

**CREATING REVOLUTION AS WE ADVANCE:  
THE REVOLUTIONARY YEARS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR  
SELF-DEFENSE AND THOSE WHO DESTROYED IT**

**DISSERTATION**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate  
School of The Ohio State University**

**By**

**James Thomas Jones III, B.A., M.A., M.A.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**The Ohio State University  
2005**

**Dissertation Committee:**

**Professor Warren Van Tine, Adviser**

**Professor William E. Nelson, Jr.**

**Professor James N. Upton**

**Approved by**

---

**Adviser**

**History Graduate Program**

**Copyright by  
James Thomas Jones III  
2005**

## **ABSTRACT**

**“Creating Revolution as We Advance” studies the Black Panther Party’s rise during the mid-sixties. The Nationalist aesthetic was contextualized by the non-violent civil disobedience theory of Dr. King, and Malcolm X’s rhetoric. The movement’s genesis was the majority community’s incessant attacks upon African-Americans Civil and Human rights. Additionally, the failure of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts to affect Black lives in a tangible manner was felt by all.**

**The Bay Area of California was the epicenter for American radicalism. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, two veterans of the burgeoning Oakland Black protest movement, created an activist alternative. Unbeknownst to Newton and Seale, the problems they were addressing were universal to Black urbanites. The Black Panther Party possessed unprecedented revolutionary potential for this latest generation of activists. By assuming the vanguard position, Newton and Seale advanced a politic that transgressed against Nationalist parochialism. Deriving their notoriety as a result of the gun, the co-founders were revolutionary to emasculated Black urbanites. Not until their attempt to replicate the Panther program did admirers become aware of Panther politics peculiarities. The Panther’s adoption of class was debated by all. Ironically, such sophistication set the stage for their.**

**The Panthers public embrace of left-leaning groups and individuals shocked all. Said alliances made the Black Panther Party the “greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.” Although initial adversarial attacks emanated from the local level, the Panthers were targeted by the federal government. “Creating Revolution as We Advance” focuses upon FBI attacks.**

**Dedicated to my parents**  
**James Thomas Jones, Jr., and Kathryn V. Jones**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**I wish to thank first of all, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

**I wish to thank Dr. Warren Van Tine for his unconditional support and encouragement during this unprecedented intellectual adventure. In a word, thanks.**

**I thank Dr. James Upton for displaying on a daily basis the true essence of a “scholar and a gentleman” from the moment I was fortunate enough to become his student.**

**I must send praise to Professor William E. Nelson, Jr., for simultaneously displaying the courage to “speak truth to power” while simultaneously serving as the most reliable safety net an aspiring scholar could ever wish for.**

**I wish to acknowledge Dr. Maurice Shipley for offering unconditional support via private conversations and helping to pave my path with every exchange of ideas.**

**To Dr. Marshall Stevenson, I am grateful to have been given the privilege of being your student. Your existence let me know that I could find my niche as an academician, while also teaching me to never seek validation from hostile forces.**

**To Dr. Paulette Pierce, the scholar that I consider my intellectual mother, thank you immeasurably for challenging and pushing me way past anything that I considered at the time reasonable. Your shining example of intellectual inquiry and**

**the presentation of such facts in a form that was accessible to the masses is one that I still strive to approach.**

**To Dr. Stephanie Shaw thank you for your encouraging words, you will never know how sorely they were needed and re-used at critical moments.**

**To my wife, Yvette S. Jones, you should know that none of this would have been possible without your support. Your presence in my life is the greatest example of that age old lesson that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is “an on-time God”. I love you.**

**Last but not least I would like to acknowledge a group of individuals who have impacted my life in ways that ensured that I would never be the same person. I would like to thank the following individuals for helping me to become who I am: Damon Thomas, Tony Quinn, John Calhoun, Ed Williams, Mario Martin, Jose Diaz, Marcus Allen, Mark Seay, Larry Beechum, Damon Butts, Eric Morris, the Vickers Family, the Jones family, the Youngs, and last but definitely not least James Thomas Jones IV. My love, respect, and adoration for you all stretches beyond the grave.**

## **VITA**

**April 30, 1970.....Born – Mansfield, Ohio**

**1994.....B.A. Black Studies,  
The Ohio State University.**

**1995.....M.A. Black Studies,  
The Ohio State University.**

**2000.....M.A. History,  
The Ohio State University**

**2001 - 2004..... Assistant Professor, History  
Columbus State  
Community College**

**2004 - Present.....Assistant Professor, History  
Prairie View A & M  
University**

## **FIELDS OF STUDY**

**Major Field: History**

**Minor Fields: African-American and African Studies**  
**Modern American History**  
**Black Power Era**  
**Black Nationalism Labor History**  
**African History**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Vita.....	viii
Chapters:	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The River Swells.....	12
3. The Founders.....	34
4. The Founding.....	48
5. Patrols, Guns, and Harassment.....	72
6. Gaining Fame By Getting Lost.....	94
7. Free Huey.....	113
8. Division and Repression.....	138
Conclusion.....	172
Bibliography.....	214

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The struggle of African-Americans to first obtain and then ensure first-class citizenship has been long and arduous. Historian Vincent Harding has analogized this epic struggle as a river. Harding's analogy expressed in an illuminating DuBoisian poetic verse, likens the African-American struggle for rights and citizenship to an always-existing river with unpredictable ebbs and flows, twists and turns. Regardless of the historical period examined, African-Americans have displayed unprecedented resilience and strength to both advance their collective agenda, and to protect previous and contemporary advances against unceasing external attacks. The struggle Harding illuminates was indisputably in a flow stage during the two decades that bookend the Civil Rights movement and Black Power era. This dissertation focuses upon the latter portion of this revolutionary episode.

On the heels of the nation celebrating its victory over the evils of state-sanctioned segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement, African-Americans were forced to realize the fallaciousness of the idea that the nation's laws guaranteeing the franchise and legislative equality would invariably translate into the exercise of equality for African-Americans. After realizing that liberty and justice for all was nowhere on the horizon, African-Americans continued to struggle against lingering impediments within American politico-economic institutions. Largely because of broken promises and the stark reality that the 1964 Civil Rights

and 1965 Voting Rights Acts were incapable of producing racial equality, segments of the African-American movement sought strategic alternatives. In direct opposition to popular constructions, the rise of alternative strategies and tactics, particularly the Nationalist strains, signaled the transformation of the Civil Rights movement into a new stage of struggle.

This change frames this story. Although this transformation serves as the context for this narrative, this study focuses upon the organization that activists, scholars, and theoreticians acknowledge was the vanguard of late-1960s African-American struggle: the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). Only by examining the genesis, ascent, decline, and ideological underpinnings of the BPP will scholars garner a greater understanding of African-American protest history, particularly its post-Voting Rights Act era.

This study is chronologically structured, yet thematically driven. It depicts both the transformation of the African-American freedom struggle's ideological underpinnings and the genesis and destruction of the BPP as a revolutionary vehicle. Academics have not sufficiently considered the BPP genesis, ascent, and decline as a revolutionary vehicle. The seminal piece of scholarly work upon the BPP is Charles Jones' *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, a work that although impressive in its contents is an edited volume of essays. Other scholarly published work has been scant at best including Smith's *An International History of the Black Panther Party* and Jeffries' *Huey P. Newton: The Radical Theorist*, volumes which fall far short of offering anything substantial to current understanding of the Panthers. This work is an initial step toward understanding the BPP historical legacy in its totality as a revolutionary vehicle. Toward achieving such a goal, the initial chapter of this study re-creates the larger historical context and culture that birthed African-American activists' abandonment of unconditional integration in favor of a less patient Nationalist aesthetic. This discussion begins with an

examination of the historical antecedents of mid-1960s radicalism within Black America.

Although the struggle to achieve liberation and sovereignty for New World Africans is centuries old, the author posits that the modern struggle for first-class citizenship began to flow in an uncontrollable manner in the period surrounding World War II. For the purposes of this study, the most appropriate moment to begin this discussion is amidst the national euphoric reaction to the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960s.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 are linchpins in the battle to obliterate the rampant racism destroying the nation. In an optimistic mood regarding race, the American masses hoped that President Lyndon Johnson's unprecedented race-related legislation would finally bridge the existing educational, economic, and political chasms between the races. In the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, despite a glaring lack of evidence, the nation claimed victory over the historically divisive and polarizing race issue. However, this revelry was silently plagued by a fundamental incongruence amongst the celebrators, a misunderstanding that made clean cuts along racial lines.

Whites not only celebrated the triumph of legislative racial equality, but also lectured African-Americans regarding the proper steps they must take to secure rights that had remained out of their grasp for decades. The advice emanating from majority culture contradicted the activist experiences of African-Americans. Instead of continuing the fight for first-class citizenship with the in-your-face agitation that had borne the fruits of the freedom struggle, whites advised continued patience, as the new legislation needed time to work. Whites contended that the same diligence used to secure legislation was in order for the struggle to eradicate state-sanctioned racial apartheid. Many African-Americans had also joined

celebrations surrounding the civil rights legislation and eagerly anticipated reaping tangible benefits in education, politics, housing, income, and overall increased economic opportunities.

Once the initial euphoria regarding the civil rights legislation subsided, the muted warnings of both Nationalists and moderate Leaders came to fruition. These leaders warned that racial equality was nowhere on the horizon. As they had predicted, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts proved insufficient in overcoming institutionalized racism. Most Americans came to realize that previous celebrations regarding America's final triumph over racial discrimination and segregation were drastically premature. Although a noticeable decline in the public's confidence in the new legislation best sums up the feelings of white liberals regarding the inescapable realities, African-American activists felt betrayed and disappointed. Most importantly, the collective disappointment carried implications for the integrationist-oriented Civil Rights movement, its leadership, and the future of interracial politics in America. Most notably, the atmosphere of betrayal gave increased prominence to Nationalist leaders and theoreticians. In hindsight, a reciprocal relationship existed between the increase in African-American frustrations and their receptiveness to the Black Nationalist aesthetic.

Part and parcel of this change was the abrupt alteration of the ideological underpinnings and trajectory of several leading Civil Rights organizations. Both integrationist-oriented moderate and Black Nationalist leaders fully realized that disappointment amongst African-Americans had set the stage for a highly contentious intra-racial battle for the leadership of the African-American freedom struggle. Feeding this ideological battle was the stark reality that a crucial segment of the Civil Rights community had already abandoned the pursuit of racial equality in favor of personally advantageous issues via identity politics. It is no mere coincidence that white flight from the African –American freedom struggle occurred in the midst

of a surge in Black Nationalism amongst African-Americans and identity politics amongst whites. Mid-1960s Black Nationalists had not only decided that the struggle for racial justice was primarily the Black man's fight, but was at best a symbolic gesture that would eventually prove illusory to most Americans. The vast majority of Civil Rights activists had not only unintentionally obscured this issue, but in the process unwittingly adopted a flawed politic that made the securing of theoretical equality synonymous with the exercise of said equality. King cites such erroneous thinking as the height of folly.

King advanced the idea that completions of the Civil Rights movement, and thus true racial equality, mandated that a second, relatively more difficult stage be completed. "The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. The limited reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses, and no taxes are required, for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries, parks, hotels, and other facilities with whites." The second stage called for African-American empowerment via the formation of a constitutionally guaranteed agency. This second stage implicitly called for the destruction of white monopolies in politics, economics, and education at which even the most moderate and patient African-American leaders predicted the nation would falter. In hindsight, such predictions appear not only prophetic, but also buttress the criticisms of Nationalist critics that whites' intentions were insincere regarding any true attempt to blur, let alone erase, the "color line".

Black Nationalists were in the forefront of those who saw the Civil Rights legislation as not enough. Nationalists invariably followed Malcolm X's lead and advised that America did not need to create more laws; instead, Malcolm X charged also that to win the fight, the leadership needed to drastically re-evaluate existing tactics, strategies, and goals. Motivated by James Baldwin's incisive query: "who wants to integrate into a burning house?" Black

Nationalists attempted to re-direct the future of Black America entirely. Many Blacks and whites opposed such political desires staunchly.

Martin Luther King, Jr's criticism of Lyndon Johnson's legislative additions are fairly representative of the moderated integrationist-oriented Civil Rights political position. King charged that public celebrations were not only unwarranted, but communicated a dangerous message to Civil Rights supporters and detractors. What King termed an "erroneous communication" translated into a false belief that America had achieved racial equality. The Civil Rights community charged that such an erroneous perception held influence over many Americans despite the reality of day-to-day race relations. Found within such a perception was the belief that because America had supposedly achieved the highly elusive racial equality the nation should move forward by laying this extremely divisive and seemingly intractable issue to rest. King took issue with such fallacious constructs and advised Black America that the ultimate solution to what W.E.B. Du Bois had termed the "problem of the twentieth century" lay in the completion of two successive and increasingly difficult stages.

According to King's formulation, the initial step in America's achieving racial equality was securing legal equality. King explained that although the nation had largely achieved such a goal with the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, legal equality was only one needed aspect as the nation still needed to develop the will to implement its existing laws. In addition to predicting that the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts would fail to be the cure-all for African-Americans, Black Nationalists proffered an alternative goal structure, pace, and ideological philosophy. The pervasive perception that the Civil Rights movement had failed to eradicate lingering racial inequities, particularly by not delivering tangible gains, facilitated the ascension of Black Nationalism as a viable alternative within the African-American freedom struggle.

The ascension of the Black Nationalist aesthetic immediately subjected the traditional goals of integration, pacifism, and nonviolent civil disobedience to unprecedented challenge. The allure of an independent intra-racial Nationalist politic prodded African-American activists to increasingly challenge traditional Civil Rights movement tactics, strategies, and goals. In time, the Civil Rights strategies and tactics would be denigrated as parochial and passé by a critical mass of African-American activists and thinkers, many of who had ironically been either vociferous supporters and/or wedded to such methods previously. Most disconcerting for integrationist-oriented Civil Rights leaders, the Nationalist were trumping traditional practices of pacifism and integration, and were threatening not only to polarize the nation, but also to rescind previous victories. By the mid-1960s, Nationalists were publicly questioning moderate Civil Rights leaders' rigid contentions that integration and interracial cooperation were the only chances African-Americans had at racial equality or survival. Motivated by the same spirit that guided previous self-determination movements in African-American history, Nationalists executed a relatively bold intra-movement coup by re-defining the tactics, strategies, and goals of the African-American freedom struggle. Included in the initial chapter of this work are details that not only delineate, but also highlight the process that Black Nationalists undertook to first ascend and then solidify their position as the new representatives of the African-American freedom struggle. In a move that repulsed moderate integrationist-oriented leaders, Nationalists agitating within Civil Rights organizations quickly created a climate that saw a purge of whites from the African-American freedom struggle as its most obvious and surprising accomplishment. Such a drastic course of action was little more than Black Nationalists' application of an oft-forgotten political position popularized by Malcolm X. Malcolm X asserted that Blacks must achieve an intra-racial politico-economic solidarity and cohesiveness prior to any expansion



toward or embrace of interracial alliances. Such well-worn ideological formulations advanced the idea that African-Americans must have their own economic and political houses in order before they could begin forging alliances, not to mention integrating, with majority society. Although African-Americans were developing a consensus regarding this issue, numerous organizations with various political postures competed for the leadership of the burgeoning nationalist era. The most renowned of these groups is undoubtedly the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

The second chapter of this work details the western migration of African-Americans. Pulled by openings in the booming ship building business, most prominently in California's Bay Area, African-Americans settled alongside the Pacific Coast. The families of BPP co-founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale migrated from Louisiana and Texas respectively were pursuing an increase in life opportunities. Unfortunately, the Bay Area was found wanting in regards to presenting African-Americans with such opportunities. Thereby giving birth to a burgeoning activist community amongst its African-American migrants. Such solidarity and activism was essential to their safety, particularly as they were often in conflict with local Bay Area police officers.

The third chapter focuses upon the background of the BPP co-founders. Of great importance to this narrative are the ideological underpinnings and previous organizational experiences informing Newton and Seale's future organizational endeavor. Not only will the reader be informed of BPP co-founders frustrations with their activist contemporaries, but also exposed to the rise of Nationalist thought throughout the nation. The alluded to alteration of movement strategies, tactics, and tempo was not only inspired by the recently assassinated Malcolm X, but also proved essential to the demise of the integrationist oriented Civil Rights

Movement. It was during a frenetic struggle to claim the ideological legacy of Malcolm X that Newton and Seale began to proselytize throughout their unique ideological vision.

The fourth chapter addresses the founding of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Issues that are highlighted included: the selection of an organizational name, symbol, ideological underpinnings, rules, and political platform. Of particular interest is the BPP co-founders decision to diverge from narrow Nationalist constructs and embrace a decidedly more leftist ideological position. Informed by the writings of such leftist as Mao Tse-Tung, Karl Marx, and Frantz Fanon, the BPP fell out of lock step with their Black Nationalist contemporaries. Such priorities caused the BPP extreme difficulties in propagating said ideological issues to a community that was generally unfamiliar with the aforementioned leftist theoreticians. In many ways it appears that the BPP may not have been Black Nationalists at all, but more left leaning as they borrowed ideological constructs from Socialist and Communist leaders. Despite such ideological peculiarities, the BPP achieved their notoriety via their decision to ‘pick up the gun’ and patrol local Bay Area officers. The alluded to Panther Patrols brought the BPP notoriety within the African-American and activist community, while simultaneously raising the ire of the local establishment against the BPP. It would be the conflict between the Panthers and local officers that would bring the organization unprecedented publicity.

The fifth chapter of this work examines the relationship between the Panther Patrols and Bay Area officers’ desire to subdue the BPP. OPD officials implemented several stratagems toward subduing the BPP. Bay Area officer’s attempts toward subduing the BPP proved inefficient and unwittingly contributed to the Panther’s growth into a national level organization. Embraced by urban African-American males throughout the nation, the BPP was likewise denounced by moderate African-American leaders and their white Civil Rights allies. Such

denunciations would reach epic proportions after BPP co-founder Huey P. Newton was involved in a lethal early morning altercation. Most notable of the above conflict was that it solidified the BPP as the Vanguard of not only the Black Power Era, but also the general American protest scene.

The sixth chapter of this text finds the BPP absent its traditional leadership as both its co-founders were incarcerated a mere twelve months into their existence. The alluded to leadership vacuum was filled by the enigmatic Eldridge Cleaver. It would be Cleaver's leadership style and ideological formulations that ushered in a period of militarization at the expense of more reformist community programs. Having organized a national level organization around a defense campaign to secure Huey P. Newton's acquittal on a capital murder charge, Eldridge Cleaver popularized the BPP to previously impossible levels. Unfortunately, a combination of BPP expansion and propagation of Leftist ideology, let alone alliances with the White Leftist community, spurred the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency toward attacking the Panther's in a methodical manner.

The final chapter of this work examines the demise of the BPP as a revolutionary vehicle. The BPP retreat from vanguard status is equal parts internal disarray and external pressures. Internally, the BPP national expansion exposed the organization to administrative issues they were wholly unprepared to address. Additionally, BPP leaders were in general disagreement regarding the concept of victory, let alone the strategies and tactics needed to secure African-American liberation and/or a Socialist Revolution. Particularly damaging to the BPP stability was national level politicians decision to label the BPP 'the greatest internal threat to American security'. Toward subduing the BPP, FBI leaders implemented myriad tactics: wiretaps, agent provocateurs, informants, murder, and disinformation campaigns. Readers will discover that the

combination of internal disarray combined with antagonistic external pressures to bring the BPP to its demise.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE RIVER SWELLS**

During the modern Civil Rights Movement, African-American activists and their liberal, white counterparts embarked upon an epic battle against state-sanctioned racial apartheid.<sup>1</sup> As the movement appeared to be heading for a major breakthrough in the early 1960s, Americans mourned John F. Kennedy's assassination and worried about the nation's future, particularly whether Lyndon Baines Johnson, a Texan, would support additional Civil Rights legislation. Johnson shocked many by offering his unequivocal support for Civil Rights. The subsequent passage of Civil Rights legislation led many to posit that America no longer had a need for continued vigilance. Fortunately, such idealistic beliefs did not represent the entire activist community.

African-American leaders admonished their unrealistic liberal counterparts. Civil Rights stalwarts charged that not only was racial equality a contemporary impossibility, but the vehicle that possessed the only chance of arriving at equality were being discarded. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reflected:

[W]ith Selma and the Voting Rights Act one phase of development in the civil rights revolution came to an end. A new phase opened, but few observers realized it or were prepared for its implications. For the vast

majority of white Americans, the past decade --- the first phase --- had been a struggle to treat the Negro with a degree of decency, not of equality. White America was ready to demand that the Negro should be spared the lash of brutality and coarse degradation, but it had never been truly committed to helping him out of poverty, exploitation or all forms of discrimination. The outraged white citizen had been sincere when he snatched the whips from the Southern sheriffs and forbade them more cruelties. But when this was to a degree accomplished, the emotions that had momentarily inflamed him melted away,

When negroes looked for the second phase, the realization of equality, they found that many of their white allies had quietly disappeared. Negroes felt cheated, especially in the North, while many whites felt that the negroes had gained so much it was virtually impudent and greedy to ask for more so soon.<sup>2</sup>

King was most prominent of those dissenting against the naïveté that a need no longer existed for continued commitment in the battle to eradicate racial inequalities. King stringently opposed assertions that existing legislation would eventually translate into first-class citizenship. Despite such warnings, the nation moved forward.<sup>3</sup>

King's trepidations reflected a pervasive fear among moderate integrationist- oriented Civil Rights leaders. Malcolm X, a staunch Civil Rights opponent, appropriately summed up America's predicament when he suggested that it was straddling a racial powder keg. Civil Rights leaders feared that once the recently- passed legislation failed to translate into tangible

gains, anger would become the sorrow song for marginalized African-Americans. Integrationist leaders feared that African-Americans' anticipated reaction would bewilder whites. African-American moderates were very reasonable in fearing whites would immediately question what more could, or more importantly, should be done for the American Negro.

While integrationist oriented African-Americans agitated for additional legislation, many vocal whites embraced an oppositional politic. These whites theorized that the group protection African-Americans sought was irreconcilable with principles of American individualism, positing that contemporary inequalities were solely a result of now defunct legal codes. In effect, the final step to liberation, according to this theory, mandated that African-Americans exercise a degree of patience. Such theory, however, would grossly miss its mark. Indicative of African-Americans' impatience was an unprecedented racial drama that occurred five days after the Voting Rights Act passage. Such an event forced the nation to face its racial dilemma. More important, Americans realized that mere strokes of a pen, even the presidential pen, were incapable of closing its nearly four hundred-year racial divide.

In general, police officers' routine operations within African-American communities have proven incredibly volatile, as they served as a constant reminder of establishment power. Typically, African-Americans' only interactions with law enforcement officers during this period were antagonistic in nature. In light of such volatility, when on August 11, 1965, a Los Angeles Police officer stopped an African American man for erratic driving. The arrest caused an uncontrollable rage in the African-Americans witnessing the officer's actions. Police on the scene radioed for assistance as the situation escalated out of control. The arrival of additional officers only worsened tensions among bystanders. The Watts Riot began as onlookers commenced throwing bricks, bottles, and other objects at officers.

Watts, a Los Angeles neighborhood with a 98% African-American population, was the first in a string of urban rebellions to occur under similar circumstances. Watts was representative of the destruction wrought by such rebellions. By the sixth day of rioting, 34 people had been killed, over 900 injured and 4,000 arrested. Total property damage exceeded \$35 million, an astronomical figure for 1965. Oakland resident Huey P. Newton insightfully posited that “[b]y their rebellions in the Black communities across the country the people have proved that they will not tolerate any more oppression by the racist dog police. They are looking now for guidance to extend and strengthen their resistance struggle.”<sup>4</sup>

The Watts rebellion should have demonstrated to all that the American Dilemma remained unsolved. Unfortunately, whites not only rebuked thoughts that racial equality was a present impossibility, but also took the offensive against African-Americans. Watts and similar rebellions gave whites a convenient excuse for their resistance to racial equality. However, even King scoffed at such a catalyst:

A simple explanation holds that Negroes rioted in Watts...and the white backlash was born; the public became infuriated and sympathy evaporated. This pat explanation founders, however, on the hard fact that the change in mood had preceded Watts and the Black Power slogan. Moreover, the white backlash had always existed underneath and sometimes on the surface of American life.<sup>5</sup>

Integrationist-minded Civil Rights stalwarts were dumbfounded by their former allies’ oppositional politics. African-American moderates’ shock at white liberals’ abandonment of racial progressivism turned to horror as new political principles rose to prominence. A very influential group of politicians and academics, including President Lyndon Baines Johnson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, led the majority culture’s abandonment of racial progressivism.<sup>6</sup> The



neo-liberalism advance guard and its Horatio Alger principles would have a disproportionate influence upon the American political landscape. Many whites quickly supported the idea that African-Americans would eradicate their own intra-racial vices if whites simply stepped out of the way. White theoreticians posited that such actions invariably would lead to African-Americans wielding unprecedented power within America's highly competitive economies. Neo-liberal thinkers also conjectured that African-American advancement must be achieved via independent intra-racial political economic mobilization, a process in which all minority groups historically engaged once they reached American shores.

Although public calls for African-Americans to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps had been a familiar refrain, it remained neither fair nor achievable considering African-Americans' dearth of monetary caches. Despite African-Americans' lack of political and economic resources due to prior patterns of state-sanctioned discrimination, neo-liberals shifted the blame for disparities between the races to African-American shoulders. Unmistakably implicit in this philosophy was a white belief that enough, if not too much, already had been done for the American Negro.

Neo-liberals served as an advance guard attacking traditional liberal ideas of group protection while promoting the belief of unprecedented individual opportunities open to African-Americans. To white minds, if African-Americans adopted a principle of socially responsible individualism, the next frontier of racial progress would occur via representative democracy and collectivist economics, not the polarizing protests of yesteryear. African-American activists clearly recognized that their opponents had abruptly altered the national political landscape.

The rise of neo-liberalism threatened African-American politico-economic advancement in myriad ways. Most troubling for African-American moderates was the neo-liberal tendency to

propagate false reasons for African-American angst. Another concern were neo-liberals' avoidance of attacks upon inherent structural biases within capitalism and representative democracy. Such changes were particularly notable as African-Americans and their former white allies were previously unrivaled in any substantive way regarding assertions that structuralism was the genesis of contemporary racial inequalities. In a reversal of prior beliefs, neo-liberals posited that racial inequities were not caused by state policy. President Johnson advanced this theory in his commencement address at Howard University on June 4, 1965.<sup>7</sup> Johnson's speech illuminates progressive whites' abandonment of traditional liberalism in favor of alternative politics. Ever the consummate politician, Johnson first enveloped himself in traditional progressive jargon by acknowledging the effects of racial discrimination and calling for continued diligence. The President pointed out:

[Y]ou do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus, it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.<sup>8</sup>

However, the weightiest aspect of Johnson's presentation occurred after these initial thoughts, when the President unveiled Middle America's new strategy for the eradication of racial inequities. During this crucial moment, Johnson resituated the source of discrimination prominently onto African-Americans' backs:<sup>9</sup>

Equal opportunity is essential, but not enough. ... Ability is stretched or stunted by the family you live with, and the neighborhoods you live in, by the school you

go to and the poverty or the richness of your surroundings. It is the product of a hundred unseen forces playing upon the infant, the child, and the man. . . . Overt job discrimination is only one of the important hurdles which must be overcome before color can disappear as a determining factor in the lives and fortunes of men . . . The extent to which an individual is able to develop his aptitudes will largely depend upon the circumstances present in the family within which he grows up and the opportunities which he encounters at school and in the larger community.<sup>10</sup>

Johnson's address was not only an early display of neo-liberalism, but also a public warning that the onus was upon African-Americans to lift themselves up. The speech clearly revealed white liberals' abandonment of structuralism and an accompanying absolution of any responsibility to the issue of racial justice.<sup>11</sup> Neo-liberal theory gave rationale to the average white citizen's increasing opposition to racial progressivism and unwittingly contributed to a volatile reaction within Black America.

