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Introduction

Law enforcement officials loom large as villains in the history of the civil rights movement. J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) stifled activists with covert surveillance, while Birmingham commissioner of public safety Bull Connor attacked them with German shepherds and fire hoses. Some segregationist Southern sheriffs even plotted the murders of civil rights workers. These men deserve the scorn they have received. But too many Americans have found false comfort in treating them as anomalies whose pathological abuses were reined in by federal authorities, a national devotion to fairness and democracy, and an equitable justice system outside the South. It is a myth that law enforcement gladly promotes.

To understand the roots of racism and violence in policing in the twenty-first century, we need to look beyond Hoover's FBI and the most sadistic segregationist sheriffs, the avowed enemies of Martin Luther King Jr. Behind them lies a deep history of local police not just in Alabama and Mississippi but in the cities of the North, West, and purportedly progressive New South—everywhere from New York to Los Angeles, Houston to Philadelphia. While they invoked the “color-blind” pursuit of “law and order” in public pronouncements, local police sabotaged the work of civil rights activists with calculated stealth.

2 INTRODUCTION

Birmingham and Selma guaranteed that the image of officers beating Black protesters would prevail as symbols of police violence for decades to come. On the one hand, photographs and film footage exposed brutality by white law enforcement against Black people; they roused thousands to march against white supremacy. It is not an exaggeration to credit them with generating much of the political momentum that propelled the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to passage.

And yet, just as these captured images ignited political firestorms—like today’s cell phone videos of law enforcement misdeeds—they also narrowed the public’s conception of police violence. Both then and now, they have been misinterpreted as evidence that police violence is always recognizable by its physical brutality, something that can be documented on film or video that will strike all decent people as wrong, if disseminated.

But what about police violence that is not easily caught on camera, abuses that have escaped the attention of many Americans? We might think of these as instances of “slow violence.” These are unhurried acts of harm, the products of painstaking design that exact damage in a such a subtle and drawn-out manner as to not appear violent at all, at least not to many observers. Examples include many of the insidious weapons police used against civil rights organizers in the 1960s: retaliatory felony prosecutions; the infiltration of activist groups by undercover officers; widespread surveillance, which many in the movement suspected at the time but could not prove; and a campaign of vilification aimed at destroying activists’ reputations and halting their organizations’ gains. These tactics were gradual in both their execution and their effect. These slow but violent acts committed by police against the civil rights movement—and the activists who fought back against them—are the subject of this book.¹

One of the most persistent and pernicious myths about the movement was that it endured police violence without fighting it. More than a few contemporary commentators have claimed that a meaningful

national movement against police violence did not materialize in America until the Movement for Black Lives emerged in the 2010s. The *Washington Post* argued in 2015, for instance, that “the Black Lives Matter [BLM] movement is picking up the unfinished work of activists who fought for equal voting rights five decades ago.” And the *Los Angeles Times* noted in the wake of the summer of 2020 that “the unfinished work of the civil rights movement was laid bare” by that year’s protests. Indeed, this framing of police violence as an issue that the civil rights movement failed to address—presumably because the problem was too intractable, or because activists did not understand it, or because the movement was too busy with other issues—has proved all too common since the emergence of BLM.²

In fact, civil rights organizers did not at all leave the fight against racist police violence “unfinished.” Rather, activists were steadfast in their efforts to combat repressive law enforcement. But the organizers who dared to protest police abuses against Black citizens found themselves the targets of tremendous and ultimately overwhelming violence that derailed, discouraged, and discredited the movement. These attacks took physical, psychological, economic, and legal forms. Far from surrendering to this onslaught, civil rights organizers waged a defiant counterattack on the array of violence perpetrated by police against Black people, including assaults aimed at the movement.

By the middle of the 1960s, some activists—especially in two of the civil rights movement’s more radical organizations, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—insisted on confronting police abuses. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) clung to a decades-old legalistic strategy of suing police departments in selective instances of egregious physical violence against Black citizens. Dr. King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference meanwhile singled out the most unapologetically abusive police departments—such as those in Birmingham and Selma—with campaigns for desegregation and voter registration designed to prod them into violent overreactions, as part of a strategy to attract national media attention. But neither group made organizing against law enforcement abuses a significant part of their efforts.

