditorium, and finally out the door and into the streets of Washington, DC, past the campus and still chanting, *umgawa*, black power. And that was really the launching of that movement at Howard.

**NARRATOR:** The movement grew. In April 1967, a student black power group invited Muhammad Ali to speak at Howard.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:** See, we have been brainwashed. Everything good and of authority was made white. We look at Jesus, we see a white with blond hair and blue eyes. We look at all the angels, we see white with blond hair and blue eyes. Now, I'm sure if there's a heaven in the sky and the colored folks die and go to heaven, where are the colored angels? They must be in the kitchen preparing the milk and honey. We look at Miss America, we see white. We look at Miss World, we see white. We look at Miss Universe, we see white. Even Tarzan, the king of the jungle in black Africa, he's white!

**NARRATOR:** Over the next three semesters, students and some faculty pushed Howard to proclaim itself a black institution. They demanded more courses in black culture and history. They demonstrated against military training on campus. A protest against the war in Vietnam led student government leaders to denounce fellow students.

**GLOSTER CURRENT:** It has been apparent that throughout the year, certain elements have attempted to transform Howard University into a haven of black power and a center of race controversy. While we recognize the need for Negroes to organize politically and socially, and many of us here have led vital demonstrations for the people, any tendency to disrupt the normal process of this university and accepted standards of society cannot be condoned.

**FRED BLACK:** As a student leader, you felt like you were being pulled apart, pulled in different directions by what you thought the right way to deal with the problem was as opposed to what the popular opinions on campus happened to reflect. A much more militant attitude on the part of some students in dealing with the administration, techniques and tactics that were directly coming from the broader civil rights struggle off the campus. And you had to feel like this was not necessarily going to work on a university campus.

**NARRATOR:** Throughout America, students were confronting the nation's inaction on civil rights and its involvement in the Vietnam War. As protests escalated, so did conflicts between students and police. During a civil rights protest in February, 1968, three unarmed black students were shot and killed by police in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

**TONY GITTENS:** And then what we were doing at Howard and the dangers there seemed minimal compared to what other people were willing to face for the same kind of reason.

**NARRATOR:** Students at Howard moved with a new urgency. They issued a manifesto. It demanded that Howard move towards the student's vision of a black institution. The students set a deadline for the administration's response.

**FRED BLACK:** It was almost unheard of in those days to place demands on administrators, but yet people demanded the resignation of the president and the dean of liberal arts and the vice president of the university. I don't think many of the elected student government leaders would have gone that far.

**NARRATOR:** In March, 1968, protesters went farther. When the university failed to respond to the manifesto, 1,200 students took over the administration building.

**ADRIENNE MANNS:** In a press release issued by the students was staging a sit-in in the administration building. If Howard University has raised the federal government to serve an injunction against us, many of us will stay in the administration building and be arrested. I'm sorry, brothers. We feel that the administration must give some public indication that they will move to establish democracy and a black oriented curriculum before we can discontinue our protest. Our position is legitimate, and we must continue to push for all of our demands.

Specifically, the black issue was that Howard should exist for the benefit of a black community. That it ought to be involved in economic change and political change, that it had a mission, let's say, or a purpose, a goal, that didn't allow it just to be a place where you came and got a liberal education and became a member of the middle class and went on with no consciousness.

**CHARLES EPPS:** It was, for all practical purposes, a black university. Now, I don't know how it could have been more black, and I'm not sure what they were trying to say. But Howard provided a mainstream education which prepared people to be competitive in their every field. I don't recognize, and I don't think the world recognizes, that there's any black physics, there's no black engineering, there's no black medicine. So that the mission of the university was to train students to be competitive and competent in whatever field.

**NARRATOR:** News of the takeover spread throughout Washington. On Capitol Hill, legislators reminded the press that Congress was responsible for more than half of Howard's annual funding.

**SENATOR ROBERT BYRD:** I'm shocked and dismayed by the situation that has developed at Howard University here in the nation's capital. I believe that citizens throughout the country who believe in democratic processes, who cherish an orderly society and who with the tax dollars which they pay, support this nation's institutions of higher learning, will be outraged by the fact that it has become necessarily, temporarily at least, to close this institution because of a student uprising that can only be described as anarchy.

**NARRATOR:** The following day, student leaders telephoned members of Howard's Board of Trustees.

**KENNETH CLARK:** I was primarily concerned with protecting the students and the university from chaos and violence. They were organized and they had taken over a couple of the buildings and they seemed to -- quite persistent and insistent in -- a few of us on the board felt that if we didn't establish some communication with them that things would get worse and worse and worse.

**EWART BROWN:** We want to make Howard University a university which is quite relevant to the black community. We want Howard not shut off from George Avenue and 14th Street. We want Howard University to stand as a pinnacle of black America as far as education is concerned.