The change in liberalism prodded King to observe that whites had completely absolved themselves of any responsibility to closing the racial divide. Dr. King charged the United States government with "writing piecemeal and incomplete legislation and proclaiming its historic importance.... [In effect] the American Government left the Negro to make the unworkable work."<sup>12</sup> Despite white liberals' abandonment of racial progressivism, an unmistakable consensus among moderate Civil Rights leaders regarding its importance remained. Put simply, Civil Rights leaders pled for continued vigilance by the national citizenry and governmental assistance until all citizens enjoyed the theoretical equality that whites proposed. King succinctly

summed up African-Americans' predicament when he posed the following question in the title of one of his most poignant books: *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*

To such a query, African-American activists were prepared to answer independent of white influence. The most lucent and reverberating reply to King's piercing question emanated from Stokely Carmichael, a young activist member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He proposed that African-Americans' future advancement hinged upon their success in building independent, parallel institutions. The SNCC leader theorized that such institutions were essential to African-Americans' mobilization, organization, and management of politico-economic resources. Nationalist theoreticians were in general agreement that the creation of Black controlled institutions was critical to African-American progress, let alone liberation.<sup>13</sup> Noted grass-roots organizer Saul Alinsky predicted in his work *Rules for Radicals* that once African-Americans realized the shortsightedness of integration, they would abandon such pursuits in favor of Nationalism:

As more effective means become available, the Negro civil rights movement will divest itself of these decorations and substitute a new moral philosophy in keeping with its new means and opportunities. The explanation will be, as it always has been "times have changed, this is happening today."<sup>14</sup>

Once Nationalists began indicting Civil Rights leaders for their failure to secure tangible gains, Alinsky was proven correct.

Although the criticism of moderate goals, tactics, and strategies of the SCLS, Urban League, and NAACP was a constant throughout the Civil Rights movement, Civil Rights leaders' failure to obtain actual advancements through legislation would prove to be the Nationalists' trump card. As *Ramparts* editorialized one year after the passage of the Voting

Rights Act: “(a) fter more than a decade of the Civil Rights Movement the black American in Harlem, Haynesville, Baltimore and Bogalusa is worse off today than he was ten years ago.... The Movement’s leaders know it and it is the source of their despair.... The Movement is in despair because it has been forced to recognize the Negro revolution as a myth.”<sup>15</sup> Staunch Civil Rights leader Whitney Young offered credibility to such assertions, musing, “there is little value in a Negro’s obtaining the right to be admitted to hotels and restaurants if he has no cash in his pocket and no job.”<sup>16</sup> Nationalists calls for new leadership, direction, strategies, tactics, and goals were standard reactions to whites’ rightward movement.

African-Americans viewed the strengthening neo-liberalism as a barometer of white determination to thwart Black political and economic progress. Nationalists exploited such sentiments by questioning the wisdom of integrating with an increasingly conservative majority culture. Put simply, Nationalists’ discontent “developed out of frustration over the limited pace and scope of racial change, and out of bitterness toward unceasing, brutal white opposition to ... black advances.”<sup>17</sup> Such a context forced King to denounce whites’ waning commitment to justice. King reminded whites:

Negroes of America had taken the President, the press and the pulpit at their word when they spoke in broad terms of freedom and justice . . . The word was broken, and the free-running expectations of the Negro crashed into the stone walls of white resistance.<sup>18</sup>

King posited that within such a context, African-Americans’ gravitation toward and embrace of Nationalism was not only predictable, but also an understandable, rational decision.

African-Americans' eventual adoption of a less compromising Nationalist politics was the result of the intensifying white resistance. Bay Area resident Bobby Seale highlighted the mid-1960's pulse of African-Americans when he stated that

laws the NAACP were trying to establish were a waste of time and money. Black people in this society don't have anything that is for them. The laws already on the books weren't even serving them in the first place, so what is the use of making more laws, when what was needed was to enforce the present laws.<sup>19</sup>

African-Americans were suspicious of white liberals' admonishment that change would be slow but forthcoming if only the Black community would be patient. As Huey Newton recognized, by the mid-1960s African-Americans were increasingly non-receptive to calls for integration:

The Black leaders have led the community to believe that brutality and force could be ended by subjecting the people to this very force of self-sacrificing demonstrations. The Black people realize brutality and force can only be inflicted if there is submission. The community has not responded in the past or in the present to the absurd, erroneous and deceitful tactics of so-called legitimate Black leaders. The community realizes that force and brutality can only be eliminated by counterforce through self-defense.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, James Robert Ross in *The War Within* recognized the urgency African-Americans felt regarding the need to alter Civil Rights Movement strategies and tactics: each time the black people in those cities saw Dr. Martin Luther King get slapped they became angry, when they saw little black girls get bombed to death in a church and civil rights workers abused and murdered they were angrier; and when

nothing happened, they were steaming mad. We [Civil Rights Leaders] had nothing to offer that they could see. Except to go out and be beaten again.<sup>21</sup>

While whites increasingly attacked Black Nationalism, Nationalist politics experienced growing support from African-Americans. Whites' denunciation had a negligible effect as such public sentiments resulted in poor- and working-class African-Americans exploring Nationalist politics and repudiating gradualism. Not since Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association of the 1920s had the nation seen African-Americans poised to gravitate en masse towards Nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

Historian Clayborne Carson posits that the rise of neo-liberalism and Goldwater conservatism in majority culture politics combined with the mid-1960s' rise of Nationalism guaranteed that the Civil Rights movement and its goals of interracial cooperation, gradualism, and integration were relics of the past.<sup>23</sup> The pride component of Nationalism led African-Americans to become fed up with unmitigated white aggression; they were prepared to get their point across that rampaging white mobs and white night riders must be made to understand that their days of free head-whipping are over. Black people should and must fight back. Nothing more quickly repels someone bent on destroying you than the unequivocal message: OK, Fool, make your move, and run the same risk I run-of dying.<sup>24</sup>

The psychological alteration wrought by the Nationalist aesthetic rivaled a similar one of a half-century before when African-Americans' post-World War I existence within urban enclaves such as Harlem generated a "New Negro." This term popularized by Alain Locke came to be the very definition of an African-American urbanite no longer afraid of whites. Likewise, the rise of Nationalism during the mid-1960s had a similar effect upon African-Americans and the genesis of a "new Black" is central to understanding this rise. . The transformed population

was known by his/her urban locale and repudiation of the Civil Rights movement's snail-like pace and reformist, conciliatory goals. In its place, such individuals adopted less patient politics that pivoted upon the centrality of parallel institutions in the African-American freedom struggle.

Most startling to moderate leaders was that this latest challenge to their hegemony emerged from their own camp. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the unacknowledged heir to the Civil Rights mantle, issued the most serious, if not the first, challenge to moderate Civil Rights leaders. With its roots in pacifism and inter-racialism, SNCC's challenge to existing moderate strategies was the height of contradiction.<sup>25</sup> However, an in-depth examination of SNCC lends critical understanding to the ascension of nationalist politics.

During the Civil Rights movement's hay day, SNCC and its interracial membership cited base as the future of race relations.<sup>26</sup> Supporters highlighted that SNCC had proven in the South's most dangerous battlefields that interracial cooperation was possible. The sacrifices of SNCC members knew no limits as several died during organizing activities. Although this utopian view of SNCC was a particularly inspiring progressive portrait, unfortunately, it was fallacious at its core.

SNCC's African-American members knew all too well that the organization was not the melting pot outside commentators lauded. As Clayborne Carson emphatically states, by 1964, SNCC was marred by racial strife. Veteran Civil Rights activist Andrew Young recalls that during this period, he saw frustrations surrounding white privilege build to a point that African-Americans within SNCC abandoned the singing of "We Shall Overcome" in favor of angry, alienating, and uncompromising shouts for "Black Power."<sup>27</sup> Carson's history of SNCC fleshes out Young's observations, and in the process replaces the idealization moderates propagated.



Although white SNCC workers risked their lives to register disenfranchised African-Americans, such dedication does not cancel out an undertow of racial and gender resentment festering beneath SNCC's progressive facade. SNCC's African-American members had tired of intra-organizational contradictions and began harshly critiquing previously unexamined issues, such as integration. Such an ideological alteration was not totally shocking as Civil Rights leaders foresaw SNCC's abandonment of unconditional integration. As King noted: "I should have known that in an atmosphere where false promises are daily realities, where acts of unpunished violence towards Negroes are a way of life, nonviolence would eventually be questioned."<sup>28</sup> The harsh realities to which King alluded prodded African-American activists toward the Nationalist strategies of Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and the Deacons for Defense and Justice. This abandonment of integration and inter-racialism exacerbated tensions within SNCC to unprecedented levels.

By 1966, the tension of working in the Jim Crow South, disappointment regarding movement gains, and resentment of white privilege aided SNCC Nationalists in executing a coup. These Nationalists' alteration of SNCC's trajectory was understandable; however, it remained morally questionable since "disappointment produces despair and despair produces bitterness, and that the one thing certain about bitterness is its blindness...When some members of the dominant group, particularly those in power, are racist in attitude and practice, bitterness accuses the whole group."<sup>29</sup> Prodded by such bitterness, SNCC leaders distanced themselves from King's position and embraced Malcolm X's Nationalist politics via the pursuit of intra-racial solidarity and political and economic empowerment by any means necessary. Such focus was largely irreconcilable with prior organizational leanings.

SNCC's new Nationalist politics caused it to be vilified within the Civil Rights community. Unbeknownst to critics, SNCC's adoption of intra-racial solidarity was little more than an implementation of standard Nationalist principles. Nationalist figures such as Malcolm X had admonished that before there could be any hope for interracial harmony, there must first be intra-racial unity. Additionally, Nationalists advised whites that their most valuable contribution in the battle to end racial discrimination was not in working among African-Americans, but working within their own communities.

SNCC was not alone in adopting Black Nationalism. Historians William Chafe and Howard Sitkoff write that once it became apparent that the moderate Civil Rights leaders' agenda was incapable of securing tangible gains for the African-American masses, "virtually every black organization soon adopted some variant of Black Power, each giving it its own congenial connotation."<sup>30</sup> Saddened, old guard Civil Rights leaders sought to make sense of this movement born partially of generational conflicts and mused that "[m]any of the young people proclaiming Black Power today were but yesterday the devotees of black-white cooperation and nonviolent direct action.... If they are America's angry children today, this anger is not congenital. It is a response to the feeling that a real solution is hopelessly distant because of the inconsistencies, resistance and faintheartedness of those in power."<sup>31</sup> African-American activists' reaction to the nation's failure to honor its promises made it clear that the next stage of the struggle would never repeat prior strategic errors.

The unprecedented frontal assaults upon white supremacy, particularly white politico-economic monopolies, rendered previous strategies and goals non-issues.<sup>32</sup> Nationalists' offensive rhetoric was often the same commentary espoused by the average African-American worker, student, or urbanite in whites' absence. Although moderate integrationist-oriented Civil

Rights leaders remained steadfast in their conviction that whites were indispensable to the movement, Nationalists flippantly discarded whites and their alleged contributions. To their credit, white supporters of racial equality continued their activist ways despite their dismissal from the African-American freedom struggle. However, after the Voting Rights Acts, white activists' pursuits focused upon areas that did not directly impact the future fortunes of African-Americans or race relations in America: women's rights, the Vietnam War, and gay rights.<sup>33</sup> Former Civil Rights supporters recognized that the current preoccupation with intra-racial solidarity held an implicit message for progressive allies and conservative opponents alike: the African-American freedom struggle had turned the corner and was angrier and less patient than at any time in recent memory.<sup>34</sup> African-American activists' abandonment of moderate Civil Rights goals and non-violent civil disobedience should not have been a total shock for the majority culture. In fact, even a cursory examination of African-American protest history reveals that multiple political philosophies and goals have always been vying for vanguard status.

The popularity of Malcolm X as a Nationalist spokesperson during the height of the integrationist-oriented Civil Rights movement confirmed this rejection of former conciliatory principles. Urban African-Americans' admiration of Malcolm X was a result of his sharp and unforgiving analysis of African-American problems. Malcolm X warned the nation, particularly whites, to be leery of Negroes who sought unconditional integration instead of having their own nation. Such politics, Malcolm X contended, clearly signaled that its espouser was out of his/her right mind. In the same vein, Malcolm X warned whites that Negroes who reported that their brethren sought unconditional integration were doing all Blacks a drastic and most dangerous disservice:

Few white people realize that many black people today dislike and avoid spending any more time than they must around white people. This “integration” image, as it is popularly interpreted, has millions of vain, self-exalted white people convinced that black people want to sleep in bed with them -- and that’s a lie!<sup>35</sup>

Following Malcolm X’s lead, Nationalists articulated a deep disdain for pacifist strategies and moderate goals. Taking a page from the literary genius James Baldwin, Black Power Era leaders echoed his famous query: “Who wants to integrate into a burning house?”<sup>36</sup>

Influenced by an extended tradition of self-determination politics, H. Rap Brown, a catalyst behind SNCC’s embrace of Nationalism, asserted that the African-American freedom struggle’s completion was ultimately left to Black men.<sup>37</sup> SNCC program secretary Cleveland Sellers supported such sentiments and added that once Nationalists focused upon tangible issues, they realized “that the problems [facing African-Americans] ... will not be solved without revolution.”<sup>38</sup> However, it was not until the Civil Rights movement’s last major march through the South that outsiders became aware of these ideological and strategic alterations.

In June 1966, as African-American youth embraced Nationalism and thereby widened the generational gap between themselves and integrationist-minded elders, James Meredith was shot during the “March Against Fear.” Prior to Meredith’s embarking upon this march, intra-movement discord combined with the absence of a dramatic rallying issue to shut down the Civil Rights movement’s hallmark mass marches and protests. Consequently, Meredith’s decision to continue his trek with a veritable “Who’s Who” of the Civil Rights movement provided insurgent Nationalists an opportunity to debut their new politics via television and print media. Meredith’s “March Against Fear” became the venue during which SNCC’s Nationalist cadre

debuted its vision of the tactics, strategies, and goals need in the next stage of African-American struggle.

The following is King's account of the contentious battle waged between the integrationist-oriented .King and the young SNCC Nationalist Stokely Carmichael as they wrestled for control of the African-American freedom struggle:

Sensing this widening split in our ranks, I asked Stokely and Floyd to join me in a frank discussion of the problem.... I mentioned the implications of violence that the press had already attached to the phrase.... "Power," he [Stokely] said, "is the only thing respected in this world, and we must get it any cost." ... [W]e must use every constructive means to amass economic and political power. This is the kind of legitimated power we need. We must work to build racial pride and refute the notion black is evil and ugly. But this must come through a program, not merely through a slogan...The words 'black' and 'power' together give the impression that we are talking about black domination rather than black equality.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, Nationalists garnered a critical mass of African-Americans and gained control of the movement. Unfortunately, the sensational, yet polarizing, rhetoric that garnered national attention was incapable of masking the reality that there was a definite dearth of concrete political analysis emanating from its ranks.

The failure of various Nationalists to agree upon what "Black Power" meant demonstrates how damaging this lack of clarity was for the Nationalists. . William L. Van DeBurg indicts them for this huge oversight when he writes, "militants found it much easier to explain alleged misconceptions than to formulate succinct definitions."<sup>40</sup> As a result of such

failure, myriad interpretations of Nationalism arose from supporters and detractors alike. For whites, “Black Power” was code for racial separatism, Black supremacy, and “premeditated acts of violence to destroy the political and economic institutions of this country.”<sup>41</sup> To make matters worse, moderate Civil Rights leaders were leery of associating with Nationalist political thinkers, particularly as racially polarizing rhetoric and slogans appeared to be central to their liberation programs.

Civil Rights leaders feared that Nationalist rhetoric would render a waste much of the energy exerted toward integration. Ironically, the oft-irrational fears emanating from the threat of Black Power for whites flowed directly from their ancestors’ and contemporaries’ consistent abuse of power. King highlighted this extreme irony by reminding Americans that

[t]here is nothing essentially wrong with power. The problem is that in America power is unequally distributed. This has led Negro Americans in the past to seek their goals through love and moral suasion devoid of power and white Americans to seek their goals through power devoid of love and conscience.... [I]t is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crisis of our times.<sup>42</sup>

Many whites refused to believe that African-American calls for power were not part of a long-range goal of racial revenge and retribution for prior white transgressions.

Put simply, the embrace of Nationalism was a conscious attempt to redefine the African-American freedom struggle in hopes of preventing its ebb. Stokely Carmichael contended that Nationalism enabled “black people to make a serious bid for power and to take responsibility for those areas of their lives that others have always controlled.”<sup>43</sup> Carmichael’s statement revealed Nationalist leaders’ political direction and its irreconcilability with moderate Civil Rights

leaders'. Manning Marable notes that integrationists "simply desired an equal opportunity to compete within society and the labor force, without the debilitating restrictions of caste."<sup>44</sup> Black Nationalists' uncompromising rhetoric, however, foreshadowed a volatile period of American race relations.

In *Black Power Ideologies*, Joseph T. McCartney describes the chaos Nationalists encountered as they attempted to nail down the meaning of "Black Power." According to McCartney, out of the plethora of Nationalist ideologies available, two strands rose to prominence: (A) symbolic acts of physical or cultural separation from whites, and (B) mobilization of intra-racial political and economic resources for a later attempt at integration with power.<sup>45</sup> The latter posture emerged victorious, forcing Nationalists to concentrate on the building of independent politico-economic institutions.

Toward this goal, Charles V. Hamilton created a functional definition of Black Nationalism:

Black power is concerned with organizing the rage of black people.... Black power (1) deals with the obviously growing alienation of black people and their distrust of the institutions of this society; (2) works to create new values and to build a new sense of community and of belonging; and (3) works to establish legitimate new institutions that make participants, not recipients, out of a people traditionally excluded from the fundamentally racist processes of this country.<sup>46</sup>

Carmichael and Hamilton's *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* further fleshed out Black Nationalism's meaning. Their popular book suggested that the next stage of African-American activism would be achieved via intra-racial political, social, educational, and economic

solidarity. The authors theorized that independent, parallel institutions were African-Americans' only hope to achieve independence:

The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks. By this, we mean group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. Traditionally, each new ethnic group in this society has found the route to social and political viability through the organization of its own institutions with which to represent its needs within the larger society . . . the American melting pot has not melted. Italians vote for Rubino over O'Brien; Irish for Murphy over Goldberg, etc.<sup>47</sup>

Such thinking influenced even Civil Rights stalwarts such as King.

Although King's post-"March on Washington" ideological transformation often is ignored by scholars, he grasped the core of Black Nationalism and offered conditional support for its political philosophy:

Black Power is a call for the pooling of black financial resources to achieve economic security.... Through the pooling of such resources and the development of habits of thrift and techniques of wise investment, the Negro will be doing his share to grapple with his problem of economic deprivation. If Black Power means the development of this kind of strength within the Negro community, then it is a quest for basic, necessary, legitimate power.<sup>48</sup>

Despite such lucent prose, the lack of a coherent ideology and goal continually resurfaced within the Nationalist community. Consequently, instead of uniformity, each organization, and often leaders within the same organization, espoused contradictory philosophies regarding



“Black Power.”<sup>49</sup> Without a fundamental definition, Nationalists battled for territory. One of the organizations engaged in this struggle was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), which became the vanguard of not only the Black Power era, but also the general American protest scene during the sixties; this is the story of their revolutionary years.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE FOUNDERS**

Although many people are alarmed by the rise of significant political dissent within America's borders, such fears are alleviated by a largely unsupported belief that such individuals and the movements they head are aberrations within the American political system. In reality, the rise of such individuals is usually explainable by their backgrounds and/or upbringing. Such individuals are, to borrow the phrasing of Richard Wright, America's Native Son's, meaning that just as this nation were forged behind political dissenters so to do these individuals pick up that mantle and attempt to alter their country, people, and conventional wisdom regarding what is and what is not possible. This chapter focuses upon the background of two such individuals and attempts to bring some logic to their rather unconventional protest.

Walter Newton settled his family in Oakland during the 1940's, where he found employment as a general laborer. The Newton patriarch was one of an estimated 50,000 African-Americans who moved into the Bay Area and found work in the shipyards or ancillary wartime industries during the national mobilization for World War II. Oakland's centrality to wartime naval production was the only reason the city was able to absorb such large numbers into the local economy. As the nation mobilized for World War II by converting America's manufacturing centers into production sites for American war materials, industrial barons found themselves in an unenviable position.

They needed to increase production while losing substantial parts of their overwhelmingly white, male work force to the armed forces. In desperate need of laborers, factory owners revisited their World War I hiring practices and recruited African-American laborers. Curtis Jerome Austin notes that “[l]abor recruiters [who] traveled to Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and the Carolinas sought workers for Kaiser’s four gigantic shipyards in Richmond, and for other shipyards such as Marinship in Sausalito, Moore in Oakland and Todd in San Francisco.”<sup>50</sup> The availability of entry-level jobs, sometimes with the possibility of advancement, encouraged African-American emigration. Additionally, World War II labor progress was greatly facilitated by A. Philip Randolph’s threat to “March on Washington” if President Franklin Delano Roosevelt allowed job discrimination to continue unabated in the nation’s war industries. To avoid global embarrassment and charges of hypocrisy, Roosevelt gave in to Randolph’s demands and banned racial discrimination in wartime industries by signing Executive Order 8802. For the Newtons, as for the majority of their fellow emigrants, the impetus for relocating was economic; however, not even the Bay Area’s increased employment opportunities ended economic woes.

The Bay Area’s population increased exponentially as African-Americans arrived during the mobilization effort. The municipality of Oakland witnessed a growth from nearly 8,500 African-American residents in the pre-World War II period to nearly 50,000 ten years later. Berkeley also saw its Black population nearly quadruple from 3,400 to over 13,000, while Richmond grew from a paltry 270 African-Americans to an amazing 14,000 in 1950.<sup>51</sup> One Bay Area resident poignantly recalls that the droves of arriving emigrants were a continual source of amazement during her childhood. She remembers, “We’d go down to the Sixteenth Street Station after school to watch the people get off the trains, and it was like a parade. You just couldn’t believe that that many people would come in, and some didn’t even have any luggage; they would come with boxes, with three or four children with no place to stay....”<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, a familiar adversary shadowed African-Americans’ westward migration.

Although labor recruiters’ overtures were critical to the Bay Area’s changing demographics, the simultaneous importation of white Southern police officers curtailed the

potentially positive impact African-Americans could have made to the community through sincere industrious efforts. Such irony serves as the backdrop to Oakland racial politics from World War II forward. The Oakland Police Department's (OPD) policies and actions were so racist that the California legislature launched an investigation during the post-World War II period. This investigation ultimately led to the Chief's resignation and a shake-up of the entire department. Despite the influx of African-American laborers and the California Legislature's investigation, conservatism was still the Bay Area's dominant political perspective as the Republican Party solidified control in the 1950s. Ironically, the Republican Party's ascendancy and introduction of extreme conservatism occurred at the very moment that the Southern-based Civil Rights movement entered a flow stage. Conventional wisdom holds that it was the Southern strongholds that were the least amenable to change, particularly along the frontier of race, however, by the 1950's it was these very strongholds of racial bigotry which began slowly reforming its position on race while non-Southern areas reversed their field and adopted the South's antiquated posture on race and civil rights.

Mimicking a national pattern, post-World War II economic prospects for Bay Area African-Americans steeply declined. The economic downturn of 1946 and 1947 was a direct result of cessation of wartime production and the return of white soldiers to their old jobs. Bay Area African-Americans' post-war economic displacement was exacerbated by industrial owners' desire to become major players in the emerging Pacific Rim economy. Although such expansion could have served as a boon for African-American laborers, a lack of specific skills and education precluded such opportunities. As Rod Bush noted:

new technologies such as containerization brought about  
reductions in longshore and warehousing jobs. Manufacturing jobs

moved to the suburbs and overseas, and were replaced with service industry jobs in commerce and finance. These new jobs required high levels of skill and education and were not available to most of the displaced, unskilled laborers in Oakland, who were often Black and Latino.<sup>53</sup>

Further marginalizing African-American laborers was the collusion of Bay Area union leaders who defended the closed shop, employers who refused to hire across the color line, and landlords who refused African-Americans affordable housing.

Accompanying the transitioning post-World War II economy was a developing pattern of “white flight” and the relocation of Bay Area factories to non-central city areas. As a consequence, Oakland’s overall population declined by- nearly 23,000 citizens between 1950 and 1970. Over the same period, the African-American population increased by 80,000. The effect of the decade-long relocation of jobs was reflected in the census of 1959-1960 that painted a bleak economic picture of Oakland. The city’s unemployment rate was 70 percent higher than the surrounding San Francisco-Oakland Standard metropolitan statistical area and 50 percent higher than state and national rates. The 1960 census of Oakland further revealed that while 39.6 percent of whites in the area lived in deprivation or poverty, an overwhelming 66.1 percent of nonwhites did so. Such a concentration of poverty forced the United States government to classify Oakland an economically depressed area.<sup>54</sup>

Local resident Reginald Major recalls the Bay Area’s rapidly increasing economic problems and contends that by the modern Civil Rights movement’s genesis, Oakland was “a slum characterized by ramshackle buildings, poor city services, inadequate transportation, a too high a concentration of unemployed persons and an almost total disregard for the needs of the

residents by official agencies of Government.”<sup>55</sup> Major argues that opportunities to eradicate the formidable socioeconomic problems plaguing Oakland were rare, and he, along with others, lays the blame for the deteriorating situation squarely at the feet of Bay Area business and political elites. These groups’ sole priority was ensuring the Bay Area’s centrality in the developing Pacific Rim economy. Unfortunately, such a pursuit came at a cost to Oakland’s citizenry in the form of intensifying central city poverty, despair, and hopelessness, all by-products of Oakland’s dwindling tax base. Exacerbating Oakland residents’ plight was the reality that even the Southern-based Civil Rights movement promised little tangible impact upon their situation. Oakland’s Black residents could vote and serve on juries; they lacked good jobs, modern schools, and proper housing. These maladies colluded to prod Bay Area African-Americans toward a decidedly more cynical view of American democracy than their Southern brethren.