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The organizers of CORE and SNCC, by contrast, took direct action against police violence. They picketed law enforcement outside city halls and department headquarters, staged sit-ins in precinct stations, and stopped traffic on busy streets to protest police misdeeds. CORE organizers developed a theory of “police malpractice” to cover the wide array of abuses by law enforcement, including false arrests and political prosecutions, not just physical attacks on protesters. SNCC, in turn, came to understand police abuses as manifestations of structural racism and state repression that presaged the onset of fascism. On the West Coast, CORE and SNCC organizers helped establish street teams to monitor police in African American neighborhoods as early as 1965, pioneering an approach that the Black Panther Party later made famous. While the Panthers and other Black Power groups of the late 1960s tended to dismiss earlier civil rights activists as too moderate, their own work built on these previous efforts by the movement’s radical critics of police power.

Over time, SNCC and CORE expanded their work against physical brutality to focus on political policing, namely, the monitoring and legal harassment of activists for organizing activities regarded as criminally subversive. Although political ideology informs all varieties of policing, this approach to law enforcement explicitly targets those who are politically active. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political police targeted leftists and labor organizers with backgrounds as European immigrants. As Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association emerged as a mass movement in the 1920s and African Americans joined the Communist Party in growing numbers in the 1930s and 1940s, police began to set their sights on Black activists, too. But only by the start of the 1960s, after the pervasive repression of the Red Scare had decimated the Communist Party, did the ascendant struggle for racial justice—or the “long civil rights movement”—capture the full attention of political police.³

Within this context, political policing took shape as a potent but underrecognized variety of what scholars have termed the anti-Black punitive tradition. In a body of literature that has ballooned in the last two decades, researchers have explored criminalization and

incarceration as white supremacist tools of social control imposed on African Americans throughout U.S. history. And yet, the very slowness of the covert methods and legalistic weapons deployed by police against Black activists has functioned as camouflage. This is especially true for local police, whose sparse recordkeeping and widespread destruction of surveillance files have posed particular challenges for historians, in contrast to the extensive paper trails left behind by even the most secretive federal law enforcement agencies.⁴

By placing political policing at the heart of the anti-Black punitive tradition, this narrative returns localized state repression and activism against police violence to the center of the civil rights movement. Political policing of the movement is often remembered as the work of the federal government. Indeed, a common misperception is that while the FBI attacked activists with the sophisticated tools of surveillance and slander, local police were content to assault them with the primitive weapons of clubs and dogs. But local police were far more experienced in spying on and sabotaging activists than we have acknowledged—so much so that COINTELPRO, the FBI’s notorious counterintelligence program against “Black extremists” launched in August 1967, should be recognized for federalizing efforts that local police departments had already undertaken to disrupt the civil rights movement.⁵

Local law enforcement pioneered political policing. At the start of the twentieth century, before the FBI was founded, police in New York and Chicago formed political surveillance units tasked with monitoring local radicals, and in the decades between the two world wars, departments in almost every major American city followed suit. Colloquially known as “red squads,” these secretive detective divisions committed themselves to ferreting out communists and other Marxists. By the middle of the 1950s, they began to shift their focus to the burgeoning Black freedom movement. Red squads photographed protesters at rallies, monitored activists’ communications

and travels, and amassed countless filing cabinets of information on their political and private lives. Time and again, they noted peaceful, orderly, and legal activities in their surveillance reports, yet they continued to spy on civil rights organizers as though the safety of their cities depended on it. Decades before police utilized text mining and predictive algorithms, these intelligence units were the original pioneers of “big data surveillance” in law enforcement.⁶

By some measures, the scale of political policing by municipal departments exceeded that of the Bureau’s operations against activists. Because they were closer to the ground and embedded more deeply in their communities than federal authorities, local departments enjoyed an advantage in collecting information on organizers. As the civil rights movement swelled in the early and middle 1960s, police departments in New York, Philadelphia, Houston, and Nashville reimaged their existing red squads or formed new units to track a new generation of activists. The fewer than sixty FBI field offices covering the United States had far more area to cover than the roughly five hundred police departments that operated their own political intelligence units. The best estimates available indicate that while the FBI devoted three thousand of its agents to political intelligence by the end of the 1960s, America’s local police departments assigned more than 4,700 individuals to this work.⁷

