



Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)

By Stokely Carmichael

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The astonishing personal and political autobiography of Stokely Carmichael, the legendary civil rights leader, Black Power architect, Pan-African activist, and revolutionary thinker and organizer known as Kwame Ture.

Head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Honorary prime minister of the Black Panther Party. Bestselling author. Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) is an American legend, one whose work as a civil rights leader fundamentally altered the course of history—and our understanding of Pan-Africanism today. *Ready for Revolution* recounts the extraordinary course of Carmichael's life, from his Trinidadian youth to his consciousness-raising years in Harlem to his rise as the patriarch of the Black Power movement.

In his own words, Carmichael tells the story of his fight for social justice with candor, wit, and passion—and a cast of luminaries that includes James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh, and Fidel Castro, among others. Carmichael's personal testimony captures the pulse of the cultural upheavals that characterize the modern world. This landmark, posthumously published autobiography reintroduces us to a man whose love of freedom fueled his fight for revolution to the end.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Stokely Carmichael (known as Kwame Ture later in his life) died before his autobiography, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael*, could be completed, so much of the text was stitched together from extensive taped sessions by his long-time friend, Ekweeme Michael Thelwell. What remains is a sometimes uneven but always stirring record one of the most fascinating and controversial figures of the Twentieth Century.

Carmichael was born in Trinidad, but his life as an activist began with his immersion in the Civil Rights movement at the Bronx High School of Science and then Howard University in the 1950s and 60s. At Howard he joined the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) and later, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), through which he drove voter registration efforts in Mississippi and Alabama. Later, as chairman of the SNCC he moved beyond the teachings of nonviolent resistance and forged the Black Power movement, authoring one of its key documents, "Toward Black Liberation" with Thelwell. He became a nationally recognized figure, reviled by leaders on both the left and the right for his apparent abandonment of integration. Yet his vision for black self-determinism would empower a generation of African-American artists, scholars, and leaders to embrace a new vision of African and African-American identity that is still transforming black culture. Eventually, Carmichael settled in Guinea, where he became a member of the ruling party and spent his later years promulgating his vision for Pan-African revolution.

In the introduction to *Ready for Revolution*, Thelwell admits that, in keeping the story faithful to the recordings, he left it essentially a "first draft" of Carmichael's vision. Thelwell's intrusions in the text, whether his own points or thoughts of others whom he interviewed are bracketed--while this formal approach honors Carmichael's words, the passages are often distracting and would have been better left as endnotes. Further, Thelwell seems to let Carmichael's original text stand where some pruning would have been beneficial, notably in Carmichael's overly detailed recounting of his school days. That said, Thelwell has done a great service to African-American studies by shepherding Carmichael's controversial, quirky, and uncompromising autobiography into print. --*Patrick O'Kelley*

From Publishers Weekly

The firebrand civil rights leader who led the call for Black Power in the 1960s looks back on nearly five decades of protests and freedom fighting in this passionate, posthumous autobiography. In collaboration with his friend Thelwell (a professor of Afro-American studies at the University of Massachusetts), Carmichael, who died in Guinea in 1998, traces his path from immigrant child of Trinidad to charismatic U.S. student activist and unrepentant revolutionary. The story is told largely in Carmichael's own stylish, often thunderous, first-person words and is named for the telephone greeting that the author used for much of his life. It covers the full sweep of events that shaped Carmichael's life: his years at the elite Bronx High School of Science and Howard University; summers spent registering black voters in Mississippi and Alabama; personal encounters with such leaders as Martin Luther King, James Baldwin and Malcolm X; and his sudden decision in 1969 to relocate to Africa and change his name to Kwame Ture. Carmichael also addresses controversial issues that surrounded him as a young civil rights activist: his splits with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers, and reports of ideological struggles with the pacifist King all "[u]tter, utter nonsense," he insists. While Carmichael's love for the African community and its traditions are infectiously passionate, the book's singular perspective, despite being intercut with other interviewees and sources, won't sustain every reader. The book is at its strongest when

Carmichael recounts powerful I-was-there anecdotes (most notably from his days as a SNCC organizer in Mississippi) that civil rights historians will devour. At its best, this is a compelling portrait of a radical thinker who radiated charisma and practiced revolution to the end.

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From [Booklist](#)

As a Freedom Rider, student movement organizer, Black Panther, and Pan-Africanist, Carmichael was an extremely important figure in the civil rights movement. His legacy, however, has been marred by accusations of misogyny and by those who interpret his black nationalism as antiwhite hostility. His autobiography, published posthumously with the help (and illuminating commentary) of fellow activist Thelwell, is a response to such charges and an attempt to define his legacy. It's also a fascinating read. Carmichael's life story begins with the steel-drum-band soundtrack of his childhood in Trinidad and takes us through the Bronx, politically charged Howard University, Mississippi jails, and the South Side of Chicago--a where's where of the civil rights movement--before reaching Guinea, where he continued his Pan-African efforts for 30 years until his death in 1998. Malcolm X, Fidel Castro, and Toni Morrison are described reverently. Often whimsically conversational in tone, Carmichael emerges as a passionate humanist and social revolutionary, determined to the end, yet less abrasive than his critics would have us believe. *Brendan Driscoll*

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