The issues confronting non-Southern urbanites were distinctly different from those facing Southern-based rural African-Americans. One consequence of such differences was that non-southern African-Americans often were bolder in ideology and generally unwilling to wed themselves to the pacifism Southerners refused to betray. Simply put, if the South was King’s territory, urban Black America was the land of Malcolm X and Black Nationalism. The rich Nationalist lineage of Marcus Garvey, WEB DuBois, Elijah Muhammad, Albert Cleage, and Malcolm X gave focus to urban African-Americans’ criticisms of Civil Rights tactics, strategies, and goals. Malcolm X’s Nationalist theory proved most influential through his rhetorical indictment of nonviolent, civil disobedience tactics and integrationist goals. Nationalists eagerly proselytized Malcolm X’s position that integration was incapable of achieving racial equality. Such thinkers charged that non-Southern African-Americans were living proof that neither the franchise nor legislative equality was capable of alleviating African-Americans’ maladies. These

challenges would be articulated most strongly by Nationalists within Oakland's Bay Area, an area to which white radicals also would bring infamy through protest activity at the University of California-Berkeley. This highly active political environment served as the backdrop for Newton's political development.

Born in Monroe, Louisiana on February 17, 1942, Huey P. Newton was the seventh and last child born to Amelia and Walter Newton. Newton's parents unwittingly anointed their son a political activist at birth, naming him in honor of Louisiana Governor Huey P. Long, a long-time advocate for Negro rights during the Jim Crow period. However, Newton would earn his own infamy hundreds of miles from rural Monroe. While their youngest child was still a toddler, the Newtons left their Louisiana roots in search of a better life. Traditionally, the primary catalyst behind African-American migration was the South's racial apartheid system. African-Americans realized that Southern society was closed as far as the politico-economic advancement was concerned. According to Newton, the push of Jim Crow and the pull of increased economic opportunities were the primary catalysts for his family's move to the Bay Area in 1945.<sup>56</sup>

Amelia and Walter Newton were also motivated to migrate by the improved educational opportunity such relocation offered their children. Better schools and a traditional educational calendar year were a new experience for African-American emigrants. In the rural South, the labor-intensive agrarian existence mandated the participation by the entire family, particularly during planting and harvesting seasons. However, the availability of increased educational opportunities was directly linked to a brighter future and provided immeasurable hope for African-American parents. The Newtons planned for their children to excel educationally; however, those well-laid plans were not to be fulfilled by all of their offspring, particularly the youngest, Huey.<sup>57</sup>

The youngest Newton appeared destined for marginality. Newton sensed early on that much of formal education failed to address the peculiar problems facing African-Americans. Explaining his difficulties with engaging in either assigned material or his teachers, Newton reflects,

during those long years in the Oakland public schools, I did not have one teacher who taught me anything relevant to my own life or experience. Not one instructor ever awoke in me a desire to learn more or question or explore the worlds of literature, science, and history. All they did was try to rob me of the sense of my own uniqueness and worth, and in the process they nearly killed my urge to inquire.<sup>58</sup>

Huey appeared unconcerned with his obvious educational difficulties, thinking perhaps they would miraculously work themselves out. Newton humorously relates a peculiar perspective on literacy while in junior high school: “I associated reading with being an adult: when I became an adult, I would automatically be able to read, too.”<sup>59</sup> Possibly one reason for Newton’s lack of enthusiasm for schooling was the dearth of African-American educators and administrators in Bay Area schools.

For many African-American children, the absence of African-American teachers and administrators creates ill feelings toward the entire educational process. William Henry Brown reveals that in 1962, the Bay Area was nearly 50 percent African-American, yet incredibly, out of 139 administrators, the school system had only five Blacks serving as principal and vice principal. Additionally, only 164 African-American teachers out of nearly 1,200 educators served the needs of Bay Area youth.<sup>60</sup> A subsequent study by the National Education Association



subtitled “A Community in Transition with a School System Too Slowly Adapting”

recommended that the Oakland Public School System take immediate steps to better serve its highly diverse population of students:

[We] advise the acceptance of professional leadership responsibility for adopting the school program and staff to meet the needs of a community and school system in rapid transition. This includes the employment of new teachers and assistance to currently employed teachers so that understanding of the problems and needs of children from non-urban areas and from different cultural, racial, and language backgrounds will be assured those needs met.<sup>61</sup>

One consequence of what Newton perceived as the Oakland schools irrelevancy to his daily life was his departure from the system as a student and his reincarnation as a hellion. Newton’s withdrawing from school led to his pursuing self-worth in Oakland’s mean streets.

The adolescent Newton directed his energies toward defending his most cherished possession, a rapidly-growing street reputation, and he eagerly embarked upon a pattern of anti-social behavior that invariably led to confrontations with rivals. Taught by his older brother Sonny (Walter, Jr.) to confront his fears and see his tormentors as scared individuals themselves, Newton adopted a belief that the best defense was an uninhibited offense. If anyone looked at him “the wrong way,” he pummeled the transgressor. Newton’s contemporaries referred to him as “Crazy Huey” because he proved unafraid to fight anyone under any circumstances.<sup>62</sup> Newton’s pugilistic skills and oratorical style were incapable of compensating for his educational deficiencies. While his status as an urban legend increased, he remained a functional illiterate and disciplinary problem within the innumerable Bay Area schools from which he was expelled.<sup>63</sup>

Although Newton held the local public school system in the same contempt as the rest of his surroundings, he did possess the intelligence to excel academically. As with most troubled

students, Newton's talents needed nurturing and development, a process that must have seemed impossible to Bay Area educators. Newton needed to be re-socialized into understanding the utility of education, and although appearing incorrigible, he admits to always possessing an innate desire to uplift his race by alleviating their suffering.

Newton's sincere desire to aid African-Americans provided an opening for him to halt the downward spiral of his life. Fortunately, his brother Melvin, a college student, convinced Newton of the power of education. Although the task of catching up to his peers must have appeared daunting, Newton began the process through a regimen of voracious reading. He pursued his education with the same intensity as when he rebelled against teachers. Such tenacity helped Newton matriculate from the highly-rated Berkeley High School. However, in one final instance of rebellion against school authority, Newton balked at a counselor's advice that he should abandon any ideas of furthering his education. To this particular educator's chagrin, in 1959 Newton enrolled himself in Oakland Community College (OCC), later re-named Merritt College.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike many of his peers, Newton did not intend to matriculate from OCC within a traditional time frame, evidenced by his opting to take a single course each grading period. Newton's decision to take such a light course load was not due to any mental inadequacies, personal slothfulness, or uncertainties regarding his abilities. Instead, it was quite simply an extension of his unconventional philosophy toward education, a belief that drew strict lines between education and training. For Newton, true education occurred when an individual focused upon a single subject for extended periods. His light course load enabled him to read the footnoted material in the works assigned for the course, in addition to the bibliographic texts and suggested readings. Such activities went beyond being mere mental exercises for Newton as they

enabled him to become an expert in various disciplines. More important than the subjects Newton voraciously digested is the oft-ignored insight such fanatical focusing reveals about his personality. The future Panther leader was predisposed toward maniacally pursuing specialized areas of study, which led to his decision to become an attorney. This linkage of the law as a powerful tool in the battle for racial justice with his zealous pursuit of expertise in specified areas would serve him well in future endeavors.

Lacking any real guidance from counselors, Newton decided that the correct manner to prepare for law school was to take political science courses. His exposure to this discipline prodded him to examine his deteriorating surroundings more critically. The inquisitive Newton quickly recognized that the problems facing African-Americans (joblessness, homelessness, poverty, and inferior education) were not unique to his Bay Area environs. Rather Newton perceived that such maladies were linked in Newton's mind to the endemic structural flaws of American capitalism.

Further aiding Newton's intellectual development was his participation in the campus-based Afro-American Association (AAA). The AAA was a group of African-American collegians who analyzed the seminal texts of 1960s protest culture, including WEB DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. Through immersing himself in these books, Newton began forming conclusions regarding African-Americans' role, existence, and future within capitalist America. Newton observed that regardless of where they resided in the nation, African-Americans remained the most likely to be poverty stricken, poorly educated, and incarcerated at rates exceeding their percentage in the general population. Such insights guided Newton toward examining accepted American principles such as democracy, capitalism, justice, and liberty. His most important conclusion was

that fundamental flaws within America's politico-economic institutions, and not some ill-defined notion of African-American inferiority, were at the root of African-American problems.<sup>65</sup>

While Huey P. Newton busied himself as a Civil Rights theorist via his collegiate experience, his future comrade, Bobby Seale, was serving in the nation's military. Seale's experience in the Air Force would endow him with an unquenchable thirst to impact his surroundings for the good, particularly as they related to his race. Bobby Seale, born in Dallas, Texas, on October 22, 1936, was the son of a master carpenter who possessed only an eighth-grade education. After living in several Texas cities, the Seales joined the wave of African-American emigrants to the West Coast during the World War II mobilization effort. Although not the sole factor behind the family's marginal economic position, the eldest Seale's lack of formal education undoubtedly contributed. In the wake of their relocation, the Seales found themselves residing in a Berkeley government-subsidized housing project. Here, Bobby began running with other poor youth who encouraged his participation in petty crime, although Seale never found his way to any major legal troubles. Upon graduation from high school, with no money for college, Seale joined the military, a path that many disenfranchised youth considered their only escape from poverty.<sup>66</sup>

An optimistic youth, Seale trained as a sheet metal mechanic in the Air Force. Prior to entering the service, he possessed strong feelings concerning the injustices done not just to African-Americans, but all marginalized populations. In the Air Force, Seale witnessed many of these injustices up close. As his service tenure continued, his discontent with particular aspects of the military heightened. Seale later admitted he made a drastic mistake in joining the United States Air Force as he floundered in an environment predicated upon respect for superiors, many of whom he charged were avowed racists. After serving nearly three-and-a-half years, Seale had

a major confrontation with his commanding officer at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota that ultimately led to a court-martial. For Seale, there was no reconciling the daily degradation he and other African-American service personnel received from white officers while these same individuals publicly proclaimed their patriotism. Seale cited these facts as a primary reason his Air Force career was checkered with discipline problems.<sup>67</sup>

After being court-martialed and discharged, Seale returned to the Bay Area and secured employment at Kaiser Aerospace Electronics, a job that skills learned in the Air Force equipped him to perform. Additionally, Seale found what he had been searching for all along, a vehicle to make the world a better place--the strengthening Bay Area student protest scene. It was after his return to the Bay Area that several events occurred that drastically changed Seale's life: he enrolled at Oakland Community College (OCC) part-time with intentions of becoming an engineer; and he became infected with a love for African-American history; which in turn encouraged Seale to take a prominent role in the burgeoning Bay Area student movement.<sup>68</sup>

At OCC, Seale met an energetic student activist named Huey P. Newton. Seale vividly recalls his initial exposure to Newton and readily admits to being mesmerized at how the quick-witted Newton argued down rivals disputing his contention that the Civil Rights movement was parochial. Obviously, Newton, the emerging revolutionary theoretician, was a marked improvement from the troubled adolescent; however, it is striking that Seale's initial exposure occurred while Newton was in the midst of verbally attacking a foe, a context eerily similar to those physical confrontations Newton engaged in while protecting his street reputation. Only the subject in contestation, and not the confrontations themselves, appeared to have changed. By the time he and Seale met, Newton had become one of the Bay Area's leading theoreticians on race and revolution.<sup>69</sup>

After reading C. Eric Lincoln's *Black Muslims in America* and hearing Malcolm X speak at McClymonds High School in Oakland, Newton attended the Nation of Islam's San Francisco mosque and studied Elijah Muhammad's program of racial separatism, Black economic efficiency, empowerment, and moral righteousness. Newton was so impressed with the Nation of Islam's program that he began the process of securing his "X." However, he eventually decided against officially affiliating with the Nation of Islam because of its religious fanaticism and strict forbiddance of engaging in politics. Despite the decision not to join the Nation, Newton's exposure to Malcolm X had an undeniable impact.<sup>70</sup>

Concomitant with the emergence Black Nationalists was a similar amount of activity within white radical circles. Without question, the most powerful protest voices emanating from the Bay Area were white collegians at the University of California's Berkeley campus. Berkeley radicals seemingly protested every issue and event the Federal Government embarked upon on domestic or foreign soil. Foremost of the voices advancing the white radical agenda was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and its radical offshoot, the Weathermen. It was within an environment that incubated and encouraged protest that Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale generated the seed that eventually sprouted into the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.<sup>71</sup>

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FOUNDING

Despite the African-American freedom struggle's rich lineage of Nationalist thinkers, Newton and Seale ironically forged comradeship over a foreigner's theories. In the wake of Malcolm X's assassination in 1965, Newton and Seale analyzed Malcolm X's life, the Civil Rights movement, and formulas for African-American liberation. During a conversation, Seale introduced Newton to the writings of Martinique psychiatrist Franz Fanon, particularly his seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth*. In his magnum opus, Fanon posits that revolutionary violence is the only mechanism that allows oppressors to recognize the humanity of those they oppress, a contention with which Newton and Seale agreed completely. In the wake of his exposure to Fanon, Newton joined Seale in the Soul Students Advisory Council (SSAC).<sup>72</sup>

SSAC's founders intended it to be markedly different from its activist contemporaries. Towards achieving such goals, the SSAC consciously avoid shortfalls such as volatile Nationalist rhetoric. Additionally, SSAC leaders indicted their contemporaries who uncritically celebrated the virtues of "Blackness." SSAC disagreed with the tendency to compress whites into a monolithic group motivated by a wicked desire to retard African-American politico-economic advancement. In reaction to such narrow Nationalism, the SSAC sought to uplift African-Americans through progressive leadership, not race baiting. To achieve this progressivism, the SSAC planned an anti-Vietnam War rally, considering such a "rite of assage" essential to their inclusion within the general populace of Bay Area political protestors.<sup>73</sup>

SSAC's protests attempted to highlight blatant US hypocrisy as the country continually drafted marginalized African-Americans to protect its interests abroad. Such a practice, Newton maintained, relegated African-Americans to colonial subjects forced into compulsory support for the "mother country." While SSAC's anti-Vietnam War rally was successful, trouble awaited Newton and Seale. The Bay Area duo soon realized that their SSAC comrades were actually similar to the Bay Area Nationalists with whom they disagreed. SSAC proved incapable of transcending the Nationalist rhetoric that had become a Black Power Era trademark into definitive action. To Newton and Seale's dismay, SSAC members were undisturbed that their only contribution to African-American liberation came in the form of rhetorical clichés and posturing from the safe confines of academia's ivory tower.

Friction between SSAC members and Newton heightened after Newton unveiled a plan to honor the late Malcolm X's birthday. Foreshadowing his future activist endeavors, Newton planned to invite armed African-American males to Oakland Community College. He intended their appearance to be public notice that the SSAC had adopted Malcolm X's teachings regarding the utility of armed self-defense. Newton solicited the group's support for his revolutionary symbolism:

We bring these brothers off the block openly armed on to the campus and bring the press down. We could reach the community and show them on Malcolm X's birthday, May 19<sup>th</sup> that Malcolm had advocated armed self defense against the racist power structure and show the racist white power structure that we intended to use guns to defend our people.<sup>74</sup>



SSAC, however, was unwilling to sanction such extremism. To move the group beyond its comfort zone, Newton and Seale invited armed African-American men to the next SSAC meeting, clearly highlighting the wide chasm within the group.

After this confrontation, Newton and Seale voluntarily separated from the SSAC. Prior to leaving, a frustrated Newton told his former colleagues about his and Seale's future plans: "We're going to the black community . . . to lead the black liberation struggle. We don't have time for you. You're hiding behind the ivory-walled towers in the college, and you're shucking and jiving."<sup>75</sup> To Newton and Seale, the pressing nature of African-American suffering made immediate amelioration of the issues hindering their advancement of utmost importance. Thus, Seale asserted, "it was not a time for talking, it was a time for picking up the gun."<sup>76</sup>

The activist pair did not have to wait long for an opportunity to impact their community. During the summer of 1966, Bobby Seale secured employment as a foreman at the Oakland Poverty Center. While Seale worked with Oakland youth, Newton began his career as a grassroots organizer, going door-to-door exchanging ideas with residents regarding problems and solutions. Newton and Seale's increased exposure to their urban environs prodded them to form a vehicle for addressing many of its most obvious and pressing problems, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Confident that their organization would be the embodiment of that for which their community was pleading, co-founder Seale reflected that Newton and he:

had no choice but to form an organization that would involve the lower class brothers and sisters. We worked it out in conversations and discussions. These sessions were our political education classes, and the Party sort of grew out of them. We also read. Frantz Fanon, particularly *The Wretched of the Earth*, the four

volumes of Chairman Mao-Tse Tung, and Che Guevara's *Guerilla Warfare*. We read these men's work because we saw them as kinsmen; the oppressor who had controlled them was controlling us. We believed it was necessary to know how they gained their freedom in order to go about getting ours. However, we did not want merely to import ideas and strategies; we had to transform what we learned into principles and methods acceptable to the brothers on the block. *Negroes with Guns* by Robert Williams also had a great influence on the development of the Party.<sup>77</sup>

Bay Area protest culture also influenced the Black Panther Party's development as Newton and Seale attempted to incorporate the myriad currents of protest activity that electrified the area.

After Newton and Seale had exhaustively discussed the strides and miscalculations of prior African-American protest movements, the two laid the ideological foundation for their organization.<sup>78</sup> Indicative of their vision was the selection of a Black Panther as its symbol. Despite the electrifying effect the emblem would have upon the nation, in reality its selection occurred by happenstance. Newton and Seale discovered the symbol when they stumbled across a pamphlet promoting the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's voter registration drive in Alabama's Lowndes County. The Lowndes County Freedom Organization had chosen a black panther because even illiterate voters were capable of discerning between it and competing parties' symbols. Newton immediately was enchanted with the thought of using the black panther icon because of the regal animal's characteristics: "The panther is a fierce animal, but he will not attack until he is backed into a corner; then he will strike out."<sup>79</sup>

On October 15, 1966, at the Poverty Center of North Oakland, Newton and Seale formally created the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). Its creation entailed Newton dictating to Seale ten items that he confidently asserted represented “what black people have been voicing all along for more than 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation and even before that.”<sup>80</sup> Contrary to some recollections, the document Seale recorded was far from revolutionary. Instead, the BPP platform laid out reformist goals. Commonly referred to as the “Ten-Point Platform and Program,” the headings read:

- 1) “*We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*”
- 2) “*We want full employment for our people.*”
- 3) “*We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black community.*”
- 4) “*We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.*”
- 5) “*We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.*”
- 6) “*We want all black men to be exempt from military service.*”
- 7) “*We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people. . . . We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.*”
- 8) “*We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.*”
- 9) “*We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.*”
- 10) “*We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. And as our political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.*”<sup>81</sup>

Along with the Ten-Point Platform, Newton and Seale developed rudimentary rules such as no use of drugs or alcohol at either party headquarters or while performing official Panther duties. The decision that Newton would be Minister of Defense while Seale would assume the Chairmanship was determined by a coin flip.<sup>82</sup>

With their platform in hand, Newton and Seale propagated the Panthers throughout the Bay Area:

we took the Ten-Point Platform and program--a thousand copies of it--and went to the Black community with them. [Newton] didn't just pass out the platform in people's hands. He stopped, talked, and discussed the point on the ten-point platform with all the Black brothers and sisters off the block, and with mothers who had been scrubbing Miss Ann's kitchen. We talked to brothers and sisters in college, in high schools, who were on parole, on probation, who'd been in jails, who'd just gotten out of jail, and brothers and sisters who looked like they were on their way to jail.<sup>83</sup>

While disseminating their Nationalist vision, Newton and Seale experienced the first of many challenges. The first emanated from the stark reality that there was little room for another Nationalist group within the Bay Area's activist community. In the mid-1960s, an array of combatants pursued vanguard status through competing rhetoric, strategies, and goals. Although such rivalries were relatively common among activist, within the African-American protest community such competitions were particularly intense. Nationalists perceived the most assured route to preeminence was to be more revolutionary (more left leaning) in rhetoric and ideology than rivals. Unfortunately, such posturing led activists to advance unrealistic programs and unachievable goals. In such a competitive environment, Panther contemporaries immediately denounced the "Ten-Point Platform and Program" as reformist.

The competing Nationalists argued that the ten points mirrored the politics of moderate Civil Rights organizations. In *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Notes from a Black Worker's Notebook*, James Boggs contended that the BPP ideological platform was "more a statement of grievances and concessions demanded from the White power structure than it is a program to mobilize Black people in escalating struggle for control and power."<sup>84</sup> In addition, many Nationalists incredulously charged the Panthers were a front for prominent white radicals seeking to bolster their own program by co-opting burgeoning African-American solidarity.

The influence of white radical and third world upon the Panther's ideology unintentionally complicated the Panthers' entrance to the Black Power arena. The most notable influence was a white leftist critique that Newton and Seale also propagated. Throughout the twentieth century, white radicals had asserted that Black leaders failed to recognize that

capitalism's effect upon African-Americans was little different from its influence upon majority workers. White leftists posited that the downplaying of Black working-class status pro-longed their position of subordination. In arguing that race was a secondary variable to class in African-American oppression, whites noticeably disagreed with traditional African-American analysis. Newton and Seale's acceptance of this white leftist analysis directly contributed to their vilification by other Nationalists in the Bay Area.

In reality, however, the vast majority of Black Power groups had failed to perform much serious analysis. Newton and Seale predicted that such omission would eventually return to devour aspirant Nationalists. Absent concrete political analysis, Nationalists commonly relied upon parochial calls for intra-racial solidarity. Newton and Seale believed that the majority of their rivals were charismatic charlatans who cloaked their untheoretical programs in pseudo-African culture. Unfortunately, Black Power Era calls for racial allegiance created a quandary regarding the concept of "Blackness" and the strategy of racial solidarity.

This dilemma was a by-product of various Nationalist leaders attempting to create a barometer to measure racial allegiance. Unwittingly encouraging the development of such measures was Malcolm X's call for racial solidarity, which stated that the foremost obstacle to African-American progress was a scarcity of intra-racial solidarity. Cultural Nationalists exploited Malcolm's assertion by forcefully charging that racial solidarity was the initial step in Black liberation, conveniently placing its articulators above criticism. Cultural Nationalists invariably translated their silencing of legitimate, well-grounded criticism into unprecedented support for their oft-flawed constructs. Intending to disrupt such opportunism, Newton asked what the community gained by allowing such exploitation and Seale charged that "[i]f a black business man is charging you the same price or higher, even higher than the white businessman

than he himself ain't nothing but an exploiter.”<sup>85</sup>

As the Black Power Era increasingly promoted cultural Nationalist leaders as spokespersons for the race, Seale and Newton feared that neither parochial politics nor obvious racial transgressions would prove sufficient to topple such tyranny. Newton offered one of the clearest examples of blind cultural nationalism retarding collective development by pointing to Haiti:

Papa doc in Haiti was an excellent example of reactionary nationalism. He oppressed the people but he did promote the African culture. He's against anything other than black, which on the surface is very good, but for him it is only to mislead people. He merely kicked out the racists and replaced them with himself as the oppressor. Many of the nationalists in this country seem to desire the same ends.<sup>86</sup>

Newton and Seale could not comprehend the hostility that awaited their critique of self-serving articulations of Nationalism. Their rivals quickly charged them with counter-revolutionary behavior for exposing uncritical celebrations of Blackness and intra-racial solidarity.

Nationalist contemporaries of the Panthers propagated “race first” ideologies through rhetorical calls for racial solidarity. Although history is replete with examples that such slogans are incapable of moving African-Americans forward, such antecedents failed to deter Cultural Nationalists. Nonetheless, their posturing alienated moderate Civil Rights leaders and removed all opportunity of forming coalitions with left-leaning whites. Despite being fully aware of the attractiveness of “race first” politics to African-Americans, Newton and Seale sought to avoid the usual pitfalls stemming from such ideology by encouraging coalitions of like-minded

activists regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. Despite their openness to coalition politics with the larger American protest community, clearly the BPP never forgot that African-Americans were central to their success.

Newton and Seale saw that their organization's only hope for survival was by creating distinctions between it and its rivals. The surest path to creating such separation was by highlighting the myriad points that the BPP ideological program diverged from the parochial formulations of narrow Nationalist rivals. The Black Panther Party constantly pointed out that its rivals' failure to conduct concrete political analysis led to an over-reliance upon undefined slogans. The fruits of such failure were ill-considered rhetoric and racially-polarizing slogans that white conservatives wielded to discredit Nationalist politics.

Standard Nationalist rhetoric led many to perceive that few substantive differences separated believers. In time, the Nationalist community was little more than a caricature to the majority of Americans, a group of rabble-rousers mimicking Malcolm X's speeches, oratorical mannerisms, rhetoric, and shocking commentary that failed to garner much support beyond fleeting moments of racial pride. Clearly, Nationalists relied upon clichés to a fault, particularly as they replaced critical analysis, practical solutions, and achievable goals. Fortunately, Newton and Seale's maturation within the culturally-diverse Bay Area activist community enabled them to bypass such strategic errors. Considering their anonymity, however, the Panthers' founders were premature in congratulating themselves.

In the weeks following the creation of the Black Panther Party in October 1966, few residents were aware of its existence. While other Nationalist groups successfully proselytized for members with revolutionary rhetoric, the BPP wallowed in obscurity. Compared to the machismo rhetoric, pseudo-African Cultural Nationalist expressions and outlandish goals of their

contemporaries, Newton and Seale were moderate, if not conservative, in their political stance. Nonetheless, although scholars such as Manning Marable, Charles E. Jones, and Clayborne Carson are in consensus that the party's "political philosophy...was basically that of radical reform,"<sup>87</sup> Newton balked at such assertions, insisting his group's initial posture was designed to garner African-American loyalties through a realistic and achievable program:

The primary job of the party is to provide leadership to the people. It must teach by words and action the correct strategic methods of prolonged resistance...But first, they must respect the party which is transmitting this message...The main function of the party is to awaken the people and teach them the strategic method of resisting a power structure which is prepared not only to combat with massive brutality the people's resistance but to annihilate totally the Black population...The main purpose of the vanguard group should be to raise the consciousness of the masses through educational programs and other activities. The sleeping masses must be bombarded with the correct approach to struggle and the party must use all means available to get this information across to the masses."<sup>88</sup>

In a further attempt to refute the reformist label, Newton cites the impact of Marxist theory upon the BPP during its formative years. Yet, in truth, evidence of Marxist theory was absent from the "Ten-Point Platform." The Panthers' initial ideological position was indeed reformist.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, reformist thought the ten-point platform was not the sole similarity between the



Panthers and declining Civil Rights organizations. The Panthers' early organizational structure mimicked the hierarchical monstrosities that Civil Rights groups had become by the mid-1960s.

The Panthers' initial organizational structure included two complementary branches: a political wing and an advisory cabinet. Newton and Seale intended that the proletariat-composed political wing would execute daily Panther operations while the "intelligencia" in the Advisory cabinet would serve as the brains. To be included in the advisory cabinet, one needed "bourgeoisie skills": writing, administration, public speaking, and organizing skills. Although inclusion in the cabinet did not preclude participation in political wing activities, the plan mandated that administrative issues would come first. Towards achieving such goals, Newton planned to enlist members of the African-American elite, declaring that they would be better served in the long run if they utilized the administrative skills they were presently using as employees in majority businesses to aid their own people. However, such plans derailed as African-American elites balked at Newton's ideas.