Red squads attacked civil rights organizers in ways that even the FBI did not. Although the Bureau engaged private citizens to spy as volunteer or paid informants, it did not assign its own agents to carry out undercover work in Black activist organizations. A major reason for this was that the Bureau lacked the staff for infiltration. As late as 1968, barely one-half of 1 percent of the FBI’s agents were Black, which federal authorities admitted was a major impediment to collecting intelligence on Black activists. Although major city police departments were also overwhelmingly white, their share of Black officers ranged between 3 and 10 percent.⁸ In addition, Hoover banned his agents from going undercover, and the only documented cases in which his subordinates flouted the prohibition were in infiltrating white antiwar groups—but not Black-led organizations. Hoover feared that any undercover FBI agents discovered spying on activists would harm the agency’s reputation and raise charges of

entrapment and political prosecution. Paid informants were simply easier to disavow than salaried federal employees.⁹

Local police displayed no such qualms in their attempts to sabotage the movement. Red squads in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston, for example, assigned officers to assume false identities and masquerade as activists so that they could infiltrate SNCC and CORE. In each of these instances recounted in detail later in this work, undercover agents were dispatched to spy on activists who had protested police brutality. In one case, an officer admitted under oath that he encouraged three activists to blow up the Statue of Liberty with dynamite and even helped them obtain the explosives. His testimony secured the trio's conviction and sentencing to federal prison. In another incident, a civil rights organizer passed a single joint of marijuana to an undercover officer who later testified that the activist had effectively sold him weed, resulting in a thirty-year prison sentence for the organizer. Over the course of the 1960s, police departments in Houston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Nashville indicted dozens of SNCC organizers on felony charges of inciting riots or other violent plots. Although virtually every one of these charges ended up falling apart in court or being dropped altogether by prosecutors, police largely succeeded in stymieing SNCC's activities in these cities, particularly their work against police abuses.

Over and over, red squads were firsthand observers of the movement's defining moments, if not direct participants in them. Undercover detectives watched as Klansmen attacked Freedom Riders in Alabama in 1961, and they stood in the audience of the March on Washington in 1963 on the National Mall. Police intelligence monitored King when he campaigned against housing segregation in Chicago in 1966 and when he arrived in Memphis two years later to support the city's striking Black sanitation workers. And, perhaps most disturbingly, red squad officers stood mere feet from both King and Malcolm X at the moments they were murdered.¹⁰

At the start of the 1960s, polling suggested that most Americans considered political protest to be ineffective. A significant majority

disapproved of early civil rights actions such as the Freedom Rides. And the idea of protesting the police lay not only far outside the political mainstream but beyond what most left-wing organizations considered prudent. At the time, opinion surveys showed that an overwhelming majority of Americans had deep respect for police and simply did not believe that officers assaulted citizens in their own communities. White Americans especially doubted that police brutality occurred in the cities and towns where they lived. And for those who did criticize police—mostly African Americans and a small segment of the white Left—the idea of protesting them on the street seemed like a reckless invitation for harassment, if not worse. In some communities, citizens were charged with resisting arrest, assaulting officers, or filing false reports in retaliation for making formal complaints against police abuses.¹¹

One source of resistance to activists' efforts was the widespread belief in law enforcement's fairness. In a poll completed in 1960, for example, 85 percent of respondents—a number that came notably close to the proportion of the U.S. population that was white—asserted that if they “had some trouble with the police,” they believed that they would be treated the same as anyone else. The overwhelming majority of Americans, it seemed, could not conceive that law enforcement might interact with one group of people differently than another. Widespread, deep-seated bias in favor of the law and those who enforced it was only further exacerbated by the rise of “law and order” politics later in the decade, championed by Richard Nixon and George Wallace in response to uprisings in Black communities, spiraling crime rates, and proliferating street protests, all of which they were eager to blame on the supposed disorder and disobedience advanced by the civil rights movement.¹²