**TONY GITTENS:** You know, we're talking about Howard University, we're talking about black people, black people asking for freedom and more rights. We don't care what happens at white universities.

**REPORTER:** Realistically, how long can you sit in this building?

**TONY GITTENS:** Oh, realistically, we're going to stay here until, you know, we get what we want. That's being very realistic. At some point, the university trustees and administration, they wanted to negotiate, they wanted to sit and talk with us to find out what was going on. And so we put together a negotiating team, and the team was headed by Adrienne Manns.

**ADRIENNE MANNs:** And so we were going back and forth, back and forth, on a lot of issues. And it came down to two that were a problem. First was Nabor's resignation, and the trustees told us that he planned to retire the next year so that they felt there was no need to ask him to resign. And secondly was on the matter of black, the word black. We wanted Howard to make a statement about its commitment to the black community, to the welfare of the black community. And the trustees said no, they couldn't do that.

**NARRATOR:** The takeover had entered its third day. Students expected to be evicted by the Washington, DC police, a force that was predominantly white. Despite the bravado, many feared police action on campus.

**KENNETH CLARK:** I felt strongly that we should do everything within our power to keep police from coming into this conflict, or coming on campus, because I had images of police using their nightsticks and their bludgeons and worse, really.

**ADRIENNE MANNs:** I had been at -- in October '67, at the Pentagon for the big peace march. I had gone to that and I'd seen how they had beat those people at the Pentagon. You know, young white people. And since they'll do that to them, I know what they'll do to us.

**NARRATOR:** By the fourth day, the trustees were ready to take legal action against the students. Clark pleaded with the students to end their protest. He told them the trustees would not accept the students definition of a black university. But they would give students a greater voice in developing the curriculum.

**TONY GITTENS:** We talked about it that night, and that morning we got up and we went down and we said, you know "It's time for us to go." And we gave our reasons why we should go. And we asked all the press to leave who were there, and we had open mikes so students could come up and they could say whether they were for it, whether they were against it, whatever the -- that went on for about an hour, hour and a half, two hours. We took a voice vote, and the agreement was that we should go.

**TONY GITTENS:** We have made a major move in our protest to move Howard toward becoming a black university. Howard is well on its way towards its becoming a black university, the type of black university we want to see. If we didn't believe that, we would not come out of this building.

**KENNETH CLARK:** We are concerned, first, with these young people, the students of Howard University as human beings and we are identified with them as human beings.

**NARRATOR:** The students ended their takeover. It had lasted five days. Police had not intervened. The following semester, Howard University sponsored a national conference called For the Black University. It energized a growing black studies movement throughout the country.

**PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON:** I am the resurrection and the light, says the Lord. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, literally lives. And whosoever liveth --

**NARRATOR:** Twelve days after the takeover at Howard, Martin Luther King was assassinated. Anger tore through American cities. It was the nation's fifth year of civil unrest. In November, 1968, Republican Richard M. Nixon was elected President. His campaign had called for law and order.

**PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON:** We've been putting out billions of dollars for programs for federal jobs and federal housing and federal welfare and I'll tell you what we've reaped. We've reaped a harvest of riot and frustration and failure, and now they want to put billions more into the same programs and I say no. My friends, I say when you're on a wrong road, you get off of it and you take a new road.



**ARTHUR EVE:** Many of us had experienced great expectations and hopes on the great society and programs of the '60s and civil rights and so forth. We saw Nixon's election as taking away those gains. We saw the system moving away from a commitment to people and hunger and housing and political empowerment.

**NARRATOR:** The Nixon years saw a rise in government repression in black activists at the national and local levels.

**REV. BEN CHAVIS:** For example, I was put in jail one night because my signal light didn't work. Another time I was put in jail because the registration of my car was not in my glove compartment, but in the trunk, in my briefcase and they wouldn't allow me to get my briefcase out of the trunk. But what it prevented me from doing was having a rally that night. It prevented me from organizing.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** Oh, what can it be? What can it be, whoa, whoa, be, what can it be? Oh that's holding me, what can it be, that's holding, holding me, holding me from-from-from getting free? Whoa, whoa, whoa, do you, do you, do you know?

**NARRATOR:** New visions were emerging. Black nationalists like poet Imamu Amiri Baraka called for black unity based on common concerns and a shared African heritage.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** We a big, we a big, big, big, black, black, we are the big black, bad, bad me, me, me, me to hook up, hook, hook, hook up into a bad black, we are bad, bad, a black, black, black, we, yeah, bad we, yeah, yeah, bad, bad we, see, yeah, we a, we a, we a bad, bad, black devil jammin', we, yeah.