Panther leaders anticipated such hesitation based on their prior interactions with African-American elites. Previous experience convinced them that African-American elites were unwilling to participate in collectivist struggles, particularly if such activism included non-elites in any meaningful way. Newton believed that such resistance was a by-product of African-American elites' preoccupation with materialism. Additionally, African-American elites' activism tended toward reforming, not overthrowing, American capitalism. Newton scathingly observed that African-American elites' fundamental problem with capitalism was their location at the pecking order's bottom, not its inherent exploitative nature.<sup>90</sup>

Despite this particularly harsh view, Newton and Seale still attempted to utilize elite Blacks as the mental engine behind the BPP program. Newton believed that intra-racial solidarity was essential to future African-American progress:

[B]lack people must now move from the grassroots up through the perfumed circles of the Black bourgeoisie, to seize by any means necessary a proportionate share of the power vested and collected in the structure of America. We must organize and unite to combat by long resistance the brutal force used against us daily.<sup>91</sup>

However, Newton's calls for collectivism failed to sway African-American elites. In fact, they not only rebuked such overtures, but also countered that it was they who were meant to lead African-Americans in the next stage of struggle. Such a position was a simultaneous dismissal of the Black Nationalist aesthetic and the unveiling of a moderate African-American political agenda: the integration of boardrooms, university classrooms, and administrative positions.

Three factors worked against the Panthers' efforts to recruit the elite: 1) an inability to alter their priorities; 2) African-American elite's acceptance of middle-class propaganda regarding the dangers of leftist politics; and 3) the anticipated repression of Black Nationalism by the State that awaited such dissidence.<sup>92</sup> Although Newton anticipated the elite's leeriness, their condescension antagonized him. In the wake of the elite's rejection, Newton and Seale reformulated their plans and directed their energies toward the proletariat. The Panthers theorized that a byproduct of working-class African-Americans' proximity to poverty would be their natural receptiveness to the Panther plan. Newton and Seale were encouraged by their reading of Marxist theorists who often cited the proletariat as the most revolutionary population within any community. Consequently, the Panthers increasingly considering the proletariat as the

only human resource needed to achieve their revolutionary goals are logical. Eldridge Cleaver viewed Newton's determination to utilize the African-American proletariat as the catalyst for revolution as sheer genius:

One of the great contributions of Huey P. Newton is that he gave the Black Panther Party a firm ideological foundation that frees us from ideological flunkeyism and opens up the path to the future--a future in which we must provide new ideological formulations to fit our ever changing situation.

Essentially, what Huey did was to provide the ideology and the methodology for organizing the Black Urban Lumpen proletariat. Armed with this ideological perspective and method, Huey transformed the Black Lumpen proletariat from the forgotten people at the bottom of society into the vanguard of the proletariat.<sup>93</sup>

Bunchy Carter echoes Cleaver's sentiments in "The Genius of Huey P. Newton," when he explains:

that Huey Newton was able to go down, and to take the nigger on the street and relate to him, understand "what was going on inside of him, what he was thinking, and then implement that into an organization, into a PROGRAM and a PLATFORM, you dig it? Into the BLACK PANTHER PARTY--and then let it spread like wildfire across the country."<sup>94</sup>

The logic of recruiting African-American Proletarians was sound on several levels. First, African-American elites had rebuked Panther overtures. Second, Panther leaders recognized that poor and working-class citizens made up an urban majority, a reality that was becoming more pronounced as African-American elites abandoned the inner city in favor of suburban homes and lifestyles. Consequently, Panther leaders recognized that the securing of urban African-American loyalties would translate into formidable membership numbers and unrivaled influence in the Black community. Unfortunately, Newton and Seale's views concerning African-American proletarians proved terribly false.<sup>95</sup>

To their surprise, the African-American proletariat was by and large unreceptive to Panther overtures. The proletariat's hesitation was based on a suspicion that the Panthers were secretly harboring a death wish. Such an observation was understandable considering that Bay Area history was replete with ill-fated examples of similar attempts to rally the masses. Hence, the Bay Area Black working class initial reaction realized that the eventual overthrow of the BPP and their Nationalist contemporaries was a foregone conclusion.

As a consequence, Newton and Seale were unable to convince a single resident, save a teenaged Bobby Hutton, to enlist after weeks of recruiting. Hutton's background was representative of the type of individuals the Panthers were targeting. A juvenile delinquent with an arrest record that included convictions for disturbing the peace, simple assault, and petty theft, Hutton was actively searching for something to believe in. Bobby Seale remembered the first time he met Hutton:

I first met him as a young brother who probably had those little forms of self hate that a lot of Blacks come through. We didn't treat him like a kid. A youth [of] 15 years when we first met

him...[he] rejected being a child...they kicked him out of school, and during the first months or after the summer poverty program was over, I told him to go on and go back to school and get some of those skills, but by that time he was aware knowing Huey and me. Huey was working in the poverty program, too, then, and he was quite well aware of the way Huey and I thought in terms of Black people having something, in terms of all poor oppressed people in the world, and how they should not have to be subjected to all this exploitation, oppression and murder and brutality, and hunger and indecent housing.<sup>96</sup>

While Black Panthers' rivals saw their membership rolls increase exponentially, Newton and Seale wallowed in obscurity. A perplexed Newton was absolutely sure that the goals he had outlined were the same ones Bay Area African-Americans had articulated to him during face-to-face communications. He had taken solace when he first drafted the "Ten-Point Platform" that it could be adopted by any oppressed population, with slight alterations made to fit their situation. Believing in the universality of their platform, Newton and Seale reasoned that another explanation for their drastic recruiting failures must exist. In reality, two previously-ignored issues doomed BPP recruiting drives from the start: the Panthers' reformist Black Nationalist rhetoric and a pervasive community fear of repression from the Oakland Police Department (OPD). Although Newton and Seale recognized the ways that their ideological foundation diverged from that of their rivals, most Bay Area residents failed to recognize such differences. In citizens' minds, the rhetoric they heard from Newton and Seale was indiscernible from that of their rivals.<sup>97</sup> Despite their efforts, the Panthers had failed to highlight their uniqueness.

What turned the tide of the Black Panthers' future were not its theories but its actions. In an ironic way, the institution most vilified by Bay Area Blacks, the Oakland Police Department proved the catalyst for the Panthers' rise to prominence. Despite a host of politically active African-Americans throughout the Bay Area, a much larger inactive population lived there. However, what academicians routinely mistake as political apathy was actually a byproduct of a long legacy of arbitrary, yet unpunished, violence by law enforcement officers aimed at suppressing dissent and protest and keeping the population submissive. Hence, the suggestion that many African-Americans experienced a state-induced political paralysis is not an over-exaggeration. Paul Jacobs highlights the existence of a volatile relationship between officers and "minority" populations:

[E]very Negro or Mexican American kid has learned to see himself as something evil reflected in the cold, distrustful police stare, the black look behind which lurks the policeman's knowledge that he is authority, equipped by the state with the legal power to interrogate, arrest and if necessary, shoot to kill.<sup>98</sup>

This legacy of racial strife grounds the myriad problems existing between Bay Area officers and African-Americans. Hence, it is not surprising that by the Black Power Era's genesis there was intractable animosity between officers and the African-Americans they "served."

Innumerable problems plagued Oakland's Police Department's relations with the city's African-Americans, among them the under representation of African-American among the officers, the use of unjustifiable lethal violence by police that went unpunished by police review

boards; and stark differences in citizen perceptions of officers that cut along race lines.<sup>99</sup> By the 1960's, a majority of Oakland's residents were African-American. Despite such numbers, Blacks were virtually nonexistent in the OPD. Out of 647 officers on the force during the BPP formation, only 22 were African-American. Additionally, only two African-Americans held command positions. The OPD's unofficial social organization, Le Societie de Camaraderie, did not include a single African-American officer, community leader, or citizen on its rolls.<sup>100</sup> In addition to whites comprising an overwhelming percentage of the force, a significant portion of them were Southerners, since city administrators actively recruited officers from the notoriously racist state of Mississippi.<sup>101</sup> When such a racially unrepresentative police force interacted with the African-American community, little opportunity appeared for peaceful co-existence.

A mid-1960s Gallup Poll revealed shockingly divergent perspectives that divided along racial and generational lines. The Bay Area in which African-Americans lived and the Bay Area in which whites resided were incomprehensible to the other. For example, African-Americans were five times more likely to believe that police brutality occurred than their Euro-American counterparts. Even more dramatic was the finding that African-American youth, the population that experienced more harassment and brutality than all others, were a startling nine times as likely to believe in police brutality than the general white population. An article in *California Voice*, "Crime Commission Reveals Local Cops' Brute Methods," further fleshed out the existence of a long-standing and pervasive problem regarding officer conduct within the African-American community.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, *The National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence*, published in 1968, illuminated African-American and police relations:

For the black citizen, the policeman has long since ceased to be a neutral symbol of law and order...blacks perceive the police as

hostile, prejudiced, and corrupt...Many ghetto Blacks see the police as an occupying army...In view of these facts, the adoption of the idea of self-defense is not surprising.”<sup>103</sup>

Various Oakland city administrators acknowledged the existence of such problems on several occasions. The head of the OPD Welfare Association declared that African-Americans’ consistent agitation for the creation of a citizen review board related a “deep suspicion of our entire system of government since the advocates, by asking for a review board, are saying that they are unable to obtain justice through normal established democratic processes.”<sup>104</sup> Another city social worker warned OPD “that there is a deep and pervasive conviction among San Francisco and other Bay Area Negroes that the police are brutal and ...the problem should be given urgent consideration.”<sup>105</sup> These warnings, it must be noted, came prior to the volatile period of unrest that saw innumerable urban areas explode in flames.

Remembering their difficulties in securing support, Newton and Seale theorized that addressing police brutality issues would be fertile soil for the Panthers to achieve their most crucial goal, the recruiting of members. They felt no surer means of grasping publicity was available than confronting the Bay Area’s most formidable power, the OPD, and addressing police brutality through unconventional means.<sup>106</sup> This decision ensured their distinction and foreshadowed a volatile future.

In late 1966, Newton and Seale began the Panther Patrols, an implementation of point #7 of the “Ten-Point Platform and Program”:

We want an immediate end to police brutality...We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black



self defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.<sup>107</sup>

The Panther Patrols covertly followed officers as they patrolled Oakland. When the police detained a Black citizen, Newton and Seale made their presence known by observing officers from a legal distance with law books in hand (to ensure that the detained citizen's rights were not violated), a tape recorder and camera (to secure evidence for use by the defense), and weapons (for protection against officers). Despite their intentions, Newton and Seale were aware that their armaments would be the most publicized aspect of their actions. Yet their decision to carry guns was simply an extension of an often-ignored aspect of African-American protest history.

Contrary to popular mythology, African-Americans have neither been passive victims of racist violence nor devoid of armaments for purposes of personal or coordinated acts of self-defense. This rich legacy of African-American armed resistance--from the slave rebellions of Prosser and Turner through Robert F. Williams and the Nationalist exhortations of Malcolm X--was not lost on the Panthers. Newton cited Williams' work, *Negroes with Guns*, as being extremely influential on the type of organization he desired to form. Newton also credited the Deacons for Defense and Justice, a group of southern Christians who chose armed self-defense as a reasonable method of defending their African-American community against racially-motivated attacks, with shaping his thinking on the utility of armaments in repelling aggressors. In his autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*, Newton acknowledges being present when a Deacons for Defense and Justice member spoke in the Bay Area, impressing upon Newton

armed self-defense's utility.<sup>108</sup> However, the foremost influence upon the duo's thinking was Malcolm X.

Malcolm X's plan for the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), offered a clear understanding of his self-defense posture. "Since self-preservation is the first law of nature," Malcolm X wrote:

we assert the Afro-American's right of self-defense. The Constitution of the United States of America clearly affirms the right of every American citizen to bear arms. And as Americans, we will not give up a single right guaranteed under the Constitution. The history of unpunished violence against our people clearly indicates that we must be prepared to defend ourselves or we will continue to be a defenseless people at the mercy of a ruthless and violent racist mob. We assert that in those areas where the government is either unable or unwilling to protect the lives and property of our people, that our people are within their right to protect themselves by whatever means necessary. A man with a rifle or club can only be stopped by a person who defends himself with a rifle or club...It is the duty of every Afro-American and every Afro-American community throughout this country to protect its people against mass murderers, bombers, lynchers, floggers, brutalizers and exploiters.<sup>109</sup>

Inspired by Malcolm X's reasoning, Newton and Seale "picked up the gun" and took a major step out of anonymity.<sup>110</sup>

Although it was common for Nationalists to display their bravado through proclamations regarding the gun's indispensability to their freedom, no contemporary group had brought action to such rhetoric. By theoretically lauding the gun but not putting that philosophy into practice, Nationalists communicated to the community that armed self-defense was equal parts unfeasible and irrational. Historian Manning Marable points out that despite their militant posturing, "remarkably few Black Nationalists and Black Powerites had advocated violence against white-owned property, the subversion of authority, or the seizure of state power."<sup>111</sup> In fact, the lack of weapons was so acute among Bay Area Nationalists that the BPP was forced to call upon Japanese radical Richard Aoki to secure weapons. Seale recalled the Panthers' absurd predicament: "we didn't have any money to buy guns. We told [Aoki] that if he was a real revolutionary, he'd better go on and give them up to us because we need them now to begin educating the people to wage a revolutionary struggle."<sup>112</sup>

Newton and Seale saw the African-Americans' status within the United States as akin to a colonized population's relationship with the mother country. And if African-Americans were colonial subjects, then the OPD was the colonizers' military arm.<sup>113</sup> Such a context mandated African-Americans "pick up the gun" for reasons of self-preservation:

We have to arm ourselves against these racists, Birchites, and Ku Klux Klaners infested in the police departments, the pig departments who "occupy our communities," as Huey P. Newton says, "like a foreign troop." We have to defend ourselves against them because they are breaking down our doors, shooting black brothers on the streets, and brutalizing sisters on the head. They are wearing guns mostly to intimidate the people from forming

organizations to really get our basic political desires and needs answered. The power structure uses the fascist police against people moving for freedom and liberation.<sup>114</sup>

Although the Panther Patrols' primary intent was eradicating police brutality, the activity had an ancillary purpose: visible recruiting. Newton and Seale realized that membership issues were crucial to their existence and unless they succeeded in recruiting members, they would disband like so many other Nationalist ventures. As they prepared to "pick up the gun" and scrutinize the officers who were responsible for so much hardship and misery within their community, the duo experienced a natural rise in trepidations regarding their mortality. They realized that this initial community service activity could very well be their last. Newton writes in *Revolutionary Suicide*, "when the Party was first organized, I did not think I would live for more than one year after we began; I thought we would be blasted off the streets."<sup>115</sup> Despite such fears, the BPP co-founders' determination to garner recognition and halt police brutality proved stronger than their fear of officers and death.

## CHAPTER 5

### PATROLS, GUNS, AND HARASSMENT

African-American rebellion against racial injustice has been a staple of American history. Despite the relative rarity of African-American armed insurrection, White America has long held an ever-present fear of such activities. This latent fear caused many whites, and more than a few moderate African-Americans, to become unduly alarmed when Newton and Seale began executing the Panther Patrols.<sup>116</sup> More troubling to Bay Area whites, particularly those employed by law enforcement agencies, was the shocking confidence the duo displayed during patrols. But what Whites perceived to be a confident swagger was in actuality its polar opposite.

Although Newton and Seale appeared confident in public, privately they were unsure of the patrol's feasibility. The only success the initial Panther Patrols experienced was Newton and Seale's total concealment from law enforcement personnel.<sup>117</sup> In fact the Panthers were too successful at concealment. Seale related that he and Newton's initial attempts at patrolling officers entailed observing them from the safe confines of a vehicle. The Panther leaders were hidden not only from officers, but also from the African-Americans they were attempting to recruit.

The primary consequence of Newton and Seale failing to challenge officers during these initial patrols was that they achieved none of their goals: reducing police brutality within the Bay Area community, publicizing their existence to the African-American community; and successfully recruiting African-Americans. Clearly the Panthers' patrolling method mandated serious alteration. Newton and Seale faced a

crossroads in November, 1966. They either could put their weapons down and relinquish their revolutionary vision or summon the courage to put the Panther Patrols into action. Newton and Seale chose to attempt implementation in an effective manner; an immediate consequence was an unprecedented opportunity to proselytize throughout the Bay Area.<sup>118</sup> Newton's memoirs clearly highlight that preparations for more successful patrols were neither haphazardly conducted nor devoid of logic or information. Newton researched California's legal codes in search of loopholes that ensured Panther operations remained within legal boundaries. The co-founders examined gun codes, learned legal observation distance for routine stops, studied the most common infractions that led to citizens' detainment, and investigated options in the wake of criminal charges.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, in their initial patrols Panther members rarely stepped outside of the confines of legality. Ironically, the Civil Rights movement's pacifism and patriotic civil disobedience broke more laws than the BPP during its formative moments.<sup>120</sup> Despite plans to serve the community through alleviating police brutality and harassment, the Panther Patrols' primary benefit was its propagation component.

From the moment Newton and Seale emerged from concealment on patrol, the Panthers were closer to increasing their membership. Once the Panthers began approaching officers, citizens were not only shocked by their courage, but also extremely impressed by the physical image they presented. Newton tailored the BPP's image to serve as a "plus" factor in recruiting ventures. Aware of negative community response to the usual assortment of local gangs and hoodlums, Newton made a concerted effort to avoid any linkage with such groups. According to historian Ula Taylor, the BPP Minister of Defense "didn't want people to see the Panthers as thuggish, gun-toting brothers without an organized agenda. He came up with the idea that all Panthers should wear neat, polished uniform--black slacks, ironed powder-blue shirts, black tie or turtleneck, black leather sports jacket . . . ."<sup>121</sup> Seale explained the importance of the BPP's standardized dress:

That uniform represented a heck of a lot more to the community than just a uniform. It represented organization. The racist power structure recognized us as being organized and they hated it. But the Black community, even the elderly mother would say "Lord, them young men show is sharp. Them young men and young women sure are sharp and clean and organized." This is one thing Black people needed. It's a safety valve for developed consciousness. To the brother on the block, the lumpen, "Man, them dudes show is sharp. Baby I show wish I had me some knows and some pimp socks like that," you know what I mean? But at the same time, it gave us a chance to talk with people about the ten-point platform and program really what we were about...<sup>122</sup>

Although the Panthers did successfully differentiate themselves from street gangs, such distinction proved insufficient to persuading residents into joining their ranks. Nonetheless, the Panther Patrols had the entire Bay Area abuzz.

According to Elaine Brown, fear was the single greatest obstacle African-Americans faced on their path to revolution:

The first question for black people is to get past fear, to see past the monolith to the man. That's why we started using the word "pig," a detestable image that takes away the image of omnipotence. A pig, whether running loose in the ghetto with a gun or sitting on Wall Street or in the White House, is a man who can bleed like a man and fall like a man.<sup>123</sup>

The Panther leaders hoped to remove the pervasive perception of local officer omnipotence through these patrols. They hoped that confrontations with the police would force African-Americans to entertain the possibility that supporting the BPP was not suicidal.

The following incident not only represented a typical patrol confrontation between the Panthers and the police, but it was particularly significant for the Panthers because it occurred in front of a number of bystanders. Seale related:

One night Huey, Little Bobby [Hutton] and I were patrolling this pig in North Oakland...It was about 8:30 or 9:30 when we drove down the street and stopped next to the pig .... As we were turning right, the pig flashed his lights on... This pig surprised us because he stopped his car as soon as we stopped...He got out of his car and as soon as he did, and came walking from his door, we could hear this pig hollering, "What the goddam hell you niggers doing with them goddam guns? Who in the goddam hell you niggers think you are? Get out of that goddam car. Get out of that goddam car with them goddam guns."

Huey said, "Man, what the hell!" By this time the pig's reaching across Huey real fast. ...Huey grabbed this pig by the collar, pushed his head back up against the roof of the car, then shifted around and got his foot and kicked him in the belly, shoving him all the way out the car. No sooner did brother Huey's feet hit the ground, he was jacking a round off into the chamber, "clack upp," and taking three quick steps.



The pig looked up and looked around, and Huey P. Newton was standing there saying, "Now, who in the hell do you think you are, you big rednecked bastard, you rotten fascist swine, you bigoted racist? You come into my car, trying to brutalize me and take my property away from me. Go for your gun and you're a dead pig."

Huey said "Go for your gun and you're a dead pig. Don't you know by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that you can't remove a person's property from them without due process of the Law." Huey was mad, loud and articulate.

Black people began to come out of their houses, wanting to know what was going on. Huey said, "Come on out, black people. Come on out and get to know about these racist swine who been controlling our community and occupying our community like a foreign troop." ...People got to coming out, I guess seventy or eighty had gathered up there before the other pigs got there. They had about fifteen cars.

A pig walks up and says "Let me see that weapon!" Huey says, "Let you see my weapon? You haven't placed me under arrest. Ain't you ever hear of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of the U.S.? Don't you know you don't remove nobody's property without due process of the law? What is the matter with you? You're supposed to be people enforcing the law, and here you are, ready to violate my constitutional rights. You can't see my gun. You can't have my gun. The only way you're going to get it from me is to try to take it."<sup>124</sup>

Despite the BPP achieving notoriety from such standoffs, there was an unforeseen danger inherent in them. Citizens tended to denigrate the organization to the level of a gun club while overlooking the philosophy motivating BPP activities. Put simply, the Panthers lacked a mechanism to propagate the ideological underpinnings supporting their actions.

The primary consequence of being unable to explain their ideology was that the Panther Patrols presented the perception that guns were central to the Panther plan. To counter this, on January 1, 1967, Newton, Seale, and Hutton rented a small storefront office on Fifty-sixth and Grove Streets. Although the office space would eventually be used for multiple purposes, it was best utilized for Saturday Political Education classes.<sup>125</sup>

The problems facing Bay Area African-Americans dictated the subjects addressed during these classes. Consequently, it was no coincidence that the initial issue BPP leaders addressed were the problem of police misconduct.<sup>126</sup> Newton and Seale were optimistic that the combination of publicity generated by the Panther Patrols and the knowledge provided through their classes and literature would increase membership exponentially.

There was good reason for such optimism. The Panther Patrols had persuaded a few citizens to join the BPP ranks, but it was obvious that the impetus for these early additions was a desire to turn the tables on officers. Obviously, such thinking was not the application of revolutionary theory for which Newton and Seale had hoped. Regardless of the impetus, increasing numbers of Bay Area African-American males' gravitated toward BPP machismo. Unfortunately, the inclusion of such individuals led to the gun, not Black Panther politics, becoming the focal point of early operations. As Bobby Seale recalled: "in the early days of the Party...some brothers would come into the Party, and see us with guns, and they related only to the gun."<sup>127</sup> Still, the infusion of more members translated into an unprecedented ability to

launch patrols at more numerous times and locales than previously possible. Although such opportunity was a boon for the BPP, it was extremely disconcerting for police officers, accustomed to only Newton, Seale, and Hudson patrolling. The appearance of additional Panthers caused officers to overestimate the Black Panthers' strength and influence within the Bay Area.<sup>128</sup>

The reasons a citizen would sympathize, yet staunchly refused to join the BPP, explains the gap between BPP's popularity and its paucity of members. The most prominent reasons were mortality issues. The fear of retaliation at the hands of the OPD was understandable considering the agency's long history of repression and unpunished violence against African-Americans. African-Americans clearly realized that no one was outside the police's reach, particularly not those participating in armed dissidence. Bay Area history was replete with examples of moderate and revolutionary activists meeting their demise at the hands of local authorities. In light of such an historical context, Bay Area African-Americans predicted that the Panthers invariably would join the list of the killed in due time.<sup>129</sup>

Discussions regarding the BPP's inevitable downfall quickly became the Bay Area's dominant theme. Incredibly, Black Power Era Nationalists joined the chorus of doom, predicting that the armed patrols would be the primary catalyst in the BPP's decline. These critics often were the same individuals who previously charged that the Panthers were not "revolutionary" enough. However, in the wake of Newton and Seale's "picking up the gun," these other activists not only disassociated themselves from the Panthers, but also dismissed BPP as suicidal. Criticisms focused upon the reality that the BPP had not only rhetorically alluded to the utility of firearms, but they had actually "picked up the gun."<sup>130</sup>

Black Power era leaders such as Leori Jones (now known as Amiri Baraka) were at the forefront in denouncing the Black Panthers' most noted tactics. Jones charged the Panthers with being a veritable oxymoron. On the one hand, the Panthers' "Ten-Point Platform and Program" was as reformist as any Civil Rights organization's platform, yet on the other hand the party's revolutionary rhetoric diametrically opposed its reformist ideological underpinnings. Despite the sensationalism surrounding BPP guns and rhetoric, Jones contended that the Panthers amounted to little more than a band of reformists dressed up as revolutionaries. To Jones, the Panthers were not on the road to Revolution, but instead exploiting a gimmick to gain popularity.<sup>131</sup> Echoing the spirit of Jones' scathing denunciation was Bay Area Cultural Nationalist Maulana Karenga. Karenga also felt that the BPP's foremost concern was upon garnering publicity instead of attacking white world supremacy. And he too contended the Panthers' "Ten-Point Platform and Program" aimed at reforming America, not recreating it.<sup>132</sup> Put simply, the BPP armaments were denigrated by critics as shocking props. As evidence, critics called attention to the fact that Newton and Seale had not discharged a single round to protect the community.

Although most early criticism emanated from the Panthers' Nationalist rivals, some African-American intellectuals also entered the fray. Noted author Alice Walker openly questioned the wisdom of brandishing weaponry. With an acid pen, she described the Panthers as little more than emasculated males harboring a death wish. Provoking the police, Walker concluded allowed Panther members a final escape from their eunuch status through martyrdom.<sup>133</sup> Although such criticism emanated from a variety of sources, the general consensus was that the very act of "picking up the gun" moved the conflict between the state and the dissenter perilously close to open warfare.

Despite the many intra-racial critics of the BPP, the population most alarmed by the Panthers integrating armaments into their program was the catalyst for such tactics, the Oakland Police Department. Since the Panther Patrols had initially caught the OPD by surprise, little organized resistance to the activity occurred during its debut. However, once officers gathered their bearings, subduing what they considered an unprecedented threat became their foremost preoccupation.<sup>134</sup> Despite such determination, one major roadblock prevented an all-out attack upon the BPP. To officers' chagrin, the Panthers had not violated a single legal code. Unbelievably, all Panther Patrol components, including the guns, were legal. Despite such irony, officers circumvented such legality and implemented extralegal measures intended to disrupt the Panther Patrols.

