

# "Tainted" \$100,000

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Black people in Detroit, as elsewhere, are determined to control their own destinies. To do so, they must have absolute power over the institutions in their communities, as well as their own lives. They must be free of the controls imposed upon them by the white community.

One of the men in Detroit who has been working for the benefits of his black brothers is the Rev. Albert B. Cleage. As a result, the Rev. Cleage has had to deal with the sophisticated attempts of the power boys to undermine his position in the black community.

The creation of the New Detroit Committee was one such attempt. A group of middle-class affluent Negroes were organized, with the cooperation of the United Auto Workers, headed by Walter Reuther, to compete with the group led by the Rev. Cleage. Funds were made available to both the Rev. Cleage and the more moderate group. But these funds were not without strings to the Cleage group.

Acceptance of the money (\$100,000) would have cost the Rev. Cleage his reputation as an honest, strong black leader and would have prostituted the theory of self-determination. Conditions placed upon the money (e.g. constant supervision, no discretionary funds) were too restrictive to allow Rev. Cleage to disburse those funds to the black community.

In refusing to accept that tainted money, the Rev. Cleage did the only thing an honorable black man could do. He preserved his own integrity and the integrity of his people.

To be bribed is a sign that you are held in contempt. That money, offered by white men unaccustomed to contact with blacks, was the ultimate insult. It demonstrated their complete insensitivity to the mood of the black community and their belief that black people can be bought off cheaply; that they could be easily corrupted; their belief that black leaders are hungry for money that they will accept any controls. The Rev. Cleage and his black brothers proved them wrong.