**NARRATOR:** March 10th, 1972, black nationalists and elected officials, often at odds, put aside their differences to hold the national black political convention. It took place in Gary, Indiana, a city run by a black mayor.

**REV. BEN CHAVIS:** I remember when we first saw the sign saying, "Welcome to Gary." And we got downtown Gary, I mean we thought we were in a different country. I mean, to see a city in the United States, given the backdrop now of all this Nixon repression going on, a sense of disillusionment in some quarters of the nation, to drive into Gary, Indiana and see streamers, red, black and green, and "Welcome, National Black Political Convention." I mean, it was a fulfillment of what a lot of our dreams were.

**NARRATOR:** Eight thousand people arrived in Gary. Nearly half were delegates representing over 45 states. Their goal, to develop a national black agenda that would set priorities for black America. But not every black organization was represented.

**MARY HIGHTOWER:** One of our NAACP leaders came to the convention and he was opposed to our being there. And he was saying that we were separating ourselves, but we didn't see it that way.

**JESSE JACKSON:** There was a sense of alienation from the Democratic Party, Democrats taking us for granted, Republicans writing us off, and agenda items for jobs and peace and justice would no longer be an afterthought for some other party or some other person and the sense that we had to assert this new dynamic.

**NARRATOR:** Expectations were high on Saturday as Mayor Richard Hatcher opened the convention.

**RICHARD HATCHER:** Probably one of the most glorious moments of my life was when I walked out and saw all of these black people of every color, every hue, every shade, but colorful dashikis and other African garb that some of them wore, mixing with the three piece suits and so forth. It was just an incredible sight to behold.

I believe that the '70s will be the decade of an independent black political thrust. Its destiny will depend on us here at Gary this afternoon. How shall we respond? Will we walk in unity or disperse in a thousand different directions? Will we stand for principle or settle for a mess of potage? Will we maintain our integrity or will we succumb to the man's temptation? Will we act like free black men or like timid, shivering chattel? Will we do what must be done? These are the questions confronting this convention and we, you and I, are the only ones that can answer them and history will be the judge. Thank you.

**JESSE JACKSON:** We are pregnant. We are ready for change and whether a doctor is there or not, the water has broke, the blood has spilled. A new black Jesus is going to be born! We know who our parents are, their baby has now been born. We are grown, we ain't taking it no more. No more "yes, sir boss." No more bowing and scraping. We are 25 million strong, cut us in or cut it out. We're their new ball game.

**NARRATOR:** The crowd began calling for nation time.

**JESSE JACKSON:** What time is it? When we come together, what time is it? When we respect each other, what time is it? When we get ourself confident, what time is it? When we form our own political party, what time is it?

I'd drawn much of the strength of nation time from a poem written by LeRoi Jones, Amiri Baraka at that time. The sense of people saying, "What's happening?" "Nothing's happening, man." "Say, what's really happening?" It's nation time, it's time to come together, this time to organize politically, time for partnership.

**HARRY BELAFONTE:** It was an enormously exciting experiment and an idea. Could we come together, this diverse group? And in the absence of the glue that held it together previously, meaning Dr. King, meaning Malcolm X, in the absence of those leaders, and particularly Dr. King, what would emerge out of this? Could there be a consensus?

**NARRATOR:** The convention's theme was unity without uniformity. But agreement on a single black agenda would be difficult.

**CHARLES DIGGS:** The chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. McLynn.

**MR. MCLYNN:** Mr. Speaker, I move that nominations be closed.

**NARRATOR:** Congressman Charles Diggs attempted to close nominations for convener, but many delegates had been shut out of other political conventions. They were determined to be heard at Gary.

**CHARLES DIGGS:** The nominations have been closed. All of those in favor of closing the nominations, signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay. In the opinion of the chair, the ayes have it.

**REV. BEN CHAVIS:** And unfortunately, Diggs misread the crowd because when he said the chair rules that the nominations are closed, hey, pandemonium broke out. We wanted an open convention, not a repressed convention. And so Diggs, you know, got himself in some hot water. And it took Amiri Baraka, Imamu Baraka, to come with his version of Africans Consensus. I remember Baraka's statement, he said, "Now, sisters and brothers, we must use some scientific process to bring this gathering together so that we can achieve our objectives." But it was the way that Baraka said it. He didn't say it arrogantly, he said it caringly.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** I wasn't an elected official, I wasn't a mayor or wasn't a congressman, but I was a black nationalist, I was an activist, and I felt a lot of those people had come to Gary because of our organizing, our, you know, pleading with people to come and, you know, be part of the whole black political development. And I thought it was important that the thing not fly apart. Can we do that? California, will you accept that? Can we move by general acclimation to accept that and add that to our revolution? All right.