To challenge the police was to attack one of the country's most cherished myths: the notion that the law was impartial. The activists doing this work understood that legal desegregation was not going to end police violence against Black people, as they recognized the limitations of the segregation-versus-integration framework that white media and officials embraced for assessing the movement's activities. For many liberals, the solution to the country's crisis of racial

inequality was to create federal laws that superseded discriminatory state and local statutes in the South (and they did think that the problem of racism was mostly in the South). But if America was a “nation of laws, not of men,” as many liberals claimed, what good was it if those charged with law enforcement could do as they pleased, without facing any punishment for violating laws themselves? What was the use of civil rights legislation if it failed to address the police who discriminated and brutalized, not only in the South but in all parts of the United States? That the answers to these questions proved so vexing highlights why the fight against police violence was among the civil rights movement’s most radical undertakings—and why that fight continues to inspire sustained attacks from law enforcement and elected officials to this day.

In the wake of the brutal Birmingham police response to protests in 1963, many civil rights organizers zeroed in on police repression. That August, the famed Black psychologist Kenneth Clark interviewed SNCC executive secretary James Forman for a public television documentary. Asked what challenges the movement faced in registering Black voters in Alabama and Mississippi, Forman answered without hesitation. “Police brutality is the number one problem in the South,” he declared, citing weekly harassment and attacks by officers on SNCC organizers.¹³

“What the dogs and guns and hoses have proved is that the entire power structure of the South must be altered,” Lorraine Hansberry wrote later that year in *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality*, a book published by SNCC that paired Hansberry’s original writings on civil rights work with photographs by Danny Lyon and other SNCC staffers. The book’s cover featured a shot of a white Atlanta police officer placing Black high schooler Taylor Washington in a headlock as he arrested him at a protest (see figure I.1). “The original demand for equal treatment on buses and at lunch counters has had to broaden and sharpen, to strike at the political base of Negro oppression,” Hansberry told readers, arguing that police violence