Officers' initially attacked the Panther Patrols with a petty harassment campaign, a concerted effort to stop vehicles associated with the BPP for meticulous roadside inspections under the guise of minor traffic or equipment infractions. During the stops, officers conducted their inspections with a singular purpose of issuing fines and they commonly damaged a taillight, mirror, window, and/or license plate when no infraction existed. Detaining a Panther vehicle achieved two of the officers' most important objectives: that particular car and its occupants were no longer patrolling and the resulting fines completely depleted the BPP coffers.<sup>135</sup> BPP member Gene Marine remembers that "[t]he Panthers were constantly hemmed in by police, who watched for every minor traffic violation, arrested known Panthers as suspects in robberies and other crimes, and then released them after the maximum holding time...[Additionally], lists of known Panther cars and pictures of Panther leaders were posted in police stations."<sup>136</sup> Ironically, officers tailed the Panthers in much the same way they themselves had been, and were still being, tailed during the Panther Patrols.

To impress upon Bay Area African-Americans that the police remained the supreme power within the region, officers included a verbal assault aimed at persuading citizens of the futility of BPP antics. However, officers quickly abandoned such a course of action, largely because they were unable to get the better of the quick-witted Newton in verbal contests. Every time Newton engaged officers, particularly in front of potential recruits, was a shining moment for the BPP. During the verbal sparring, Newton invariably highlighted the legality of the Panther Patrols by citing statutes and the illegality of officers' tactics. Such a strategy was a calculated attempt to prod Bay Area citizens into pondering who the real criminals were in the increasingly frequent altercations. Despite the Panthers' success in this arena, OPD harassment was incessant. Since there were few full-time BPP members, it was relatively easy for officers to distribute a list detailing Panther Patrol participants and the vehicles they operated.

The most troubling issue arising from the petty harassment campaign concerned the raising of funds to pay off the unceasing tide of traffic fines. Nonpayment was not an option because then the police could arrest the Panthers who were ticketed. However, over an extended period, the fines would negatively impact, if not totally overwhelm, the organization. Prior to the police harassment campaign financial resources, or the lack thereof, had been a non-consideration for Newton and Seale. Up to that point, Panther monies came through the sporadic jobs and infrequent donations of its modest cadre.<sup>137</sup>

The fines against the Panthers consumed all funds earmarked for propaganda purposes. Clearly, the Panthers needed a source of income other than sporadic donations. While exploring options, Newton came across an article detailing a growing interest among white radicals in the *Red Book*, a collection of sayings by Mao Tse-Tung, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and leader of the People's Republic of China. Mao was one of several inspirations behind

much of the political theory and rhetoric espoused by white radicals, especially those on the relatively nearby University of California-Berkeley campus. After reading the article, Newton formulated a plan to raise the necessary funds. Figuring that “1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the population on the Cal campus are radicals or leftist,” the Panthers purchased fifty copies of the *Red Book* at \$.30 each with the intention of selling them for \$1.00 to Berkeley students. In less than an hour, every *Red Book* had been sold and the Panthers profited. Encouraged, they returned to the bookstore, brought another batch, and sold them outside the Sather Gate of Berkeley’s campus. In due time, the Panthers were purchasing all of the *Red Books* they could obtain and using the profits to propagate the BPP throughout the Bay Area, purchase armaments, and pay the OPD’s steady stream of traffic fines. The *Red Books* became a reliable fundraiser for the Panthers, so much so that they secured over 1,200 books to sell at a major anti-Vietnam War march. Although the Panthers fell short of selling all of their copies, they still earned in excess of \$1,200, a very impressive amount for a single day’s work.<sup>138</sup>

Despite such success and a resulting gradual increase in membership, Panther leaders feared their group had grown discouraged by the police’s incessant petty harassment campaign. To prevent the eroding of morale, which could result in members either lashing out at officers or renouncing their membership, Newton and Seale developed an ingenious offensive. As previously, members were to always obey officers’ orders. However, after emerging from their vehicles, the Panthers were to address any gathering crowd on the real reasons why they were being illegally detained. Although the plan was not the physical confrontation so many Panthers eagerly desired, it still proved a clever and fruitful form of resistance.<sup>139</sup>

The Panthers new strategy soon demonstrated its value when the Oakland police confronted some Panthers in front of the party’s headquarters. A throng of Black citizens

gathered to witness the escalating conflict between the Panthers and the police. When officers attempted to disperse the crowd, Newton opened the Black Panthers' office so the onlookers could legally observe the conflict up-close. Such a vantage point gave Oakland African-Americans an intimate look at the courage of the BPP's Minister of Defense. As officers wielded their intimidation tactics, Newton let loose a verbal flurry that simultaneously defended his constitutional rights to carry a gun and threatening to utilize the weapon to ensure his safety. In front of the bystanders, Newton told officers, "you shoot at me, swine, I'm going to shoot back at you . . . The Constitution says that I can carry this gun, and I can use it to protect myself." Citizens observing from the BPP office were overwhelmingly impressed that Newton had stood up to their arch-nemesis and avoided arrest. According to Seale, the result was that the Panthers received over a dozen new recruits that evening.<sup>140</sup> Such results were neither accidental nor atypical as the Panthers consciously entered most confrontations hoping to achieve such ends.

Panther leaders were pleasantly surprised by the impact their decision to be pro-active had upon citizens' actions, attitudes, and behavior toward officers, including African-Americans' increasingly public denunciation of the OPD.<sup>141</sup> Encouraged by their success, they reasoned that the most efficient way to solidify their vanguard position was through developing their Political Education classes.

These classes covered BPP rules, weapons training, and proper instruction for preventing unnecessary arrests; particularly as such arrests were typically the result of members unwittingly stepping outside legal boundaries while patrolling:

The correct political education among members was necessary to break up all these hassles that we were having trying to organize the Party. At the same time we wanted as many members as we could possibly get, so that the Party would spread and the members would carry the message. We also needed a really hard core of working people to get things off the ground...Included was one hour of



field stripping of weapons, safety and cleaning of weapons in the home, etc.

Then we had one or two hours of righteous political education and study. The

third area was work, coordinating various activities, and understanding the

political significance of various actions we took...<sup>142</sup>

These classes were as much orientation sessions for new recruits as they were propaganda sessions to sway the inquisitive into joining. In addition to the sharing of organizational rules, BPP leaders expounded upon revolutionary theory and how such information informed BPP strategies, tactics, and goals. For the vast majority of those in attendance, Political Education classes signaled their first exposure to the ideological underpinnings informing the Panthers' revolutionary Nationalist posture. During the sessions the participants were given a healthy dose of such notable leftist revolutionary philosophers as Lenin, Fanon, Marx, Mao, Guevara, Malcolm X, and Williams.<sup>143</sup>

To their chagrin, the Panthers' leaders discovered that for their new recruits such ideological formulations were overshadowed by a seemingly uncontrollable fascination with the gun.<sup>144</sup> In a similar vein, Party chairman Bobby Seale recalled:

From its very beginning, the Black Panther Party has had problems with a lot of people who come in and use the Party as a base for criminal activity which the Party never endorsed or had anything to do with. In the early days of the Party, we had to try a number of times to show brothers that they were breaking the rules, and eventually tell them that they were no longer members of the Party and that they didn't represent the Party anymore .... Some brothers would come into the Party, and see us with guns, and they related only to the gun.<sup>145</sup>

To the BPP's credit, its leadership was fully aware of this rapidly-developing fascination and the dangers it held for the Panthers, the Black Power Era, and the nation in general.

Although Newton and Seale could have reveled in the fallacy that their ideological formulations endeared the BPP to African-Americans, the Panther leaders realized that the

“Ten-Point Platform and Program” had little to do with many members’ decisions to join. Newton and Seale recognized that the perceived power flowing from the barrel of a gun, not their ideological constructs, brought significant support to the fledging party. Seale remembers that “when we started the Party,...[we] didn’t have any intention of having them identify only with the gun. We knew that we had to teach them that the gun was only a tool and it must be used by a mind that thinks.”<sup>146</sup> However, Newton and Seale predicted from the Panthers’ founding “that the guns would be more valuable and more meaningful to the ‘brother off the block’ ...”<sup>147</sup> The African-American lumpen proletariat’s enchantment with the gun caused many recruits to overlook ideology not pertaining to armaments. Obviously, this desire to “pick up the gun,” devoid of any political understanding, drastically failed to capture the essence of Newton and Seale’s revolutionary vision and impeded the Panthers’ maturation into a viable revolutionary vehicle.

Clearly, the base desires of new members to turn the tables on the police outweighed and often muted BPP revolutionary Nationalist theory. Recognizing this tendency early in the BPP’s existence, Newton and Seale combated it at every turn acknowledging that “the guns were used to attract the young urban Afrikan Americans, but once they joined the Party, it was the responsibility of the organization to train them in political organizing.” However, issues surrounding the gun, and its utility, continually impeded the party’s progress. Nevertheless, many substantive issues remained that the BPP discussed at Political Education classes.<sup>148</sup>

One of the primary theories the BPP discussed in classes was the Panthers’ two-tiered philosophy on liberation. Newton explained that an unmistakable distinction existed between the Panthers’ short-term and long-term goals. What most Nationalists criticized as reformism, said Newton, was a mechanism designed to ensure African-American survival. Such short-term

survival goals, however, were precursors to long-range goals of domestic revolution. If African-Americans perished due to a lack of necessities, the latter goals would be irrelevant.<sup>149</sup> Such beliefs, combined with a deep desire to improve African-Americans condition, led Newton to accentuate the BPP's community service activities.

Due to the sensationalism surrounding the Panthers' patrolling activities observers commonly overlooked the party's less dramatic community service activities that helped the African-American community. On one occasion, for instance, the Panthers joined a contentious battle between Bay Area African-Americans and the Oakland City Council. This ongoing contest concerned the busy Oakland intersection of Fifty-fifth and Market Streets, the site of innumerable automobile accidents in which many youth were injured and killed. When the City Council ignored the continual pleas of area residents for a traffic signal, the Panthers lent their presence to the cause. Once the BPP entered the fray, council members agreed to install the requested traffic signal; however, to everyone's dismay, the installation process was not scheduled to begin for a full calendar year. Such a timetable was totally unacceptable to the African-American community, who questioned how many more children would be killed during that period. This gross disregard of life prodded the BPP into an unprecedented action, directing traffic at the intersection until the installation occurred and a decision that endeared the organization to their community. In the wake of the Panthers' initiative, city officials amazingly found the resources to move the installation forward one full year.<sup>150</sup>

Despite such service and utility to the community, Bay Area African-Americans remained leery of affiliating with the BPP. The only means the Panthers had to combat such apprehensions were through their continued survival and their operations within the community. Each day the party survived, its existence served as refutation of the Oakland police's

omnipotence. But most African-Americans feared that repression by the OPD had yet to begin. The community knew that the dangerous standoffs that were occurring frequently were only the tip of the iceberg regarding what the OPD was capable and/or willing to do toward destroying the BPP. Even the BPP leadership realized that the OPD's petty harassment campaign would inevitably be scrapped in favor of more severe forms of repression. Sensing police frustrations, Panther leaders prepared for a forthcoming assault by warning their members of the need to exercise extreme caution in their dealings with officers.

Clearly, the OPD's petty harassment campaign had failed to curb the Panther Patrols because the very laws that officers had sworn to uphold shielded the Panthers during both their patrolling activities and daily public display of weaponry. Such irony prodded increasing numbers of officers toward back-alley justice and these extralegal activities escalated tensions between the combatants to unprecedented levels. For all intents and purposes, existing laws proved to be more of a hindrance to officers than to the dissenting population. For many Panthers, such irony was fertile ground to taunt officers and did little more than escalate the already mounting tensions.<sup>151</sup>

Equally troubling to BPP leaders was the increasing number of recruits who were mesmerized by the rhetorical virtues of the gun and allowed such fascinations to guide their interactions with law enforcement officers. For many Panthers, their foremost desire appeared to be little more than exacting revenge upon those who had harassed their ancestors and themselves. To even the casual observer, clearly a direct correlation existed between an increase in BPP popularity and OPD frustrations. Consequently, it was far from shocking when on February 21, 1967, a mere four months after the Panthers' genesis, the inevitable showdown between officers and BPP members came to fruition.<sup>152</sup>

The Black community was abuzz with excitement as it prepared for the “Malcolm X Memorial Day Conference.” The highpoint of the scheduled activities was an appearance by Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X’s widow. Organizers, wishing to ensure Shabazz’s comfort and safety, chose the BPP to serve as her security guard during her visit. Newton, a fanatic for planning, felt that the police would not passively standby and allow his group to walk into the airport, retrieve Shabazz, and depart. Certain that the officers would attempt to bar his group’s entrance, he studied the laws regarding what was, and was not, permissible in an airport terminal. Initially, Newton discovered that the airport was, in fact, private property and could dictate activities on their premises. After further investigation, however, Newton found that the airport’s capacity to hold over 200 individuals subjected it to public regulation and, thus, guaranteed those on its premises the protections of constitutional rights. Such a loophole was crucial to the Panthers’ mission for without it the local police and airport security could void the Panthers’ right to carry guns inside a public structure.<sup>153</sup>

Considering the pre-existing hostility between the Panthers and the police, it should not be shocking that officers confronted the BPP’s security detail at the airport. As Shabazz’s plane made its final approach, armed Panthers strode toward the airport entrance. When officers blocked the entrance, Newton questioned the legal grounds for their actions. As expected, the officers pointed out that the airport was private property. However, Newton reminded officers that it still fell under public regulation because of its capacity to accommodate in excess of 200 people. The officers, however, continued to block the gun totting Panthers. Airport security then suggested a compromise of allowing the Panthers access to the terminal if they left their guns outside. Newton vehemently refused, reminding the officers that the BPP was fully within its rights under the state constitution to enter the airport armed. Finally, the officers backed

down from their rigid position and stepped aside as the armed Panthers entered the airport, retrieved Shabazz from her flight, and exited in front of the officers. The head of airport security later alleged to Bay Area reporters that the only reason he “allowed” the Black Panthers’ entrance was that “[t]he only law there is, is against carrying concealed weapons and there wasn’t anything concealed... [O]f course they were on private property...and could have been arrested for trespassing but I didn’t want to inflame them and create a scene and scare a lot of innocent people.”<sup>154</sup>

Bay area police fumed at the Panthers’ public rejection of their authority. Consequently, as the Panthers escorted Shabazz to the first of a series of scheduled appearances, trouble loomed on the horizon. While Shabazz gave an interview at the offices of *Ramparts*, officers mobilized outside and impatiently awaited the Panthers’ emergence. Unable to restrain themselves, Oakland police finally stormed the building in hopes of capturing Panther leaders and meting out punishment. In an unbelievable display of ineptitude, officers fumbled their attempt to arrest Newton and Seale since many of them had little, if any, idea what they looked like. Consequently, officers randomly accosted Panthers standing inside of the building and queried them regarding who was in charge. Realizing the inefficiency of their actions, officers returned outside and stewed in anger.<sup>155</sup>

Once Shabazz completed her interview, the Panthers formed a security cordon around her and exited the front door. Obviously, the Panthers were aware of the OPD officers awaiting their appearance and wanting to crack heads. Although Shabazz’s safety remained most prominent on their agenda, the BPP was not averse to giving officers the confrontation they sought. A large crowd had mobilized in anticipation of a battle, and BPP’s and OPD’s actions clearly revealed that neither party desired to disappoint the bystanders.

Once Shabazz had been safely whisked from the area, the BPP turned its attention towards the hostile OPD officers. The Panthers taunted the police with machismo posturing and then attempted to leave. As Newton ordered his team to departure, one of the most intense standoffs in Bay Area history occurred. According to Seale:

Huey saw the cops pulling the straps off of the hammers [of their guns] all of a sudden, so Huey says, "Turn around! Don't turn your back on these backshooting motherfuckers!"...We all turned around...Huey goes, "Spread!" and jacks a shell off into the chamber of his gun... A big beefy cop moved forward. He had unhooked the strap off of the hammer of his pistol, and started shouting at Huey. "Don't point that gun at me! Stop pointing that gun at me!" He kept making gestures as though he was going to go for his gun... "You want to draw your gun?" Huey asked him. The other pigs were calling for this one to cool it, but he didn't seem to hear them. He was looking right at Huey, staring straight into Huey's eyes. "OK, you big fat racist pig, draw your gun!"...The cop didn't move. "Draw it you cowardly dog!" and with that, Huey jacked a round off into the chamber of his shotgun. "I'm waiting," Huey said, and, man, he just stood there waiting for this pig to make a move toward his gun. All of the other cops moved back out of the line of fire. The five of us were spread out behind Huey. Finally the fat pig just gave up. He let out a great big sigh and just hung his head, Huey almost laughed in his face.<sup>156</sup>

Although intense confrontations between the police and the Panthers never became routine, other sporadic conflicts almost reached similar levels of intensity of the February 21, 1967 showdown. Yet, harassment and threats from Bay Area officers had at best a negligible impact upon BPP's strength and stability. The increasingly-bold BPP, coupled with increased support from the African-American and protest communities, led officers to deduce that their present course of action, particularly the petty harassment campaign, were ineffective. Bay Area officers, administrators, and politicians concluded it was time for a new approach to what had transformed from merely a Panther nuisance into a veritable Panther menace.



## CHAPTER 6

### GAINING FAME BY GETTING LOST

Sensing imminent revenge from the OPD for the Malcolm X Day confrontation, Panther leaders began garnering the African-American community's support for they realized that failure to do so preordained the group's demise. The most important step towards propagating BPP's cause was the creation of *The Black Panther*, a newspaper for Blacks in the Bay Area. This new endeavor gave the party both increased publicity and a new member of the leadership core, Eldridge Cleaver.

While preparing for the Malcolm X Day conference, Newton and Seale met Cleaver, whose renown within the Bay Area was due to his oratorical prowess and literary skill. Cleaver, who was on parole from the California penal system after serving nine years for rape, was one of the most intriguing individuals on the activist scene. The ex-convict had much in common with the BPP co-founders, such as his migration to the Bay Area as a child and the poverty his family experienced. Once released from Soledad prison, Cleaver obtained a job at the white leftist periodical *Ramparts*. A disciple of Malcolm X, Cleaver was determined to make Malcolm X's final secular endeavor, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a success. Cleaver perceived the initial step toward accomplishing this goal was to forge a united front among African-American activists, artists, writers, and political theoreticians. Consequently, he created the "Black House," a place in San Francisco's Fillmore district for artists, activists, and

organizations to assemble. The funds for this bastion of African-American culture and politics came ironically from Cleaver's white leftist benefactors.

When Seale and Newton appeared at the Black House to receive their security assignment from the Malcolm X Day Celebration steering committee, their image and presence startled committee member Cleaver. "I spun around in my seat," he later wrote, "and saw the most beautiful sight I had ever seen: four black men wearing black berets, powder blue shirts, black leather jackets, black trousers, shiny black shoes--and each with a gun!...Where was my mind at? Blown!"<sup>157</sup> Soon there after, Cleaver joined the Panthers and became the Minister of Information.

While Cleaver was enchanted with a masculinity that he made synonymous with revolution, the Panthers was enthralled to have him join their fold since he had access to monies from speaking engagements and an intricate network of wealthy white radicals. Additionally, he agreed to donate the residuals from his best-selling prison memoir, *Soul on Ice*, to the BPP. Panther leaders quickly realized that Cleaver was a master of communications. In the end, it would be Cleaver's voice, not Newton's, Seale's, or Carmichael's, that would come to represent the Black Power Era most strongly. To be heard, Cleaver created a powerful communication vehicle and fundraiser with *The Black Panther*.<sup>158</sup>

Published on April 27, 1967, the first issue of *The Black Panther*, a four-page mimeographed spread, ran the headline "Why Was Denzil Dowell Killed?" Many of the organization's supporters felt great trepidation about the venture, fearing that the paper could lead to the BPP being linked with groups that it publicly criticized for talking about revolution

without any real intention of taking action. Newton vividly remembered the catalyst that overcome the initial concerns:

We had never even thought of putting out a newspaper before.

Words on paper had always seemed futile. But the Dowell case prompted us to find a way to inform the community about the facts and mobilize them to action. Lacking access to radio, television, or any of the other mass media, we needed an alternative means of communication. No one would do it for us.<sup>159</sup>

The initial issue of *The Black Panther* detailed Denzil Dowell's murder and the BPP's independent investigation of Oakland police behavior. According to official incident reports, police spotted Dowell attempting to burglarize a business in April 1967. Officers reported that once Dowell saw them, he attempted to escape by running into a dark area, jumping a fence, and forcing officers to use lethal force for their own protection. The state coroner reported that once Dowell was shot, he quickly bled to death where he fell.<sup>160</sup> Undoubtedly, Denzil Dowell's death and the resulting police inquiry stirred up feelings of déjà vu for local African-Americans. Not only had officers struck down another Black male, but a subsequent Internal Affairs investigation cleared them of any wrongdoing. Seeking to prove that their beloved Denzil had been the victim of state-sanctioned murder, the Dowell family launched its own investigation. More than emotions supported their suspicions when several significant inconsistencies surfaced in the police's version of that night's event.

Several pieces of evidence pointed to foul play by the police. For one, Dowell had suffered a hip injury in a car accident prior to the night of the burglary, making it extremely difficult for him to run at a rapid pace, let alone climb or jump a fence as officers alleged.

Moreover, the spot where Dowell's body lay was absent of blood, contradicting the coroner's official cause of death being immediate and uncontrollable bleeding. Adding credibility to family's suspicion that the police had moved Dowell's body was the presence of a pool of blood twenty yards in front of the fence they contended he was in the process of scaling. Amazingly, officers never summoned emergency units to the scene or stated that Dowell had a gun on his person. Finally, an independent medical examination concluded that Dowell had been facing the officers in a surrender position with hands raised above his head when the lethal shots were fired. Despite such contradictions to official accounts, the state's refused to reconsider the case. Having exhausted the legal system, the Dowell family turned to the BPP for assistance.<sup>161</sup>

The Black Panther Party's decision to help the Dowells was an extension of its belief that bringing to light police brutality cases was the surest means to win African-American support. Panther members sought to mobilize grassroots pressure for an investigation of Denzil's murder. They traveled to Richmond for a series of street rallies and circulated a petition that garnered 1,200 signatures demanding a Grand Jury investigation.<sup>162</sup> The *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle* reported that

[s]ome 150 Negroes listened as leaders of the group stood atop autos to make speeches and armed guards kept away all whites. The speakers reportedly advised the crowd what to do regarding the alleged police brutality. While Contra Costa deputies kept an eye on the gathering from a helicopter, no action was taken on the ground, since, a sheriff's spokesman said, the Black Panthers broke no laws and displayed their weapons openly.<sup>163</sup>

Unfortunately, the protests regarding Denzil Dowell's slaying were to no avail, as the state

staunchly refused to reopen the case. However, Panther agitation strengthened law enforcement officers' determination to destroy the BPP by any means necessary. Police continually attempted to provoke Panthers into using their weapons by pointing their own guns at members, conducting illegal arrests, and by executing back-alley beatings. Despite various officers' attempts to raise confrontations to lethal levels, cooler heads prevailed as OPD administrators formulated a less dramatic, but more effective, plan to subdue the BPP.

At the behest of California Attorney General Thomas C. Lynch, conservative State Assemblyman Donald Mulford introduced a bill to revoke Californians' constitutional right to carry unconcealed weapons. The Attorney General, who publicly remarked "[T]he time has come when we have to legislate against carrying or exhibiting guns in public places," had widespread support as Bay Area administrators encouraged the passage of the measure.<sup>164</sup> Clearly, the legislation, if passed, would prove disastrous for the BPP whose armaments made the group appealing to members and community supporters. The inability to wave weapons around would undermine Panther recruiting efforts as downtrodden African-American males considered the ability to defend themselves and their community against officers a major reason to enlist in the BPP.

The potential fallout from enacting the Mulford Bill would be multi-fold, but most immediately impacted would be the Panther Patrols. Panther leaders realized that without patrolling capabilities it would be difficult to attract additional members. Moreover, they feared that the BPP would lose a sizable portion of its current membership who had joined because of the gun's allure but were now in the early stages of politicization.

Although the Black Panther Party was known throughout the Bay Area, African-Americans' hesitation to join the organization emanated from a rationale fear of violent reprisals

from OPD officers. The loss of the ability to carry arms would increase such anxiety because Blacks realized that the only factor preventing officers from shooting Panthers was a fear of immediate retaliation. Because of the ongoing conflicts with police, the Panthers were not the safest organizational choice for aspiring activists, even with the possibility of carrying guns; without weapons, the party was no longer an option at all in many minds.<sup>165</sup>

Panther leaders realized that it was only a matter of time before the Mulford Bill passed into law. The absence of an advocate for the party in the state legislature translated into a lack of power in the political arena, particularly in regards to resisting the Mulford Bill. This situation offered Panther members two choices: either distance themselves from the party or engage in activities that invited incarceration or even death.

Taking the latter path, Newton, Seale, and Cleaver scheduled a demonstration at the State Capitol in Sacramento to oppose the measure. The plan was for group of armed Panthers to protest what they now called “the Panther Bill” in front of the local media. Standing on the front steps of the capital building, Seale was to read to the gathered cadre Newton’s “In Defense of Self-Defense,” and then the Panthers would quickly flee Sacramento before police had a chance to react. Although “In Defense of Self-Defense” was a particularly poignant statement, the real payoff for this operation lay in the voluminous coverage the Panthers hoped to receive from news media.<sup>166</sup>

On the morning of May 2, 1967, thirty Panthers arrived in Sacramento to protest the Mulford Bill. Near comical logistical problems marred the protest from the beginning. On the way to Sacramento, the Panthers’ pondered how to deal with the state legislature’s security personnel. But once in the city they quickly discovered that concerns about security personal were secondary since not one Panther had any idea of the legislature’s location. Sitting in their vehicles, the Panthers guessed at which building was the Capitol. Finally, using deductive reasoning, Seale correctly headed towards the building with the largest group of cameramen and reporters loitering in front.<sup>167</sup>

As the Panthers approached, one in their ranks whimsically remarked, “Look at Reagan run,” referring to California’s ultra-conservative governor Ronald Reagan. At first, the statement appeared to be little more than rhetorical posturing. However, Governor Reagan, who was addressing a youth assembly on the Capitol grounds, apparently spotted the armed Panthers and hastily exited in the opposite direction. Once the fleeing Reagan was pointed out, the Panthers continued their approach to the Capitol steps.<sup>168</sup>

Upon arriving at the building, Seale ascended the steps while the remaining Panthers assembled themselves in military formation. Camera crews immediately turned their lenses toward the Panthers and captured Chairman Seale reading the statement composed by Newton. The Black Panthers, Seale intoned:

calls upon the American people in general and the Black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature, which is now considering legislation aimed at keeping the Black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder and repression of Black people.... Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned, demonstrated and everything else to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs which have historically been perpetrated against Black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy.... The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for Black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer. A people who have suffered so much for so long at the hands of a racist society, must draw the line somewhere. We believe that the Black communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the progression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction.<sup>169</sup>

Once Seale finished reading, he unexpectedly deviated from the plan to arrive, read the directive, and quickly exit Sacramento. Instead, he sought to send a message to legislators by

observing the General Assembly at work. Such a decision was not particularly shocking as there was a Gallery Area specifically designed for observing. However, most visitors did not brandish weapons.