**NARRATOR:** With Baraka presiding, intense debate began on the agenda.

**RICHARD HATCHER:** It was a wonderful agenda. It addressed the issue of political parity. But we also talked about economic parity and the need to establish economic institutions. Many of the discussions that are ongoing today were occurring at that meeting. Unemployment, the proportionate level of unemployment among blacks, the disproportionate level of poverty among blacks and what to do about it, what kinds of new institutions could be created to address those problems?

**MAN:** There's a report, a resolution that we must make and it has to do with the suffering, the suffering of our young children as it relates to the educational policies that are in existence in the South.

**NARRATOR:** Delegates proposed remedies for years of inequity in education, housing, and job opportunities. And they went further, addressing issues on behalf of all Americans; the need for national health insurance, for day care and elder care, and for environmental safeguards.

**NARRATOR:** The push to establish national priorities collided with local interests.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** Now, some of you all need to cool yourself out a little bit. New York, Michigan, Illinois -- After those meetings, people wouldn't go to sleep, they would caucus. And each state would caucus, you know, and then there would be causes inside the caucuses because then you'd have the elected officials caucusing inside the state and then you'd have the black nationalists caucusing inside there, and then a lot of time, there was a Marxist or somebody else, they'd be caucusing.

**QUEEN MOTHER MOORE:** And this document tells you why the man owes you reparation. There honey, you want reparations? Take it. This is reparations. This is how you've been injured, this is how you've been destroyed. You was changed from an African into a Negro, you've been damaged, injured. They took your name, took your pulse. I don't have my sunny black color --

**MAN:** Thank you very much.

**QUEEN MOTHER MOORE:** No, I want an afro. I can't even wear one, the man done messed it up.

**DICK GREGORY:** What baffles me is so many white folks in America keep wanting to know, "What's wrong with them? Niggers must be crazy." Oh baby, understand one thing, niggers got more sense today than ever before in their history of America. And when niggers was basically crazy, that's when he thought we had good sense. Yeah, that's right. When he was running around goosing me in the rump, rubbing my head, "Come here, Jabbo." "Yassir, boss?" When I was basically crazy. Now we talk about getting our thing together, getting our sanity together, baby. Once you get your mind together, baby, ain't nobody deal with you. That's what this convention is all about, getting our minds together. When we leave here, it's going to be a different day.

**RICHARD HATCHER:** The last day of the convention was Sunday. We were slated to wrap up at noon, and the purpose of that last day was the adoption of the resolutions that had been agreed to by the body.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** Let's get back and deal with the situation. Now please, will you delegates return to your seats?

**NARRATOR:** Delegates pushed to adopt the national black agenda, but some Michigan delegates felt the document was too separatist in tone and might hurt black alliances, especially with organized labor. The delegation threatened to walk.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** We going to vote. Only we have more unreadiness which we going to allow. And that is to hear what Michigan has to say because we're going to call this vote.



**COLEMAN YOUNG:** Mr. Chairman, now it was my understanding, and I believe that the six man committee will confirm it, that the agreement before you rules out a walk out by us or any minority port. We, too, are trying to preserve black unity.

**WILLIE FELDER:** You must remember that 65 percent or better of that delegate body from Michigan were from labor; auto workers, steel workers, municipal workers and so forth. And you had some of the most renown labor personalities folded into that delegation who were international figures.

**NARRATOR:** Michigan asked for more time, but the request was denied. As pressure mounted to approve the agenda, members of the Michigan delegation began to walk. At the 11th hour, the fragile coalition at Gary seemed on the verge of falling apart.

**AMIRI BARAKA:** Michigan, Michigan.

**MARY HIGHTOWER:** We felt like once Michigan delegation walked out, others were going to walk out. And we was, you know, we were really afraid, you know. Everybody was -- is like standing there dumbfounded for a while, really realizing what's going to happen next?

**NARRATOR:** But the coalition held. Not all the Michigan delegates had walked.

**MAN:** And to second that, to second that motion Mr. Chairman, I also want to point out that we want to succeed with adopting that agenda because time has long passed when a state or an instance can intimidate the whole black nation.

**REV. BEN CHAVIS:** It's nation time, it's nation time, it's nation time. Let the black nation rise. I mean, you could hear reverberating all those prior stories from the '40s and the '30s and the '50s and the '60s, I mean, came to be fulfilled in that moment of crying that it's nation time now. Not next year, not next century, but now, in 1973 in Gary, Indiana.

**RICHARD HATCHER:** People went back home, rolled up their sleeves and ran for public office in a way that blacks had never thought about running for public office before.

**NARRATOR:** The National Black Agenda was published on the birthday of Malcolm X. It articulated a new spirit of independent black politics. Within ten years, the number of black elected officials in the United States jumped from 2,264 to more than 5,000.