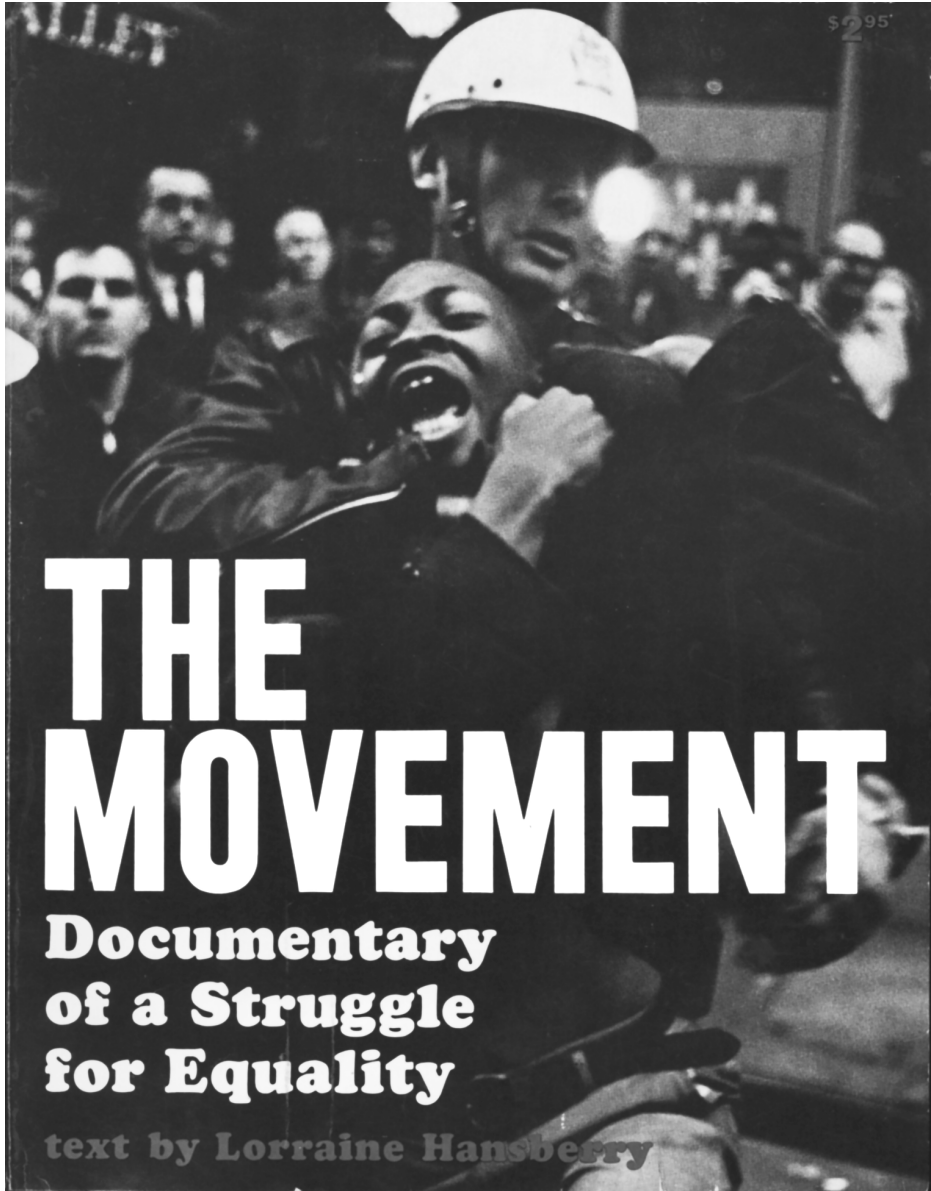


FIGURE 1.1. Authored by Lorraine Hansberry, *The Movement* was published by SNCC and featured multiple photographs of police taken by staff photographers Danny Lyon and Matt Herron. Courtesy of the SNCC Legacy Project.

had helped organizers identify the ultimate source of the racism confronting them. Months later, in April 1964, CORE director James Farmer made a strikingly similar observation: “The feeling in the Negro community, especially in the North, is stronger against police brutality than anything else.”¹⁴

A handful of studies have explored the history of activism against police violence. Indebted to these scholars’ work, I offer this book as a retelling of the national civil rights struggle through its work against police violence—and the police who attacked the movement with surveillance, undercover agents, and retaliatory prosecutions. Focusing on a cast of figures whose entanglements with law enforcement were both representative and exceptional, this book tells the story of police and civil rights organizers as it played out on the ground across the United States.¹⁵

Many of the individuals in this work are largely forgotten today. Although King is remembered for his eloquent denunciation of police brutality at the March on Washington, he was not at the forefront of organizing efforts against police violence. As our perspective on law enforcement and the movement has narrowly focused on the FBI and especially its abuses against King, we have lost view of the work against police violence by noted civil rights leaders such as Ella Baker, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Fannie Lou Hamer; we have almost entirely forgotten once-prominent organizers devoted to combating police abuses such as Herb Callender, Mike Hannon, and Lee Otis Johnson; and we have failed to recognize how an activist such as Angela Davis, whom we do not typically remember as part of the civil rights movement, challenged police power during her time with SNCC and later built an alliance against state repression with Ralph David Abernathy and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Far from being an exhaustive list, these individuals represent a selection of activists who placed the fight against police violence at the center of their work, even as they themselves endured sustained state repression.

Civil rights activism against police violence predated the famed Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, which popular memory credits with launching the movement. A prime example is Ella Baker’s work

as the head of New York City's NAACP chapter in an extended campaign against police assaults on unarmed Black citizens in 1953, at the height of the Red Scare. But when New York Police Department officials and the police union struck back with furious accusations that the NAACP was perpetrating a communist plot to defame the department, they effectively rendered the issue of police brutality radioactive for Black activists, both in New York and nationally, by hinting that protests against police could attract scrutiny from federal law enforcement or even Congress's House Un-American Activities Committee. Not surprisingly, the NAACP—which had endorsed anticommunism in 1950—shifted away from direct action protests and community organizing against police violence. Instead, they employed a more cautious approach of filing civil lawsuits on behalf of the victims of egregious police violence and lobbying federal officials to prosecute the most flagrant abuses by local departments.¹⁶