Seale's deviation from the initial plan denigrated into the worst decision he could have made. Just as the Panthers had not known where the Capitol was, neither were they knowledgeable about the structure's internal design. The gun-totting Panthers became lost as they searched for the Gallery Area. Soliciting a Capitol employee's help proved nearly disastrous as the person inadvertently directed them to the entrance to the General Assembly floor instead of the Gallery Area. When they accidentally marched onto the assembly floor, their appearance sent ripples of fear through California's elected representatives. Alarmed security officers hurriedly mobilized to stop them. Tensions between the BPP and law enforcement officers would not subside until the Panthers departed.<sup>170</sup>

The Panthers' invasion of the Assembly's floor removed any hopes of exiting quickly to avoiding arrest. Yet the comedy of errors continued as one of the vehicles carrying the Panthers overheated while leaving Sacramento, forcing them to stop at a gas station and giving officers an opportunity to take the fleeing Nationalists into custody.<sup>171</sup> In planning the protest, BBP leaders had foreseen the possibility of arrests. As preparation, Seale had been insistent that Newton, who was still on probation for prior offenses, not travel to Sacramento. The Panther Chairman also realized that if mass arrests occurred the group would need someone available to orchestrate their release. Seale's foresight proved beneficial. Once California's airwaves carried news of the episode, Newton began raising bail for his jailed comrades.

Among those incarcerated was Bobby Seale, who was charged with disturbing the peace. His conviction began a volatile period in Black Panther history directly linked to an increase in



state-sanctioned repression. The “storming” of the State Capitol certainly failed to dissuade lawmakers from passing the Mulford Bill. Indeed, by giving Representatives an up-close view of “the Panther menace,” the affair propelled the legislature to make the measure even more restrictive.<sup>172</sup> Empowered by the new legislation, police officers revived their earlier repressive tactics with new vigor. Compelled to defend themselves against even the most frivolous charges, the Panthers could expect significant incarceration time. Acquiring adequate legal defense required monies that the Panthers did not have, a matter made more intolerable when the prosecution routinely dropped charges just prior to the case going to trial.

Yet the Sacramento rally did get the group known across the country. National news coverage of the Panthers “storming” the State Capitol was a far greater propaganda tool than the BPP could have ever fathomed. The moment the images of armed Panthers appeared on national television, the party catapulted into the vanguard position of the Black Power Era. However, the BPP was woefully unprepared to deal with a host of unforeseen issues that developed from its increasing popularity. One Panther recalled that they had not anticipated the intensity of attention they received from the media or police: “Cause they went hand in hand. The more repression, the more media attention; the more media attention, the more repression.”<sup>173</sup> Although most whites and integrationist-oriented African-Americans denounced the Panthers’ shocking machismo image, many young Black males throughout the nation embraced it wholeheartedly.

The allure of the gun fed urban African-American males’ romanticized ideas surrounding revolutionary struggle.<sup>174</sup> For these individuals, the Panthers’ signature leather jackets, powder blue shirts, berets, and armaments were the embodiment of a revolutionary. Unfortunately, the brief news clips of the Panthers in Sacramento left urban admirers with little exposure to BPP

principles. African-American urbanites' gravitation towards the BPP after its short media exposure clearly displays a search for an alternative to nonviolent civil disobedience. For these people, what mattered was that the Panthers had taken a military stand against the "establishment" and survived. They had no way of fathoming that the catalyst for such an extreme form of protest was the BPP's desperation to stay afloat.

Prior to the Sacramento protest, the Panthers' ranks were composed of individuals that the co-founders personally knew from the Bay Area. However, expanding nationally brought in strangers. Newton recalled that in the wake of the State Capitol rally, the Panthers "had more members than we could handle. From all across the country calls came to us about establishing chapters and branches; we could hardly keep track of the requests."<sup>175</sup> In reality, the Panthers were little more than a group of poorly organized African-Americans creating revolution as they advanced, unprepared for national expansion.

Although Newton and Seale had considered future expansion, prior to the Summer of 1967 they had taken little action. Now, in an attempt to facilitate growth, the Panther leadership hurriedly created a new three-tiered hierarchy for the organization. At the highest tier was the BPP's governing body, the Central Committee, composed of Newton (Minister of Defense), Seale (Chairman), Cleaver (Minister of Information), Frank Jones (Deputy Minister of Information), and David Hilliard (Chief of Staff).<sup>176</sup> The second tier was comprised of regional chapters, and the lowest tier included local branches scattered throughout the nation. Rank-and-file members would report to local branch leaders concerning developments in their respective locations. Only truly important matters made it to the Central Committee, who made the large decisions and created policy. This structure would not be completely workable, but it was somewhat functional for a short time.<sup>177</sup>

Initially, when an individual outside the Oakland area called the Panthers' headquarters to inquire about beginning their own chapter, BPP leaders responded with a list of extreme requirements that included relocating to the Bay Area, selling *The Black Panther*, and learning current ideology and rules.<sup>178</sup> However, Newton and Seale soon realized that the relocation demand was unrealistic and shortly dropped it. Meanwhile Minister of Education George Murray created a handbook that included BPP rules, goals, strategies, tactics, and ideology.<sup>179</sup>

The explosion in requests for membership also forced the Panthers to amend their criteria for inclusion. Recruits who entered the BPP after the Sacramento protest were required to fill out a basic membership form and pay \$3 (\$0.50 for hardship cases). Once their applications were approved, new members participated in a six-week political education program, divided into three parts: community, leadership, and cadre. New recruits had to study the "Ten-Point Platform and Program" and read the seminal literature informing the BPP ideological underpinnings: Fanon, Marx, Malcolm X, Williams, Mao, and Guevara. Panther leaders structured their program to move their recruits' understanding of revolutionary struggle from a "race first" domestic struggle to an international one with obvious class implications.<sup>180</sup> Despite mandating a mastery of the same material by all BPP chapters, Panther leaders quickly realized that more and more members disregarded political theory. Most individuals proved incapable of going beyond infatuation with the Party's revolutionary image and weaponry.

Undoubtedly, the BPP's militant posture polarized the nation and led to vociferous denouncements from a cross section of America, including the Civil Rights community. Most problematic for moderate leaders was the BPP's oft-recited charge that the Civil Rights movement had failed. For BPP supporters, that failure mandated that African-Americans abandon parochial goals in favor of an uncompromising Nationalist politics. Although Civil

Rights leaders continued to struggle for integration, large numbers of Blacks had abandoned integration in favor of a Nationalist aesthetic. Remarkably, even the Civil Rights movement's most trusted ally, white liberals, had abandoned the prescriptions of integrationist leaders.

White liberals presented some of the most interesting reactions to the Black Panther Party and its Nationalist politics. Within the ideologically diverse white leftist community, two markedly different reactions emerged. One camp followed the lead of moderate Civil Rights leaders and denounced both the Panthers and their nationalist ideological underpinnings. Most problematic for these liberal whites was the Black Nationalists' tendency to disregard prior contributions and sacrifices made by whites toward securing racial justice. These white liberals had little idea that the BPP's progressive politics mandated participation in interracial alliances with like-minded groups. Such an ideological stance made the Panthers an anomaly within the largely separatist-minded Nationalist community. So too were Newton's and Seale's verbal support for gay rights, free speech, and women's rights in the midst of the sometimes separatist, xenophobic, and narrow-minded nationalist Black Power Era. However, no display of progressivism proved sufficient to overcome the preconceived notions of the BPP and Black Nationalist politics held by many liberals.

More left-leaning white radicals realized that moderate and liberal whites' denouncement of the Black Panthers was rooted in ignorance. White radicals admonished their liberal counterparts for their thinly-veiled racist views, asserting that the Panthers "are not what the press makes them out to be. They are not a racist organization. They oppose all oppression and brutalization of the ghetto whether perpetrated by black people or white people. They are armed to defend themselves and their community against oppression...."<sup>181</sup>

Prior to BPP's "storming" the State Capitol, members of the Bay Area's influential white leftist movement had already been exposed to the Party. Leftists had assisted the Panthers in several community service programs and considered the Panthers brothers in the coming socialist revolution. White leftists recognized that the Panthers were ideologically distinct from other Black Nationalists, particularly as they utilized arms and proved receptive to progressivism. Only the vanguard party, the Panthers felt, could successfully incorporate arms into their struggle. The prospect of cooperation between the two most vilified populations of 1960's radicalism, while leftists and the Panthers, alarmed both local and national law enforcement agencies.<sup>182</sup>

The FBI was aware of the BPP from its genesis. While the FBI initially was lax in its monitoring, the Panthers' growing popularity got the attention of FBI Director Hoover as well as that of local law enforcement officials throughout the nation. An increasingly conservative national climate encouraged largely irrational fears of radicals. Middle America sought "law and order" but were willing to turn a blind eye when the government used unlawful tactics against dissenters. Targeted for such tactics were opponents of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and advocates of African-American rights, women's rights, gay rights, and free speech.<sup>183</sup>

Despite sharing a common bond of police harassment, there were obvious differences between the types of causes activists championed. Partially motivated by self-interest, activists sought to address their most pressing needs prior to challenging general grievances. For example, the post-Voting Rights Act period saw white males protest the Vietnam War, while white women championed women's rights, and urban working-class and poor African-Americans protested slum conditions and second-class citizenship status.

The volatile summer of 1967 saw urban African-American neighborhoods explode in riots. Analysts generally agree that the catalyst for these rebellions was the trinity of inner-city evils: socioeconomic despair, police brutality, and political powerlessness. American politicians failed to consider the legitimacy of such grievances, particularly as they pointed towards structural flaws within American capitalism and representative democracy. Instead, many white politicians blamed the rhetoric of Black Nationalists for igniting the fires of the summer of discontent. This idea became a fixture within the campaigns, speeches, and political stances of more than a few politicians. To assuage the fears of middle America and persuade conservative Blacks to oppose Nationalism, politicians in both major parties advanced a “law and order” brand of politics.<sup>184</sup>

In response, the Panthers promoted militant Nationalism and dropped “Self-Defense” from their organization’s name. In July 1967, Newton expounded upon this latest alteration in BPP ideology in “The Correct Handling of the Revolution”:

The Black masses are handling the resistance incorrectly. When the brothers in East Oakland, having learned their resistance fighting from Watts, amassed the people in the streets, threw bricks and Molotov Cocktails to destroy property and create disruption, they were herded into small areas by Gestapo police and immediately contained by the brutal violence of the oppressor’s storm troops. Although this manner of resistance is sporadic, short-lived, and costly, it has been transmitted across the country to all the ghettos of the Black nation.

When the people learn that it is no longer advantageous for them to resist by going into the streets in large numbers, and when they see the advantage in the activities of the guerrilla warfare methods, they will quickly follow this example...It is not necessary to organize thirty million Black people in primary groups of two's and three's but it is important for the Party to show the people how to stage a revolution.

They are looking now for guidance to extend and strengthen their resistance struggle. The vanguard party must exemplify the characteristics that make them worthy of leadership.<sup>185</sup>

By adopting a revolutionary Nationalist posture, Newton attempted to create further distance between the BPP and its rival. Newton believed that by rebelling through rioting, the African-American masses had altered their strategies, tactics, and goals. The BPP sought to direct such activism through revolutionary Nationalism while simultaneously cautioning against occurrences of reactionary rebellion. The BPP's new emphasis on revolutionary Nationalism immediately stirred up the Bay Area police. Armed with the Mulford Act, officers sought to eradicate the Panthers through a series of quasi-military operations. As tensions mounted between officers of the Oakland's Police Department and Black Panther Party members, area residents sensed that it was only a matter of time before blood would be shed by one, if not both, of the combatants.<sup>186</sup> That time arrived in the morning hours of October 28, 1967.

As the city was awakening, Oakland police officer John Frey pulled over Huey Newton and Gene McKinney. The two Panthers immediately realized the danger they were in when they recognized Frey, who during his brief tenure with the OPD had gained notoriety throughout the African-American community as a rogue cop devoid of any sense of legal or moral boundaries. The Panthers had framed Frey's picture as a "Most Wanted" poster on a wall in their

headquarters. Community outcries against Frey had led to his superiors filing papers to transfer him to a location that would minimize his interactions with Bay Area African-Americans. In light of such a background, the events of October 28, 1967 were merely a continuation of Frey's antagonistic behavior towards Bay Area Blacks.<sup>187</sup>

Although the events of that morning remain contested, certain facts are clear. Prior to stopping Newton and McKinney, Frey had beaten a 16-year-old African-American grocery clerk named Daniel King. Then, when back patrolling, he recognized a "Panther car" and decided to investigate what its occupants were doing out so early in the morning. Frey was able to recognize the vehicle as a "Panther car" because Oakland officers circulated a list of vehicles owned or frequently operated by BPP members. Quite likely, Frey knew prior to radioing in the license plate number who was inside the stopped automobile because he requested additional officers. Once twenty-four-year-old Herbert Heanes arrived on the scene, Frey ordered Newton from his vehicle and toward the police cruiser.<sup>188</sup>

The early morning tragedy occurred in the short amount of time it took for Huey P. Newton to emerge from his vehicle and arrive at Frey's squad car. During these moments, gunfire lit the sky. Once the shooting ceased, both Newton and Officer Heanes suffered gunshot wounds, and Frey lay dead. Gene McKinney then stopped a passing motorist, Dell Ross, and forced him to drive Newton and him from the scene. Ross alleged hearing Newton boast that he had just shot two people. McKinney and the bleeding Newton made their way to David Hilliard's residence. Hilliard destroyed Newton's blood-soaked clothes and then arranged his transportation to Kaiser Hospital for emergency treatment. As dawn broke, newspapers throughout the nation ran shocking photos of a wounded Newton shackled to an emergency room gurney, surrounded by menacing Oakland Police Officers.<sup>189</sup>



The BPP Minister of Defense spent two weeks in Kaiser Hospital before being transferred to San Quentin Prison's medical ward. The state issued three indictments against Newton, one for the murder of John Frey, the second for assaulting Officer Heanes with a deadly weapon, and the third for kidnapping of Dell Ross. If convicted on the first charge Newton would be eligible for the death penalty.

With Newton awaiting trial and Seale still incarcerated for "storming" the State Capitol, the BPP was without experienced leadership. To fill the void, the Panthers' Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, assumed control. Cleaver and the BPP had two pressing issues to address: saving Newton from execution and weathering the increasing law enforcement attacks. Cleaver decided to guide the organization in a new direction. Under his leadership, the BPP expanded nationally and staved off attacks aimed at its destruction. One of his most important accomplishments was his orchestrating an alliance with deep-pocketed white liberals who proved instrumental in the Panthers' struggle to stay solvent. Unfortunately, there was an unmistakable correlation between Panther involvement with white radicals and the FBI's paranoia. Although Cleaver considered the alliance integral to the Party's survival, it directly contributed to a period of FBI-led arrests, death, and discord. Consequently, the period of Newton's incarceration was simultaneously the best and the worst of times for BPP members. Put simply, this period saw the Panthers experience unprecedented popularity among African-Americans and white radicals. Yet such prominence would be balanced by the horrific military strikes from their state opponents.<sup>190</sup>

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **FREE HUEY!**

The October 28, 1967 shootout involving Huey Newton occurred six months after the Black Panther Party's first national exposure and a few weeks past its first anniversary. Although publicity from the Sacramento protest had solidified the Panthers' standing as the Black Power movement's vanguard group, the shooting pushed the BPP to the center of the entire American protest scene. David Hilliard remembers, "The shootout has definitely been a colossal event. Before we were ten to fifteen guys with no office, money, media outlets or program. Now we...turn away new members, [and] don't have time to fulfill all the media requests for interviews..."<sup>191</sup> Despite growing fame, a myriad of obstacles confronted the Party during its second year of existence, including the loss of leadership.

While Newton awaited arraignment on charges stemming from his role in the early morning shootout, Bobby Seale remained incarcerated following the Sacramento protest. Newton's involvement in the murder of an OPD officer, coupled with the brilliant, yet often polarizing and shocking rhetoric of new BPP head Eldridge Cleaver, made sensational copy for the profit-driven press. On the one hand, the publicity increased requests for national expansion and led to the induction of over 200 Bay Area residents into the national chapter.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, it produced a harsh reaction from state and local authorities, including a propagation

campaign to ruin the BPP. As the Panthers prepared to mount Newton's defense, Oakland's mayor John Reading denounced the BPP and their martyr in the press:

A noisy and illogical demand is made for the release of Huey Newton who was apprehended and indicted by the Grand Jury on the charge of killing an Oakland police officer. Let me assure you that this city government will insist that this charge be pressed with vigor and determination by the District Attorney's office<sup>193</sup>

Echoing such sentiments was Police Chief Charles Gains. Gains by delivered a scathing forty-five-minute televised message denouncing the Panther:

The Black Panther party poses a real threat to the peace and tranquility of the city of Oakland. Calling the police murderers, calling them fascist pigs, and claiming the police do not protect and police the minority community is ridiculous and irrational. The Black Panther party has no practical, implementable programs to my knowledge and it's about time that all reasonable persons in the city of Oakland, both black and white, recognize the Black Panther party for what it is and let them know that the people in this city are not going to tolerate their unlawful activities and their irrationality. This must be done if we are going to have peace in this city<sup>194</sup>

Having to assuming a leadership position at such a time would have proven formidable for even the most experienced individual. Fortunately, Cleaver, while far from a seasoned leader, did not consider the state's attack insurmountable. Such optimism, however, in no way solved the plethora of issues confronting the Party. To prepare for Newton's approaching trial Cleaver realized the need for a great deal of money. Thus, once again, he turned to the progressive white community for financial help.<sup>195</sup> White leftists' admiration of for Cleaver flowed directly from a series of essays he penned while imprisoned. Following the appearance of *Soul on Ice*, leftists

anointed Cleaver the next revolutionary leader of the African-American masses, completing the course begun by Malcolm X. Although Cleaver's oratorical prowess secured white leftist funds and sympathies, such talents failed to create a stable inter-racial coalition throughout the activist community.<sup>196</sup>

From the moment the state handed down its indictments against Newton, Cleaver began mobilizing a defense.<sup>197</sup> One key component of the defense effort was a public relations campaign designed to draw attention to the trial and also to raise funds. The Panthers employed a simple but catchy slogan to mobilize the masses behind Newton: "Free Huey."<sup>198</sup> The "Free Huey" campaign rested upon three pillars: *The Black Panther*; the oratorical gifts of Panther leaders, particularly Cleaver; and the creation of coalitions that broadened support toward securing Newton's release. *The Black Panther* proved to be the Party's best fundraiser and propaganda tool during the period leading up to Newton's trial. David Hilliard remembers that *The Black Panther* became "the most visible, most constant symbol of the Party, its front page a familiar sight at every demonstration and in every storefront-window organizing project throughout the country."<sup>199</sup>

The nationally-distributed *Black Panther* informed members and sympathizers of trial developments and reported injustices within the larger African-American community.<sup>200</sup> A smaller newsletter, the "Ministry of Information Bulletin," also kept Party ranks aware of recent trial developments. The production and distribution of these periodicals was a collective effort in every way. Panthers possessing the required skills compiled information and wrote articles, while rank-and-file cadre sold the paper throughout the community, including in front of the Alameda County Courthouse where Newton was held. Clearly the Panthers succeeded in the

struggle to recruiting significant segments of the American populace to join their demands that Newton must be set free. And we wish to make it very clear that if he is not set free, there is little hope of avoiding an open armed war in the streets of California and of preventing it from sweeping across this nation. Black people are in no mood to allow this racist power structure to add Huey P. Newton's blood to the blood of the other people of the world which is now dripping from the fingers of the racist imperialist who have plunged the entire world into a nightmare of misery.<sup>201</sup>

Cleaver and the recently released Seale traveled the country speaking on issues surrounding the trial, Panther ideology, strategy, and goals. While lecturing, they sought to correct the innumerable fallacies that existed about the BPP and its infamous leader Newton. Seale recalls:

I came out with the feeling and desire to get brother Huey P. Newton out of jail and to keep them from sending him to the gas chamber, because this was the Party and the Party was my life...So, we really went into motion, using every means we had, taking every speaking engagement we could, and rallied the community. The Party moved rapidly to the campuses, and held rallies and forums. We had funds and donations coming in.<sup>202</sup>

Still, the information the nation's citizenry received came overwhelmingly from mainline newscasts, newspapers. Most reporters for these media intimated that Black Power calls for agency and the Panthers' display of arms were covert directives for retaliatory violence.

Unfortunately, such propaganda was the only image most middle-Americans, particularly white suburbanites, ever received on the BPP.

While at a loss on how to combat such bias, BPP members also were frustrated by another adversary who raised important questions regarding Black Nationalism and the utility of intra-racial solidarity. Although the BPP attempted to solidify the African-American community behind its revolutionary policies, many Nationalist organizations considered the Panthers an adversary because of its willingness to form coalitions with radical whites. The Panthers' ascension to vanguard status also made rivals out of who should have been natural allies. This conflict threatened to impede the preparations for Newton's capital murder trial, and therefore forced Eldridge Cleaver to address the critics. He charged that the BPP's ascension to vanguard status marked the advent of a new era of Black Nationalism. Cleaver contended that:

for the first time in the history of this country, a black organization, the Black Panther Party was in a position to initiate a principled relationship between blacks and whites. We were in complete control of our own organization, and we had built a solid base among ordinary people in the black community who trusted us, even when we started dealing with white folks. Our analysis that black people constitute a dispersed colony within the white population of the "mother country" has enabled us to seize upon the mechanism of coalition-foreign relations between forces, within separate nations, which are moving in opposition to the same white power structure that exploits and manipulates many whites at the same time it oppresses, brutalizes, and murders black people.<sup>203</sup>

Likewise, Bobby Seale charged that their rivals' insular politics highlighted their fallacious understanding of capitalist principles and their lack of knowledge of revolutionary theory and philosophy. Seale emphasized that:

The Black Panther Party is not a Black racist organization, not a racist organization at all. We understand where racism comes from. Our Minister of Defense [Huey P. Newton] has taught us to understand that we have to oppose all kinds of racism.<sup>204</sup>

While rival Nationalists' naively cried for racial exclusivity, there were logical reasons why the BPP turned to left-leaning whites for support with the "Free Huey" campaign. Cleaver remembers:

[W]e did not recognize that there was a need for [inter-racial coalitions] and it was only when they had Huey on death row in Alameda County, when they had indicted him for first degree murder and where we knew that they wanted to put him in the gas chamber that we had to make a retreat. We had to go inside of closed doors and say how we were going to deal with this because there was one thing that we knew, we knew that we would not be able to observe the process of those pigs...we could not allow them to get away with putting Huey Newton in the gas chamber. So how are we going to deal with this? It involved examining where we are, where we were, and where we wanted to go, where we willing to go, with whom we were willing to work. We had to look at that in terms of the program of the party and the ideology of the party and there was nothing there that precluded a working alliance, a coalition with white people.<sup>205</sup>

In light of the Panthers' poor financial resources and dearth of bourgeoisie skills, they accepted help from wherever it was offered. For Cleaver, such support was found among California's white leftist community. Future BPP leader Elaine Brown remarks that the "Free Huey" campaign was "the beneficiary of the support of the most powerful collection of artists in America: the Hollywood film industry's actors, actresses, producers, writers, and directors."<sup>206</sup> Philanthropic support, which ran into the tens of thousands of dollars, was offered by Hollywood

moguls such as Jane Fonda, Marlon Brando, Leonard Bernstein, and Bert Schneider.<sup>207</sup>

To most activists and scholars, the Panthers' overtures to white leftists appear to be the height of contradiction, a posture that was fundamentally flawed. Unfortunately, there has traditionally been a connection between Nationalist calls for "Black Power" and interracial non-support, a correlation that many Nationalist thinkers and theoreticians failed to recognize. Nationalist leaders made "Black Power" slogans and Nationalist politics synonymous with physical, cultural, and symbolic separatism from whites.<sup>208</sup> In contrast, the BPP charged that such politics were not only historically unsupportable, but also the height of absurdity. Newton and Cleaver believed that alliances with like-minded organizations were a necessity, not a mere convenience.

Cleaver particularly was convinced of the necessity for such alliances:

This is the key center of the eye of the storm because whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, neither white radicals nor black radicals are going to get very far by themselves, one without the other. In order for real change to be brought about in America, we have to create machinery that is capable of moving in two different directions at the same time, machinery the two wings of which are capable of communicating with each other. The Black Panther Party through its coalition with the Peace & Freedom Party and its merger with SNCC has been the vector of communication between the most important vortexes of black and white radicalism in America.<sup>209</sup>

Newton also rebuffed rival Nationalists' criticism regarding the Panthers' interracial alliances by maintaining that such arrangements were "possible as long as we controlled the programs.... We



needed allies, and we believed that alliances with young whites—students and workers—were worth the risk.”<sup>210</sup>

Despite the Panthers’ fundamental disagreements with other Nationalist leaders regarding the utility of interracial coalitions, its coalition with white groups was not always harmonious. One conflict developed between Black Panthers and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). At the National Conference for a United Front against Fascism, SDS leaders took issue with Panther claims to the mythical, yet revered, vanguard title.<sup>211</sup> Seale angrily responded to SDS’s criticism by threatening to have Panthers administer “disciplinary actions” against “those little bourgeois, snooty nose SDS’s” if they got “out of order.”<sup>212</sup> Despite incidents like this, the Panthers never abandoned their belief that interracial alliances in no way contradicted their revolutionary Nationalist politics.