In contrast to the NAACP's national leadership, activists like Baker who collaborated with current or former socialists and communists did not shy from organizing direct action protests against police violence. For decades, communists had articulated an analysis of police violence as political repression and spent more time than any other group campaigning against it, especially through organizations such as the International Labor Defense, the Civil Rights Congress, and the National Lawyers Guild. But because this work carried the taint of leftist radicalism, many in the new generation of civil rights leaders who emerged in the 1950s considered protesting the police too politically risky. That changed with CORE and SNCC in the 1960s.¹⁷

To place activism against police violence at the center of our larger narrative of the civil rights struggle is to bring communists and socialists back into the history of the movement. Many in the movement denied this influence for years, hoping to protect themselves from the vicious red-baiting of the Cold War era. Communists forged critical alliances with Black civil rights and labor groups who fought police violence in the 1930s and 1940s—as a number of scholars have skillfully shown—but the alliances that

quietly continued in the 1950s and 1960s deserve more attention. In addition to regular protests against physical brutality by police, communists regularly decried political policing in their writings, with frequent criticisms of the “frame-up system” that prosecuted radicals and editorials against police intelligence units as little more than agents provocateurs.¹⁸

Why did some—but not all—civil rights activists pinpoint police abuses as one of the most significant threats to Black freedom? Generally speaking, those in the movement who devoted considerable energy to fighting police abuses shared two experiences. First, they were open to working with socialists and communists and were shaped by their thinking on police. Second, they had personally witnessed right-wing vigilante attacks on activists made possible by police collusion. For many, this was a formative lesson of the Freedom Rides, when Birmingham and Montgomery police covertly assisted Klan members in carrying out vicious attacks on protesters. Although racist terror lynchings had virtually ceased by 1950, police continued to facilitate mob attacks in the civil rights era, and those activists who endured such attacks were understandably more skeptical of police than their peers who had not.¹⁹

These differences in experience translated into varying interpretations of police violence among activists. A central question that emerged was whether police violence required a legal remedy or a broader political solution, whether it was merely the doing of individual racist officers who broke the law or, rather, a fundamental expression of an oppressive political ideology. Some of the more radical organizers in SNCC and CORE embraced the view that law enforcement was committed to creating and defending a political order with a wide array of violence. This was not a matter of unkind officers or hardened segregationists; this was baked into the design of the system, they insisted, arguing that anti-Black policing was part and parcel of the larger plague of American racism. Organizers in SNCC and CORE came to view police violence not only as a challenge confronting their movement or a symptom of racial inequality but as an active ingredient of white supremacy. In many ways, their

thinking anticipated the theoretical underpinnings of the movement to abolish prisons and police that emerged decades later.

In writing this book, I have often felt that I am telling a story that many do not want told. For decades, police and public officials have worked hard to conceal their attacks on the civil rights movement. Most police intelligence work against Black activists remained secret for years—the stuff of lore within the movement but rarely acknowledged by officials or mainstream journalists and almost always denied by police. This changed in the 1970s, when activists in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Memphis, and Houston sued local police departments and city governments after uncovering records of sustained surveillance and other invasive counterintelligence measures deployed by red squads. Many of these activists brought their experiences in the civil rights movement from the previous decade to this legal crusade. Today, however, this national movement by organizers against local police repression and surveillance in the 1970s is barely remembered, overshadowed by the revelations of federal intelligence abuses that emerged from the Watergate scandal; the break-in at the Media, Pennsylvania, FBI office; and U.S. Senator Frank Church’s Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities.

No national investigations or hearings were ever held to probe the extensive abuses by local police against activist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, and no federal action was taken. Lawmakers in a handful of states such as Maryland and California convened committees to emulate Church’s work, but their impact was minimal. To make matters worse, state legislatures across the country enacted public records laws in subsequent decades that permanently prohibited the release of police personnel and investigative files in perpetuity, as well as the identities of undercover officers—in some cases even after they have passed away. By contrast, the federal Freedom of Information Act allows for the release of personnel and investigative records from the FBI, including hundreds of thousands of

pages detailing the Bureau's surveillance of activists. For all that federal law enforcement has withheld, researchers still have far less access to records documenting local political policing of the civil rights movement. Most troubling of all, police departments in New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and numerous other cities shredded and incinerated millions of intelligence documents in the 1970s as activists confronted them with civil suits, deliberately seeking to destroy the primary sources detailing their abuses.

Indeed, police have gone to great lengths to conceal their contemptible record of attacks on the civil rights movement. Each January on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, police departments fall over themselves to celebrate the civil rights leader, all the while glossing over the violence they have perpetrated against racial justice movements, including against King himself. Accounts of the 1960s written by police for their profession's museums and textbooks make virtually no mention of their widespread surveillance or retaliations against the movement, though they often point to FBI abuses. All told, we might conceive of these efforts by police as a remarkable act of unremembering, something much more conscious than mere forgetting—an intentional campaign to erase history.²⁰

Using a variety of research strategies, I have reconstructed the historical record on police and civil rights that officials have worked so hard to conceal and destroy. More than sixty years after the civil rights movement, law enforcement agencies have slowly released many of the documents pertaining to the individuals in this book in response to public records requests that I have submitted. I've visited municipal storerooms in dusty basements in Los Angeles and convinced reluctant file clerks in Houston to produce court records believed to be lost for decades, and I've located forgotten police records—including secret surveillance files of civil rights activists—squirreled away in city archives, mayoral papers, and the once-closed files of congressional investigative committees.

Through the Freedom of Information Act, I have obtained thousands of pages of classified FBI records on police investigations of activists, a large share of them held by the National Archives and never before released to researchers. Many of these records are

held by the federal government only because the FBI requested that municipal police agencies brief them on local investigations of civil rights organizers. Some of these documents raise new questions about the criminal prosecutions of activists and even whether law enforcement officials themselves may have committed crimes in their investigations of these individuals.

Today, many Americans embrace the civil rights movement as the nation's ultimate expression of democracy in action. But anyone serious in that belief must recognize the inverse to be true as well: that police attacks on the civil rights movement were profoundly antidemocratic. In recent years, scholars have advanced the concept of racial authoritarianism to explain the United States' political history. For decades, researchers reserved this term to describe formally segregated states such as apartheid-era South Africa. Increasingly, however, political scientists recognize the corrosive, authoritarian effect represented by formally democratic states' treatment of racial minorities. Of course, African Americans have long been excluded from full participation in the American political system. And it was police, arguably more than any other agents of the state, who employed coercion, violence, and punishment to ensure such disenfranchisement. Police repression of the civil rights movement was nothing less than state action to ward off organized efforts at democratization.²¹

The astonishingly effective work of police against the activists who protested them in the 1960s does much to explain why no national movement against police violence emerged in America for half a century. The sabotage of the civil rights struggle demonstrated just how great the political, legal, and economic risks were for organizers who confronted law enforcement. Local movements against police brutality popped up around the country in the decades that followed, as did organizations devoted to prison abolition that periodically addressed police abuses, such as Critical Resistance. These groups netted meaningful victories along the way. But for fifty

years, nothing approached the national significance and visibility of organizers' work against police abuses in the 1960s and early 1970s.

That finally changed in the 2010s, with the emergence of the Movement for Black Lives. Today, we can see the legacy of police antagonism to civil rights in the vilification of Black Lives Matter by law enforcement—and by the political Right more broadly—as they insist that BLM and its allies betray the goals of King, whom they now claim to revere. Many Americans unfortunately believe that activists who attack racist policing do more harm than good, even as the civil rights movement of the 1960s continues to enjoy a reputation as a shining example of American democracy. In the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020, an estimated fifteen to twenty-six million people protested for Black lives and against police violence all over the United States—the largest wave of sustained political protest in American history. And yet, polls three years later suggested that barely half of Americans still supported Black Lives Matter and more than 40 percent opposed it.²²

Looking back, we can trace the origins of our political paralysis in the face of law enforcement abuses to the war that police waged against the civil rights movement. If we wish to eliminate a culture of policing in which unarmed Black citizens can be killed with impunity, in which law enforcement officers attack racial justice activists with invasive surveillance, legal retribution, and violent force—if we do *not* want this to be our future—then we must confront our past.

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