On December 22, 1967, Cleaver formed the Panthers’ first interracial alliance with an upstart political party, The Peace and Freedom Party (P&FP).<sup>213</sup> The Peace and Freedom Party’s constitution articulated its ideological leanings. The document reads in part:

The Peace and Freedom Party is an independent, permanent radical political party. We see the Democratic-Republican parties as a part of the system in which the economic and social interests of a few determine the policies which bear major responsibility for the evils against which we are committed to fight. We are the beginning of a new national radical political movement in clear opposition to these parties, rather than a mere pressure group upon them<sup>214</sup>

P&FP leaders explained the group’s motivations for aligning with the Panthers and answered criticisms from the white radical community concerning the wisdom of such an alliance:

It should also be noted that this is the first coalition between a white radical group and a black radical group. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense is the healthiest militant black group for us to relate to: it is not racist and it has a program for social change...This coalition can build a way in which blacks and whites can work together and still retain their identity and integrity. Since the beginning of the coalition, both groups have moved in a healthy direction, and have learned the importance of working together in areas of common agreement. The Panthers have become more politically oriented and we have come to better understanding of the existing political situation in the black community. We have both come to see that we are fighting the same oppressive power structure<sup>215</sup>

The alliance was encouraged by a mutuality of needs. In exchange for desperately needed office supplies and equipment, including a sound system-equipped van, copying facilities, and financial aid, the BPP registered voters for the Peace and Freedom Party. The P&FP sent a letter to the editor of the *San Francisco Express Times* explaining:

we have formed a coalition for specific political purposes. By supporting Huey Newton and recognizing him as a victim of the political structure to which the Peace and Freedom Party is opposed, the Peace and Freedom Party has been able to focus attention upon the interrelationship of black liberation and peace in Vietnam in a concrete way.<sup>216</sup>

Although the Panthers cooperated with the Peace and Freedom Party, their foremost concern remained mobilizing a defense for their incarcerated Minister of Defense. The “Free Huey” campaign brought segments of the African-American and white radical communities into a tenuous alliance. From the moment the shooting made national headlines, supporters and detractors alike realized that it was not only Newton’s life that was at stake, but what he stood

for. Seale lamented, “What is at stake is first of all, Huey’s life, and secondly, the right of Black people to self-defense against armed aggression on the part of the police as the military arm of the racist power structure.”<sup>217</sup> “Free Huey” bumper stickers and buttons appeared throughout the nation, while Black and white activists alike threatened that if Newton were executed, “The sky’s the limit.” Sympathetic white radicals showed their support, forming organizations such as “Honkies for Huey” and even a White Panther Party.<sup>218</sup>

White radicals showed their support for Newton in myriad ways, particularly by adding the trial to their long list of grievances. At the April 23, 1968, “Stop the Draft Week” protest, white radicals demanded that the state “withdraw troops from Vietnam, get the cops out of the ghetto, free Huey Newton, end the draft and [ensure] Black control of the Black community.”<sup>219</sup> “Stop the Draft Week” participants:

march[ed] to Alameda County Courthouse for a one-hour demonstration solidarizing ourselves with the black liberation struggle demanding that Huey P. Newton be set free, and that the corrupt legal system which has incarcerated him be totally changed to insure justice instead of oppression. We are also demanding that some of our people, in a completely orderly and peaceful manner be allowed to visit Huey in that hour, even through it is not normal visiting hours, because of the special circumstances of thousands of whites amassing there to express their support of Huey’s struggle for the liberation of black people and for his own life.<sup>220</sup>

Due to growing national interest in the Newton trial, *The Black Panther* increased its circulation tenfold and membership rolls expanded at a similar pace. Toward providing the widest opportunity for people to show support for Newton, the Panthers organized a variety of activities. Thousands of activists, a virtual “Who’s Who” of ‘60s radicalism, descended upon the Oakland

Auditorium to celebrate Newton's birthday on February 17, 1968. Newton later claimed that he could hear the rumbling of the crowd from his prison cell. Event organizers planned the celebration to be an unmistakable display of solidarity that crossed racial lines, organizational affiliation, and ideological cleavages. Equally important, the gathering provided an arena for announcing a notable alteration to BPP strategy, an alliance with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Newton proposed the change to correct what he cited as a fundamental flaw in the make-up of the BPP's cadre, that being its homogenous composition. The unintended consequence of the disproportionate inclusion of working- and lower-class individuals' in the Panther ranks was a dearth of bourgeois skills. For Newton, the Party's difficulty coordinating expansion, executing administrative duties, and mobilizing an adequate defense for him, demonstrated that its current talent was incapable of running a national organization. Although rank-and-file members played a significant role in the BPP's development, image, and day-to-day operations, the pressing need now was to create political education curricula and reorganize existing structures and rules to accommodate the ever increasing new branches. Thus, Newton ordered the Panthers to relinquish operational control to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, a directive that shocked and humiliated the vast majority of BPP members.

Newton believed that SNCC's membership base of collegians possessed the bourgeois skills that were woefully absent in the BPP.<sup>221</sup> He "drafted" SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael into the BPP, thinking such a move would make the pending merger more palatable to SNCC: Because you have set such a fine example in the tradition of Brother Malcolm...you are hereby drafted into the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, invested with the rank of Field Marshall,

delegated the following authority...to establish revolutionary law, order and justice in the territory lying between the Continental Divide East to the Atlantic Ocean; North of the Mason-Dixon Line to the Canadian border; South of the Mason-Dixon Line to the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>222</sup>

The BPP/SNCC alliance was rife with problems from its conception. Rank-and-file Panthers were unwilling to honor Newton's directive, illuminating the effect that his incarceration was having on internal dynamics, particularly relative to issues of loyalty. New recruits balked at Newton's order, demonstrating that they did not possess the same reverence for the BPP co-founder as veterans did. More significant, this segment of relatively recent converts were joined by a sizable portion of veterans who thought that they should be absorbing SNCC, not the other way around. SNCC's glory days were behind it as there was no longer a need for sit-ins, freedom rides, or voter registration drives. Those Panthers resisting Newton's directive realized that SNCC internal ideological battles and its dated tactics clearly pointed to the organization being a mere shadow of what it had once been. Even some SNCC's members were expressing similar reservations regarding its own leadership.<sup>223</sup>

While Newton and Carmichael forged an alliance, within SNCC an ideological battle raged. The contestants were fighting over SNCC's future direction and priorities. One camp advocated SNCC adopting a Pan-Africanist ideology, while other member demanded a continuation of prior interracial, non-violent civil disobedience politics. The victory of the group championing Pan-Africanism and racial chauvinism raised serious problems for the Panthers. As Bobby Seale relates, the BPP leadership:

told [SNCC] that ours was a working coalition to get white people to work in the white community against racism, to destroy it, and ultimately get rid of it there. Our aim, we said, was to educate the masses of people to understand that they have to get rid of the system that exploits us, get rid of the oppression and create some real government. Well, all in all, the cats there, the SNCC people and the others, didn't accept what we were saying.<sup>224</sup>

Ironically, the bravado and armaments that endeared the BPP to the more radical segments of the American protest community worked against them in their merger with SNCC whose members feared the Panthers' ultimate objective was seizing control of their group. Additionally, the process Carmichael had undertaken to forge the alliance violated SNCC rules that did not support a centralized head. Instead, the organization followed Ella Baker's decentralized leadership philosophy.<sup>225</sup> Nonetheless, Newton and Carmichael forged the merger, blinded to the reality that resistance from their members preordained this connection to failure.

Newton had obviously lost his omnipotent place with the BPP ranks. Locked up in jail, he became little more than an icon, a living martyr of sorts, in whose name they struggled. A large number of rank-and-file members had increasingly developed a stronger allegiance to Minister of Information Cleaver, hence their name, the Cleaverites.

At the "Free Huey" celebration, supporters represented a cross-section of radical America: black, white, socialist, integrationist, Black Nationalist. With over 5,000 in attendance, the Black Panther Party introduced its new officers: Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee leaders Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and James Forman. From the moment

Carmichael appeared on stage, it was clear that he had his own agenda. Approaching the podium dressed in tribal African garb instead of traditional Panther dress, Carmichael's appearance offered a deafening comment regarding the direction he intended to lead the BPP.<sup>226</sup>

The Cultural Nationalist aesthetic that Carmichael propagated was the antithesis of the Panther program, as was his attempt to block the white Peace and Freedom Party delegates who had assisted with organizing the "Free Huey" campaign from addressing the crowd. He angrily charged that the Peace and Freedom Party's inclusion would alienate the Panthers from their Nationalist peers and make the attainment of a Black united front more difficult. However, other Panther leaders remained steadfast concerning the Peace and Freedom Party's inclusion in the program. After the day's activities were completed, the BPP/SNCC alliance was complete in the minds of Newton and the three SNCC leaders who accepted positions in the BPP. Despite the tensions introduced by Carmichael, the "Free Huey" celebration succeeded in raising more than \$10,000 for Newton's defense.<sup>227</sup>

In the wake of the "Free Huey" rally, law enforcement officials unveiled their latest strategy to disrupt the Black Panther Party. Oakland police officers raided the Seale house to execute warrants on Bobby and his wife, Artie, for conspiring to kill H. Rap Brown. Although the accusation implied that the state had a strong case, all charges were eventually dismissed due to lack of evidence. On the heels of the Seale's arrest, Bunchy Carter, Anthony Coltrale, Audre Hudson, and David Hilliard were jailed for carrying concealed weapons. A month later the OPD arrested twenty-four more Panthers on charges ranging from profanity to inciting a riot.<sup>228</sup>

Reminiscent of the earlier harassment campaigns, Oakland officers were forcing the BPP to concentrate its energies on raising funds for persistently mounting bail, lawyer fees, and court

costs. Exacerbating the Panthers' predicament were the dramatic methods the police utilized when arresting BPP members which were designed to impress upon would-be recruits and supporters the futility of associating with the organization.<sup>229</sup> To counter the OPD's actions, Newton dispatched a directive from prison explaining:

the situation is critical. Our organization has received serious threats. We draw the line at the threshold of our doors. It is therefore mandated as a general order to all members of the BPP for Self-Defense that all members must acquire the technical equipment to defend their homes...Any member of the party having such technical equipment who fails to defend his threshold shall be expelled from the Party for Life.<sup>230</sup>

Particularly problematic for the Panther leadership was the rise of attacks by fellow Black Powerites. Although such attacks were in no way capable of decimating the BPP, they did distract the Panther's attention away from Newton's defense and increasing state attacks.

The rising tensions between the BPP and rival Nationalists appeared to be little more than jealousy regarding the Panthers' vanguard status in the nationwide Civil Rights movement. Nationalists cloaked their jealousy in parochial charges that questioned Newton, Seale, and Cleaver's commitment to African-Americans. Controversy, for example, surrounded the issue of who should represent Newton during his trial. Nationalist displayed their "race first" politics by strongly pushing for an African-American as the lead attorney in the case. In their minds, the selection of such an individual would send an extremely effective symbolic message both to white and Black America. On the other hand, the Black Panthers balked at putting race and symbolism over the most effective legal counsel available. Consequently, they choose Charles Garry, a white attorney who had successfully defended numerous murder defendants and had



already proven to be an asset as he agreed to represent Newton despite the Panthers' lack of finances.<sup>231</sup>

In a rebuttal to their Nationalist critics, the Panthers argued:

The point has been made that for Huey P. Newton to go to court with a white lawyer weakens the argument for black liberation...Huey P. Newton is a brilliant spokesman of black power, a living embodiment of black power. Whether his attorney is white or black, black power is on trial.

White resources at the disposal of black people, a white legal firm defending the Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party is an...example of black power. Black skin is not—as our black lawyers, politicians, doctors, teachers and other professionals highly attest in their mad scurry for white power, white values, white acceptance and white hostility to black power.<sup>232</sup>

Predictably, the BPP refused to play a game of racial representation when the stakes were so high. In an editorial, the *Black Panther* argued:

The issue at stake was Huey's life, and the best legal skills and resources were needed. There was no basis to quibble about color. If the Minister of Defense had suffered a heart attack, and the best heart specialist were needed to save his life, I wonder if the same outcry would be raised, if the doctor turned out to be white? The point has been made that for Huey P. Newton to go to court with a white lawyer weakens the argument for black liberation... What is at stake is first of all, Huey's life, and secondly, the right of black people to self-defense against armed aggression on the part of the police as the military arm of the racist power structure. What is necessary is for Huey to be set free. This demands the most competent and powerful legal resources available.

Charles R. Garry has a record of 24 capital cases, all of which he has won. He has taken the extreme expense of some of his cases out of his own pocket to defend a client he believed

was innocent. Attorney Garry has assured the Newton family and the Black Panther Party that he will fight this case as far as it can be fought. His determination and technical skill is not dependent upon the ability of the Huey P. Newton Defense Fund to pay the entire cost of the case, which will be quite a few thousand dollars. The resources of the entire firm, Garry, Dreyfus, McTernan, and Brodsky, of which one of the lawyers is black, are being dedicated to this case.

I wonder how many of these people who complain about the white attorney are ...really concerned about putting an end to the racist exploitation of black people, really concerned about putting an ending to the wanton murder of black people by the police, and if they are so concerned, what are they doing to show it? Are these the same people who have contributed to the Huey P. Newton Defense Fund, helped the Black Panther Party to grow, made constant personal sacrifices and endured serious danger to see their commitment bear fruit? Or are these people onlookers of a liberation struggle being waged for their benefit who just generally dislike white people and don't like the way it looks in court? Are these people black lawyers and their friends who want to cash in on the prestige associated with this historic case? Whose benefit are they concerned with, Huey P. Newton's or black lawyers?<sup>233</sup>

Newton's capital murder trial was of great interest to Americans for several reasons. It was a symbolic representation of the larger battle being waged between leftists seeking revolutionary change and the more conservative proponents of "law and order" resisting such change with all of their might. Although a jury of twelve would ultimately decide Newton's guilt or innocence, the perception that larger cultural forces could influence and/or be influenced by the trial's outcome was prevalent throughout the nation. Put simply, the outcome of this trial

threatened to reverberate throughout the American protest scene for decades. With such expectations motivating their actions, a highly divisive debate between supporters for the prosecution and advocates for the defense developed. Newton opponents considered the trial an opportunity to curtail the rash of protests and dissent occurring throughout America and hoped that a conviction would send a stern message that lawlessness, even in the name of protest, was unacceptable. Conservatives vowed to protect society from the rabble-rousers who used protest as a cover for their illegal and morally inappropriate activities.

For defense supporters, the “Free Huey” campaign was an excellent opportunity to display the “power of the people.” Leftists asserted that the BPP Minister of Defense’s coming liberation from the state’s clutches clearly displayed that anything was possible, including the domestic revolution they stridently pursued. Newton supporters felt:

[w]hat is being decided in Huey’s case is whether a black man has the right to defend his life against the attacks of the racist dog police who come into our communities all day and all night to brutalize, terrorize, intimidate, harass, and murder black people...the bullet was not fired solely because of the traffic arrest. The trigger was pulled centuries before Huey Newton was born, and the bullet has been aimed at the same target for hundreds of years...If Huey Newton is set free, all black people can gain their freedom. But freedom can never be given, it must be taken—by any means necessary.<sup>234</sup>

Despite rhetoric of “All Power to the People,” Newton supporters’ leeriness of the Bay Area’s judicial system curbed such optimism. Of greatest concern was the Bay Area’s grand jury system, which was patently unfair to African-American defendants. Jerome Skolnick in his work, *Justice without Trial* contends that Bay Area African-Americans would never receive

justice because of an intractable, vile form of institutionalized racism inherent to the proceedings. For example, Bay Area grand juries could decide to hear testimony from the prosecution while refusing the defense a similar opportunity. The greatest arena of institutional racism in Bay Area court practices was the *voir dire* portion of the trial to select the jury. Although Oakland's African-American population hovered near the fifty-percent mark, juries devoid of a single African-American were common.<sup>235</sup> Newton supporters were convinced that the state would succeed at sitting such a jury for Newton's capital murder trial.

During *voir dire*, Defense Attorney Charles Garry questioned one potential juror about the presence of pre-existing conclusions regarding Newton's guilt or innocence: "Before you hear any evidence, have you got an idea that [Newton] is guilty, or else he would not be here?" The prospective juror indicated that he had already decided that Newton was guilty of the charges. Amazingly, the judge failed to disqualify this juror. In contrast, out of the six African-Americans in the entire jury pool, the state eliminated five of them during *voir dire*—the only challenges issued by District Attorney Lowell Jensen. In the end, the trial jury included only one African-American and Newton supporters charged that he was acceptable to whites because he worked for the Bank of America as a lending officer and had stated during *voir dire* that he did not have any sympathies for Newton, the BPP, or Black Nationalism.<sup>236</sup>

As the trial began, the state developed its rendition of the early morning shooting. The prosecution contended that Newton, whose probationary period for his conviction in the Odell Lee case had ended the night before, was desperate to avoid future dealings with the criminal justice system. During the moments Officer Frey escorted Newton to his cruiser, prosecutors alleged, the BPP leader pulled out a nine-millimeter gun and fired. With Frey mortally wounded,

the state posited, Newton then fired in Officer Herbert Heanes' direction before kidnapping passing motorist Dell Ross. As Newton forced Ross to drive he and McKinney from the scene, he admitted to having shot two people.<sup>237</sup>

Naturally, Newton's defense team was skeptical of the state's re-creation. Lead attorney Charles Garry highlighted that Heanes, the surviving officer, stated that he could not truthfully testify to seeing Newton with a firearm. Additionally, the state's ballistic expert concluded that it was impossible for the bullets found in Frey and Heanes to have come from a nine-millimeter pistol. And finally, that state failed to produce the weapon.

The defense advanced a radically different scenario of events. Gerry suggested that Frey and Heanes discharged all bullets fired during this altercation, theorizing that the events of that early morning were little more than an assassination attempt by rogue OPD officers. Gerry asserted that Frey was consciously attempting to escalate the feud between the OPD and BPP to an unprecedented level. Motivated by a desire to destroy the Panthers, Frey attempted to assassinate its Minister of Defense, shooting Newton in the stomach several times. The unexpected gunfire startled Heanes, who shot his weapon in the direction Newton and Frey were last standing. Gerry posited that Heanes' salvo struck his fellow officer. Additionally, the force from these shots spun Frey's body and caused his firearm to discharge the rounds that struck Heanes.<sup>238</sup>

After presenting their arguments, the prosecution and defense turned the case over to the jury for deliberations. The jury's composition of eight whites, two Mexican-Americans, one Japanese-American and a single African-American was unsettling for Newton supporters. Such concerns were particularly warranted if the research and testimony of defense witness Dr. Robert

Blaumer, a sociologist and psychologist from the University of California at Berkeley, is considered credible. Blaumer testified that his research left little room for debate on the presence of preconceived racist notions by jurors and that regardless of the sworn statements made during *voir dire*, even the most left-leaning whites were impacted by environs that forced them to harbor racist thoughts even if only subconsciously. Consequently, all juries were inherently racist regardless of the personal politics and backgrounds of those sitting in the jury box. Blaumer testified:

The white juror should have a knowledge of black history and culture. The white juror should be aware of his own prejudices and racist tendencies, and in some way be working to overcome them. [He] should have some personal experience with black people and he should have lived or attempted to live more of an equalitarian than a segregated life. The white person should be actively concerned with changing the racist structure of this society and be making a commitment to eliminate the objective racism that I referred to earlier.<sup>239</sup>

On September 27, 1968, the twelve jurors returned their verdict, finding Newton guilty of voluntary manslaughter, resulting in a prison sentence of two-to-fifteen years. Defense supporters won a partial victory, however, as the jury failed to convict Newton of wounding Heanes. Apparently, jurors, not overly convinced by either the prosecution or defense, agreed upon a compromised verdict. Despite not securing an acquittal, defense supporters realized that preventing Newton's execution was a major victory in itself, and his trial was one of the few moments that the radical community had successfully displayed the power of the people.

The Panthers realized that their partial victory on Newton's behalf would certainly antagonize Bay Area police, and they were right. On the night the verdict was announced,

September 27, two drunken officers rode past BPP headquarters and riddled it with gunshots. Fortunately, the late hour of the attack meant the BPP office was unoccupied. The perpetrators were never charged for their actions; the local police chief dismissing the attack as simply a case of his men letting off steam. Nonetheless, this attack was but the initial salvo in the escalation of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies' repressive activities.<sup>240</sup>

Law enforcement agencies throughout the nation combed city, county, and state legal codes for obscure ordinances that the Panthers may have unknowingly violated. If such ordinances did not exist in a particular city, new codes and laws were quickly written. For example, the Toledo, Ohio, Black Panther branch met its demise after local politicians amended the city's ordinances regarding the carrying of unconcealed weapons and use of profanity. Eventually, Toledo's Panthers was rendered mute because of their profanity-laced Black Nationalist rhetoric.<sup>241</sup>

Above all, the FBI increased the intensity of its surveillance activities. FBI Director Hoover was particularly alarmed by the Panthers' ongoing coalition with white radicals and the integration of leftist ideologies into their program. Hoover was disturbed by the selection of white radical lawyer Charles Gerry to defend Newton, but even more troubled by the Panthers' productive and continuing association with the Peace and Freedom Party and other leftist groups and individuals. Such alliances sounded a McCarthyite alarm for the FBI Director. For Hoover, the Black Panther Party's interracial leftist partnerships and ideological underpinnings signaled the Panthers' transcendence of racially exclusive, narrow, Nationalist politics and parochial "race first" solutions to African-American angst. It's leftist ideology, combined with the erroneous perception that it influenced millions of African-Americans, raised the Black Panther Party, in

Hoover's mind, to being "the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States."<sup>242</sup>

As the Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party, Cleaver took a proactive position and reminded the American public who the aggressor was in the increasing conflicts between the Panthers and law enforcement agencies. Cleaver attempted to assuage white fears regarding the Black Panther Party's intentions, particularly its refusal to endorse, let alone participate in, racially inspired retaliatory violence:

Let us make one thing crystal clear: We do not claim the right to indiscriminate violence. We seek no bloodbath. We are not out to kill up white people. On the contrary, it is the cops who claim the right to indiscriminate violence and practice it everyday. It is the cops who have been bathing black people in blood and who seem bent on killing off black people. But black people, this day, this time, say HALT IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY! YOU SHALL MAKE NO MORE WAR ON UNARMED PEOPLE. YOU WILL NOT KILL ANOTHER BLACK PERSON AND WALK THE STREETS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY TO GLOAT ABOUT IT AND SNEER AT THE DEFENSELESS RELATIVES OF YOUR VICTIMS. FROM NOW ON, WHEN YOU MURDER A BLCK PERSON IN THIS BABYLON OF BABYLONS, YOU MAY AS WELL GIVE IT UP BECAUSE WE WILL GET YOUR ASS AND GOD CAN'T HIDE YOU.

We call upon the people to rally to the support of Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton. We call upon black people and white people who want to see the dawn of a new history in this land. We call upon people who want to see an end to the flow of blood. We call upon people who



want to avoid a war in this land, who want to put an end to the war that is now going on in this land. We call upon people to take up the cry: HUEY MUST BE SET FREE!<sup>243</sup>

Ironically, the arrest, trial, and conviction of Newton propelled the Black Panther Party to unforeseen heights of popularity. This positive development, however, revealed an undeniable correlation between Black Panther Party expansion and an increase in state repression. The Black Panther Party's national expansion gave law enforcement personnel a misperception regarding the Panthers' overall strength and influence. In reaction, police officers across the nation increased the frequency and ferocity of their attacks upon local BPP chapters and members.

While supporters celebrated the Panthers' resiliency, the combination of police raids, alienation from contemporary Nationalist organizations, and internal disarray ensured that the Black Panther Party remained relatively unstable. Rival Black Nationalists continually criticized whites' pervasive involvement and ideological influence over the Black Panther Party program, going so far as to charge that the Panthers interracial alliances were not egalitarian and implicitly arguing that the BPP was being controlled by white leftists.<sup>244</sup> Despite such criticisms, the Panthers continued both their alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party and their highly controversial ideological position that class must carry more weight than race in the struggle against American and global capitalism.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DIVISION AND REPRESSION**

Eldridge Cleaver's ascension as spokesperson of the Panther Party in late 1967 led to its destabilization and made it more vulnerable to outside attacks. The process began when Cleaver orchestrated an abrupt turn in policy towards militarism. This shift produced two important consequences: first, a schism between Newton and Cleaver that divided the organization, and second, increased confrontations between the Panthers and law enforcement personnel throughout the nation.

As Cleaver's influence increased within the BPP, the organization increasingly became little more than a reactionary, paramilitary organization, a situation many older supporters feared would result in the Panthers' destruction. One dissenting BPP leader, code-named Captain Crutch, forthrightly challenged this ideological turn. Crutch charged that once Cleaver had gained control, he allowed to develop "numerous adverse ideas within the Black Panther Party which greatly hinder the application of the Party's correct ideology....The leaders of the party...fail to wage a concerted and determined struggle against these incorrect ideas...which is also an important cause of their existence and growth....[The Black Panther Party was seized by an] over confidence in military strength and absence of confidence in the strength of the masses of the people." [cl]

Central to Crutch's criticisms was the common practice of recruiting persons devoid of political maturity. For Crutch, the Panthers faced the proverbial fork in the road. To survive, it needed to either recruit different types of individuals or politically educate those who had romanticized revolutionary struggle.

The dialogue over the direction the Panther's should take that Crutch and others tried to foster, however, was abruptly stifled by tragedy that unwittingly encouraged militarism and divided the BPP irreparably. On April 4, 1968, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and hope for racial peace were felled by an assassin's bullet at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. America's inner cities exploded in rebellion. The significance of the violent demise of the "Prince of Peace" was lost on no one, particularly African-Americans who expressed their rage throughout America's urban corridors.

BPP Minister of Defense Huey Newton frowned upon the disruptions. Considering urban riots to be reactionary and extremely counter-productive, Newton reasoned that once such rebellions ceased, those harmed the most were poor women and children of color. Consequently, while some Nationalists, such as SNCC leader H. Rap Brown, preferred to paint the riots as revolutionary or "dress rehearsals for the coming revolution," Newton was diametrically opposed to such a perspective. Newton believed that the riots revealed that African-American were:

divided, confused, fighting amongst ourselves, we are still in the elementary stage of throwing rocks, sticks, empty wine bottles and beer cans at racist police who lie in wait for a chance to murder unarmed Black people. The racist police have worked out a system for suppressing these spontaneous rebellions that flare up from the anger, frustration, and desperation of the masses of Black people.

We can no longer afford the dubious luxury of the terrible casualties wantonly inflicted upon us by the police during these rebellions.

Despite the Panthers' official position regarding the riots being clear-cut, significant segments of the Panthers advocated revenge for King's demise. The "Cleaverites," BPP members with deep loyalties to Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver, had a very different view than Newton and his followers on the utility of riots. Cleaver, himself, desired to exact some measure of retribution in the fallen King's name

The assassin's bullet not only killed Dr. King, it killed a period in history. It killed a hope and it killed a dream....That there is a holocaust coming I have no doubt at all. I have been talking to people around the country by phone—people intimately involved in the black liberation struggle—and their reaction to Dr. King's murder has been unanimous: the war has begun. The violent phase of the black liberation struggle is here, and it will spread. From that shot, from that blood, America will be painted red.

On the night of April 6, 1968, a group of Panthers wandered the Bay Area with the intention of sending a violence-laden message to America. Their impromptu decision to exact revenge for King's death via directed action would turn horribly wrong. According to Panther David Hilliard, Cleaver organized four carloads of Panthers to ambush an officer and then stash the weapons at a safe house in Oakland or Berkeley. At the corner of 28<sup>th</sup> and Union streets in West Oakland, they found their targets, officers on nightly patrol. A firefight began between the two groups, with the police calling in reinforcements. Unable to match the resources, manpower,

and munitions of their opponents, the Panthers retreated.

According to witnesses, Cleaver and Bobby Hutton found refuge in the home of an elderly couple at 1218 28<sup>th</sup> Street. A platoon of officers from Bay Area police departments (Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond) strategically assembled around the home and began firing into the structure. In the midst of the hour-long battle, one of the teargas canisters exploded and the resulting blaze finally flushed the Panthers from concealment. Realizing the danger he was in, Cleaver advised Hutton to strip off his clothes prior to emerging from the home in hope that their nakedness would prevent them being shot because the police thought they had concealed weapons.

Unfortunately, the teenaged Hutton rejected Cleaver's advice. Although officers already had peacefully captured nine Panthers, the situation took a horrific turn once Hutton emerged.

According to Cleaver's account of events:

...they told us not to move, to raise our hands. This we did, and an army of Pigs ran up from the street and started kicking and cursing us, but we were already beyond any pain, beyond feeling. The Pigs told us to stand up. Little Bobby helped me to my feet. The pigs pointed to a squad car parked in the middle of the street and told us to run to it. I told them that I couldn't run and then they snatched Little Bobby away from me and shoved him forward, telling him to run to the car. It was a sickening sight. Little Bobby, coughing and choking on the night air that was burning his lungs as my own were burning from the tear gas, stumbled forward as best he could, and after he had traveled about ten yards, the Pigs cut loose on him

with their guns, and then they turned to me. But before they could get in anything, the black people in the neighborhood who had been drawn to the site by the gunfire and commotion began yelling at them, calling the Pigs murderers and telling them to leave me alone.

In the officers' rendition of events, "Hutton was shot when he ran toward barricaded officers and refused to halt on command."

Cleaver's nude appearance probably saved him from a similar fate.

However, he was immediately arrested for violating the terms of his parole for his previous rape conviction. For officers, the true prize that night was Cleaver. Oakland Police Chief Charles R.

Gains told the media that his men had broken no police policies in subduing the Panthers, congratulated them for a job well done, and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

Hutton's death saddened the Panthers. He was a young and much beloved member of the organization, an individual over whom older members not only doted, but also respected for his courage to join when many thought affiliation was akin to suicide. After attending the slain Panther's funeral, BPP leader Ericka Huggins remarked that the event affected her in an unforeseen manner, awakening her revolutionary consciousness:

I don't like saying that what awakened me, what changed my life and my mind about the serious commitment I had made was Bobby Hutton's face at his funeral....[M]y entire life and mind was changed from that point on....Because I

recognized that I had read about the Party and I had read about all the things in history that had been done to black people—lynching, murder, tortures, etc.—but I was convinced when I had direct confrontation with the brutality, the cruelty, and the doggishness of the police. His face had been entirely shot out. The entire portion of his face was gone and had been puttied into place and made up. He was no longer the seventeen year old person he had been, not physically or anything else. He wasn't. And the police were in the balconies of that church. They were everywhere. I had never seen anything like that in my life. I mean I had never been directly involved.

Newton's reaction to Hutton's death was similar to other Panthers' responses. However, he was also furious at the Cleaverites who had violated his directive against retaliatory reactionary operations, and created a situation that led to Hutton's violent death. It saddened Newton that the organization he had envisioned leading an international revolution was incapable of resisting the lure of emotionally-driven reactionary violence. Such behavior had not only led to the BPP being demoralized by Hutton's death, but weakened further by Cleaver's pending incarceration for participating in such activities.

Nonetheless, Dr. King's assassination had a profound impact upon the psychological makeup of African-Americans. The violent manner in which the "Prince of Peace" was struck down forced many moderate African-Americans to reconsider their marriage to Civil Rights strategies of nonviolent patriotic civil disobedience. In the wake of the events of April 4-6,

1968, the BPP experienced another surge in popularity with a number of college students gravitating towards it. As Kathleen Cleaver remarked, “The murder of King changed the whole dynamic of the country. That is probably the single most significant event in terms of how the Panthers were perceived by the Black community.” Unfortunately for the Panthers, their burst of popularity also raised their status in the minds of law enforcement agencies, most notably the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The burgeoning conservatism of the late 1960s sought to curtail the progress leftists were making throughout the nation. In this climate, Martin Luther King had been subjected to constant surveillance and smear campaigns. The Panthers, likewise, was a target of vindictives. Vice President Spiro T. Agnew categorized them as a “completely irresponsible anarchist group of criminals.” Similarly, Jerris Leonard, the head of the Nixon Civil Rights Division, called them “nothing but hoodlums...We’ve got to get them.” Pointing to such rhetoric, the FBI proclaimed that it was simply carrying out the will of the American citizenry as voiced by their elected representatives.

Founded in 1908, the FBI has a dubious history, particularly regarding its treatment of African-Americans. The FBI suffered extreme instability during its genesis as the top leadership position passed through five different individuals during its initial sixteen years. This frequency ceased with the sixth director, J. Edgar Hoover. Hired in 1924, Hoover would serve as FBI Director for the next forty-eight years with a legendary dictatorial grip. Whether investigating Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, Civil Rights workers’ disappearance in Philadelphia, Mississippi, or the alleged Communist infiltration and ideological leanings of Civil Rights leadership, Hoover remained consistently opposed to Black rights. It was inevitable that the Panthers would draw Hoover’s wrath. In 1968, when he no longer had



King to attack, he anointed the Black Panther Party as the greatest threat to the nation's internal security.

The major vehicle utilized by the FBI in subduing the BPP, as well as other African-American organizations, was the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). The primary objective of the "Counterintelligence Program Against Black Nationalist-Hate Groups" was to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalists." According to Hoover the primary goals of this often times illegal operation were to:

[p]revent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups....Prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could unify and electrify the militant black nationalist movement. Through counter intelligence it should be possible to pinpoint and neutralize black nationalists before they exercise their potential for violence. A final goal should be to prevent the long-range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth.

Although Bay Area FBI agents were aware of the Black Panther Party from its genesis, they did not become convinced that the Panthers presented a legitimate threat for almost a year. The BPP's rise in importance in the eyes of the FBI can be traced to five events in its initial year of existence that have already been discussed: 1) the party's "storming" of the California legislature in protest of the pending Mulford Bill; 2) its highly successful community service activities that secured the allegiance of what the FBI feared was a critical mass of African-Americans; 3) the Newton shooting; 4) its interracial alliance with the white, leftist Peace and Freedom Party; and 5) the selection of white radical attorney Charles Garry to represent Newton in his murder trial. Of particular interest to national FBI leaders was the BPP's association with white leftists such

as the Peace & Freedom Party and Charles Garry.

Fears that white radicals would exert broad influence over African-Americans were grounded in the often unstated belief that African-Americans were incapable of recognizing injustice, articulating their grievances, and formulating a path towards amelioration, independent of white influence. White conservatives unceasingly criticized African-American leaders as mere puppets of leftist theoreticians. While many civil rights leaders denied any association with leftist leaders or ideologies, the BPP hid neither their existing alliances nor their approval of leftist goals. In *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972*, Kenneth O'Reilly observed,

Panther pronouncements on matters of war and revolution allowed FBI officials a degree of credibility when presenting the war with the Panthers as a simple matter of self-defense. Hoover told a House Appropriations Subcommittee that the Communist party might 'unite' with the Black Panther Party. He told Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, that the Panthers intended to stage 'an armed black revolution against the Government of the United States.' He told the field that the Panthers were 'armed and dangerous,' and 'reportedly attempting...to kidnap and kill FBI agents'--a prelude of sorts to their 'Third World' idea which envisions the eventual destruction of the white race.

Under Hoover's directions, a disproportionate amount of funds, exceeding those dispensed upon all other Civil Rights and Black Power targets, were expended subduing the Panthers. Out of the 295 documented COINTELPRO operations, an astonishingly high 233 focused on the BPP. FBI agents utilized a plethora of covert activities against the Panthers: bogus letters, wiretaps, secret agent infiltration, agent provocateurs, informants, incarcerations,

and murder. A memo circulated amongst FBI agents outlined a well-thought out, multi-pronged strategy aimed to decimate the BPP:

[It] is essential that we not only accelerate our investigations of this organization and increase our informants in the organization but that we take action under the counterintelligence program to disrupt the group [by creating] factionalism between not only the national leaders but also the local leaders, steps to neutralize all organizational efforts of the BPP as well as create suspicion amongst the leaders as to each others sources of finances, suspicion concerning their respective spouses and suspicion as to who may be cooperating with law enforcement...suspicion should be developed as to who may be attempting to gain control of the organization for their own private betterment, as well as suggestions to the best method of exploiting the foreign visits made by BPP members. We are also soliciting recommendations as to the best method of creating opposition to the BPP on the part of the majority of the residents of the ghetto area.

Not all FBI agents agreed with Hoover's assessment of the Panther threat to the nation. The most vocal dissent came from Division Five, the Bureau's national security arm. Division Five did not consider the Panthers a threat of any significance. Rather, Division Five saw the BPP as a run-of-the-mill Nationalist group, similar to the plethora of organizations throughout the Bay Area. Its agents believed that such groups were destined to decline once African-American emotions gave way to rationality over the complicated politico-economic realities

confronting their population. National FBI leaders, however, rejected Division 5's assessment and ordered agents from that branch to increase their surveillance of the BPP.

Consequently, Division Five agents compiled bimonthly summaries of BPP actions, decisions, alliances, and intra-party politics, including "recommendations as to the best method of creating opposition to BPP goals by co-opting the majority of African-American residents in ghetto areas," and the names of "prominent Negroes" who would receive anti-Panther mailings. These mailings, which included racially loaded headlines such as "The Black Klan," were also dispatched through "appropriate news media representatives." Invariably, when such fallacious information was viewed through a prism of pre-existing fears, the result was a flawed analysis by national leaders "who were unsettled themselves and frightened about what was going on in the ghettos" and took the "information seriously." Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall note that the Bureau's activities were "never intelligence per se but rather the inducement of paranoia among those targeted by making them aware they'd been selected for special treatment and that there was an FBI agent behind every mailbox."

William Sullivan, a Hoover understudy at the time, illuminated FBI plans to destroy the Panthers:

[A]ctivities of all such groups should be...followed on a continuous basis so we will be in a position to promptly take advantage of all opportunities for counterintelligence and to inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant....Efforts of the various groups to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or youthful adherents must be frustrated. No opportunity must be missed to exploit through counterintelligence techniques the

organizational and personal conflicts of the leaderships of the groups and where possible an effort should be made to capitalize upon existing conflicts between competing black nationalist organizations. When an opportunity is apparent to disrupt or neutralize black nationalist, hate-type organizations through the cooperation of established local news media contacts or through such contact with sources available to the Seat of Government, in every instance careful attention must be given to the proposal to insure the targeted group is disrupted, ridiculed, or discredited through the publicity and not merely publicized.

Sullivan also admonished agents who were critical of a campaign against all Panther programs:

You state that the Bureau...should not attack programs of community interest such as the BPP "Breakfast for Children." You state that this is because many prominent "humanitarians," both white and black, are interested in the program as well as churches which are actively supporting it. You have obviously missed the point. The BPP is not engaged in the "Breakfast for Children" program for humanitarian reasons.... [They intend to] create an image of civility, assume community control of Negroes, and to fill adolescent children with their insidious poison.

Sullivan was only echoing Director Hoover's critique of BPP community service activities, particularly its free breakfast for children program. According to Hoover:

The Black Panther Party's free-breakfast program for children is the greatest obstacle to law-enforcement efforts to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for....[The breakfast program] has met some success and has resulted in considerable favorable publicity for the Black Panther Party. The resulting publicity tends to portray the BPP in a favorable light and clouds the violent nature of the group and its ultimate aim of insurrection....[The breakfast program] promotes at least tacit support for the BPP among naïve individuals, both black and white, and, what is more distressing, provides the BPP with a ready audience composed of highly impressionable youth of tender age on which to propagate its message of hate and violence.

The continuing hesitation of some agents forced Sullivan to order all division leaders to "assign [their] best agents to the COINTELPRO desk and get on with the task at hand: 'Eradicate the Panthers'." Knowing that the program was of questionable legality, Hoover warned all involved "that the nature of this new endeavor is such that under no circumstances should the existence of the program be made known outside the Bureau and appropriate within-office security should be afforded to sensitive operations and techniques considered under the program."

By 1969 the FBI had twenty-nine field offices operating against the Panthers. From its first activities against the BPP, the FBI's COINTELPRO implemented a two-fold plan: 1) disrupt the BPP internally with agent provocateurs, bogus missives, anonymous phone calls, and if needed, murder, and 2) isolate the Panthers from their activist contemporaries "by any means

necessary,” thereby preventing the rise of a united front. To achieve such ends, Director Hoover ordered field agents in November 1968, “to exploit all avenues of creating...dissension within the ranks of the BPP....[R]ecipient offices are instructed to submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP.”

The FBI’s attack upon the Panthers came at a fortuitous moment for the government. COINTELPRO operations began at a time when internal dissension split the BPP into rival camps: the Cleaverites and Newton loyalists. The Cleaverites promoted, mostly rhetorically, an immediate revolutionary overthrow of American capitalism, a posture that mocked Huey P. Newton’s more patient politics, which Cleaver dismissed as pacifist. Newton’s followers rejoined that Cleaver’s militarism was counter-revolutionary as it came at an extreme cost to the African-American community.

No gray area existed in Eldridge Cleaver’s revolutionary formulations: “either you are with the armed revolution or you are an Uncle Tom.” Such an uncompromising stance gradually isolated the Panthers from their base of power within the African-American community. Cleaver maniacally refused to support the very community service activities that had initially secured the allegiance of many African-Americans as unfitting for a revolutionary. Cleaver also denounced African-American churches and their clergy as cowards supporting stopgap measures instead of the ultimate solution to African-Americans’ ills: “armed revolution.”

In contrast, Bobby Seale thought that Cleaver made several mistakes in his oratorical diatribes, such as “cussing out preachers and not wanting to work in the church...forty-percent of the black nation is sitting in church.” Likewise, Huey Newton felt that the most damaging effect of Cleaver’s militarism was how it alienated the Panthers from the African-American community. The more the BPP became isolated from the African-American community, the

more the organization experienced a steep increase in deaths, harassment, and incarcerations. Such developments prodded Newton into advancing an ideological alternative to Cleaver's militarism.

For Newton, the only way for the BPP to minimize the impact of state attacks was to return the to its base of strength in the African-American community by cultivating productive relationships via community service programs. Newton believed that community loyalty was the BPP's sole buffer against law enforcement attacks. Cleaver, however, scoffed at such programs and referred to them as "sissy stuff." BPP member Elaine Brown recalls Cleaver boasting:

I don't give a fuck about some serve the people programs.

Anybody who doesn't want to deal with the struggle is going to have to have his ass dragged down the revolutionary road, kicking and screaming if necessary. I'm talking about the same thing I've always talked about, revolution in our lifetime...[Newton's followers are]...so punked out and gun shy that they're making the vanguard look like a reformist bitch.

Further aggravating tensions inside the Panther Party were derisive statements made by, among others, Cleaver's wife, Katherine, who charged that, while "Newton, [was] in jail, [he] was brainwashed to destroy the Black Panther Party and that he is currently a government agent." She also contended that the BPP was, for all intents and purposes, dead, and that Newton, Seale, and David Hilliard, the "reformists" within the Party, should be brought up on first-degree murder charges for killing it.



Although many of the most shocking attacks widening this deep divide emanated from the Cleaverites, Newton loyalists also exacerbated the rapidly denigrating situation. For example, Elaine Brown contended that Cleaver felt:

[t]here needed to be more killing, more arbitrary violence, the Party was moving to the right...Cleaver simply would have us...get killed for the purpose of media attention [while he safely sat in Algeria]. He had no other program and frankly, it sounded piggish—violence without reason where we'd all get killed and he could describe to history the meaning of our deaths...I was to kill and get killed, or just get killed...It is my belief that Cleaver too was...a part of COINTELPRO....

Newton also charged that: "Cleaver was an agent [within]...the Black Panthers..."

With intra-party dissension wracking the BPP's, the initial FBI COINTELPRO operation focused upon furthering the Newton/Cleaver schism. For example, an FBI agent sent an anonymous letter to Cleaver in Algeria informing him of an approaching attempt upon his life by Panther rivals. Cleaver took the threat seriously and expelled three Panthers he suspected of being involved in the plot. An additional bonus to COINTELPRO was Cleaver's refusal to explain the reasoning behind the expulsions. To Newton loyalists, Cleaver's actions were caused by mental illness, something they charged he suffered from his entire life. Pleased with the fallout from this planted missive, J. Edgar Hoover gave "incentive awards" to its authors and distributors.

The FBI sent a subsequent phony letter to David Hilliard, the BPP Chief of Staff and a

devote supporter of Newton. Hilliard thought the letter was from a comrade who had recently returned from visiting Cleaver and was confirming suspicions regarding the Panther's Minister of Information's mental health. Unbeknownst to Hilliard, FBI informants and wiretaps eavesdropped on his private musings around the clock. Consequently, it was a simple matter for agents to regurgitate Hilliard's comments regarding Cleaver in the letter he received. The "private" conversations among Panther leaders after this second letter led FBI officials to term this activity a success beyond their wildest dreams. One agent even gloated over the missive's "authenticity":

Read the language in those letters. Would you think that was  
written by a bunch of white men? When you listen to them  
everyday for a couple of years you get to know their vocabulary...

Another FBI letter to Cleaver, under the signature of Newton's personal secretary Connie Matthews, was intended to goad Cleaver into action by alleging the Panthers had declined into horrible disarray since his exile:

Things around headquarters are dreadfully disorganized with the  
Comrade Commander not making proper decisions. The  
newspaper is in shambles. No one knows who is in charge...I fear  
there is rebellion working just beneath the surface...We must  
either get rid of the Supreme Commander [Newton] or get rid of  
disloyal members.

Agents intended to "provoke Cleaver to openly question Newton's leadership...[it is thought that] if Cleaver received a significant number of complaints regarding Newton it might create dissension that later could be more fully exploited." The letter's contents not only achieved its

intended goal, but also an ancillary objective—increasing the exiled Cleaver’s determination to wrest control of the party from Newton. Increasingly, Newton and Cleaver assailed each other in public, with each charging that the disarray within the BPP clearly pointed to their rival’s inability to lead. With great delight FBI agents concluded that “the differences between Newton and Cleaver . . . [were now] irreconcilable.”

Consequently, while several agents continued to antagonize the divide, other agents commenced exploiting BPP structural weaknesses. The primary purpose of this COINTELPRO activity was the fermenting of intra-party discord through exploiting cleavages between local branches and the national leadership. Although COINTELPRO usually dispensed misinformation directly to local chapters through bogus communications, an accessory tactic was leaking information to friendly media outlets. Agents, for example, sought to stir up a hornets nest by giving information detailing Newton’s living arrangements to *San Francisco Examiner*. As a result, the newspaper scandalously reported that Newton had developed a drug addiction, routinely enjoyed the company of white women, including prostitutes, and “had moved into a \$650-a-month apartment overlooking Lake Merritt in Oakland, California” Such charges were highly volatile since Panthers throughout the nation had sacrificed comforts, material accruements, and individualistic pursuits for the collective good of the BPP and, by extension, the African-American freedom struggle.

The primary result of this campaign was increase suspicion of the Central Committee regarding a misuse of funds collected through newspaper sales, donations, and dues. One Panther remembers:

It seemed like they were taking everything in California. I don’t know where the money was going. We were turning in our paper

money...People gave us contributions...I went to various people.

We went to various well-to-do people and they gave us contributions, mostly checks or whatever. We turned everything in. We turned every dime in...Then we found out that people were living good...some local, but mostly Californians...I started hearing these rumors that they were living in penthouses...and all kinds of stuff. That makes you look like sort of a chump or a fool, when you're going without...Nobody forced me to do any of that. I willingly gave. And I willingly did everything. And I was happy to be there to do that. But then things started breaking down. And rumors, and rumors, and rumors.

FBI documents reveal that these rumors had their genesis with the COINTELPRO.

FBI agents also undertook concerted attacks upon the Panthers' community service programs. Despite his determination to subdue the Panthers, FBI Director Hoover consistently reminded his agents of the need to be discrete. For example, Hoover instructed FBI agents to take care to "insure that no implication is created we are investigating the BCP (Breakfast for Children Program) itself or the church where it is being held," despite the fact that the FBI was doing so. At its core, FBI attacks upon the BPP community service activity were intended "to keep this group isolated from the moderate black and white community which may support it."

To undercut support for the BPP's community service activities, the FBI's San Francisco office sent anonymous, inflammatory letters to financial contributors. It also forced the eviction of a Panther member from a public housing project by misinforming housing officials that he was using his apartment for the breakfast program. Additionally, a Senate Intelligence

Committee staff report relates that the FBI succeeded in “having a Catholic priest transferred from his San Diego parish because he permitted his church to be used as a Panther free food site. Once Father Curran had been removed, FBI agents gloated that “it would appear that Father Curran has now been completely neutralized. The BPP Breakfast Program...has not been renewed...It is not anticipated...that any efforts to re-establish the program will be made in the foreseeable future.”

With the community service activities seriously weakened, COINTELPRO remained poised to exploit Panther weaknesses as they presented themselves. One such opportunity came as a result of the BPP failure to develop a reliable mechanism to check would-be Panthers’ backgrounds. This oversight quickly developed into the BPP’s Achilles’ heel. Kathleen Cleaver prophetically predicted that “the most outstanding problem that the black community and in particular the Black Panther Party as a vanguard of the Liberation Struggle will have to deal with in the coming months...will be the black bootlicker, the puppet placed on black people by the white pig power structure to suppress us.” FBI files confirm Cleaver’s contention by revealing how the agency flooded the Panthers with informants and agent provocateurs.

The work of government infiltrators proved central to FBI efforts to subdue the Panthers. Numerous agency memos clearly delineated their essential duties:

the racial informant [is] needed to obtain evidence of possible violations of Federal and local laws, but the informant must be alert to intercept their [Panther] correspondence, to alert the Bureau as to their meetings, obtain their records including photos and identifying data on members, to gain access to their financial records and mailing lists, to record speeches, conversations,

meetings, trials and any Party business, to obtain posters, pamphlets, etc., to obtain writings of BPP members, to obtain any literature they might publish, to list books required by the Party for members to read, to check on telephonic instructions, to copy training films, tape recordings, to obtain copies of all possible information on the schools run by the BPP and the paper.

Agent provocateurs' success in baiting BPP members into illegal activities clearly highlighted the dubious values that many recruits brought to the party. Lacking a clear understanding of BPP ideologies, strategies, and tactics, these members focused upon the gun and used racial injustice as an excuse to engage in illicit activities. Bobby Seale charged that such individuals considered their "pot and...wine are above the Party. He thinks the gun is something he can use at will, to rip off stuff for himself."

During the Counter Intelligence Program's second year of operation, officers arrested 348 Panthers on a plethora of charges including, murder, armed robbery, rape, bank robbery, drug trafficking, and burglary. As a consequence, Newton defense attorney Charles Garry noted, "[b]etween December 1967 and December 1969, the Party paid more than two hundred thousand dollars in bail-bond premiums, money the BPP would never recover."

The BPP was unable to extract informers and agent provocateurs from its ranks. Making such efforts all the more difficult was the FBI's practice of leaking felonious accusations about various Panthers being informants or agent provocateurs. Moreover, the flawed membership review process the Party did implement proved not only unreliable, but also led to the labeling of many loyal Panthers as covert operatives. In time, a siege mentality developed within the organization as paranoia ran uninhibited, leaving no Panther above suspicion.

In 1969 and 1970 the Oakland leadership attempted to sort out the BPP's problems of internal disruption and infiltration by purging the suspect Panthers and barred new membership. BPP Chairman Seale recalls this phase being marked by a concerted effort to rid the Party of individuals who had proven uncommitted to the struggle. The extraction process was a painful one that included expelled members having their names and faces printed in *The Black Panther* to solidify their status as outcasts. David Hilliard declared that the Party actions were designed to:

get rid of all the opportunist elements, the criminal elements, and work with the people left...the party is only interested in the very best and the most revolutionary sections of society...our doors are not open to anyone that decides that they want to join the party. Now the people...will definitely have to...want to carry out the desires and aspirations of the oppressed people.

Similarly, Seale credited the bar on new recruits as: "enable[ing] us to spot the agent provocateurs better, because we could see who was doing work, who wasn't doing work, and who was messing things up. By not letting anybody else in, we cut down on the confusion caused by the constant influx of people."

Already suffering from disruptive members and government agents, the Panthers sunk further into chaos when Huey Newton returned from prison and installed himself as the head of the BPP under the highly evocative title of "Supreme Commander." While Newton denied he was asserting dictatorial powers, he nonetheless assailed any Panther he perceived possessed

enough clout to challenge his authority. The FBI privately took some credit for Newton's increasingly absurd antics:

Huey P. Newton has recently exhibited paranoid-like reactions to any one who questions his orders, policies, or actions. His Hitler-like hysterical reaction, aggravated by our present counter-intelligence activity, has resulted in suspensions of loyal BPP workers. It appears Newton may be on the brink of mental collapse and we must intensify our counterintelligence.

FBI leaders confidently reported that "fortunes of the BPP are at low ebb...Newton is positive there is an informant in Headquarters. Cleaver feels isolated in Algeria and out of contact with Newton, and the Supreme Commander's secretary [Connie Matthew] has disappeared and been denounced."

Although FBI Director Hoover's hatred of Black Nationalists is well documented, scholars have often failed to discern why the FBI attacked Panthers with greater intensity than it did other groups. The reason was that the Panthers readily worked with white radicals and incorporated leftist ideas into their ideology. Fearing the creation of a strong revolutionary movement spearheaded by the Panthers, the Counter Intelligence Program sought to destroy such alliances. For example, when Cleaver solicited white radicals, particularly the Peace and Freedom Party, for financial aid for Newton's defense, COINTELPRO dispatched a false letter to Ed Pearl, a leader in the Peace and Freedom Party. An internal FBI memorandum summarized the dispatch:



using street vernacular and appropriate stationary, which will be sent to a selected individual in the PFP, to inform him of statements made by the BPP concerning their association with the PFP. Specifically, the statements will include the fact that the BPP has made the statement in closed Panther meetings, that when the time comes they will “line up the Caucasians in the PFP against the wall with the rest of the whites.” The letter will purport to come from an individual who is associated with Panther members and who has heard Panther members boast of what they will do to Caucasians in the PFP when the Panthers finally launch an armed rebellion.

The FBI also began surveillance against those whites supporting or displaying sympathy for the Panthers. A Senate Intelligence Committee staff report stated, for instance: “Jane Fonda and other entertainment personalities who spoke in favor of Panther goals or associated with BPP members became the targets of FBI Programs....” Charles Garry, Newton’s defense lawyer, was one person the FBI tried extra hard to discredit. Clearly intending to turn the Panthers against Garry, the FBI ordered its West Coast offices to prepare “specific counterintelligence proposal(s) designed to create a breach between the BPP and Garry. Consider such things as anonymous telephone calls as well as cartoons and other logical methods of transporting your idea.”

The COINTELPRO’s determination to isolate the BPP from other Nationalist organizations is documented in a Congressional report entitled *The FBI’s Covert Action Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party* under the heading “The Effort to Promote Violence Between the Black Panther Party and Other Well-Armed, Potentially Violent Organizations.” To facilitate

this isolation, national-level FBI leaders wanted to promote: “shootings, beatings, and a high degree of unrest...” The FBI created intra-party tension within the BPP by distributing bogus political tracts among the Panthers’ potential allies. It also tried to disrupt relations between the Black Nationalist organization and what should have been natural allies, fellow Black Nationalist organizations, particularly Ron Karenga’s US organization. Ironically, the one variable that provided ample opportunities for the FBI to intervene were the respective membership bases of each organization.

Despite the BPP and United Slaves building their organizations by recruiting African-American “lumpen proletarians”, most theoreticians warn against incorporating of this class in any significant manner. The primary danger of integrating the uneducated masses emanates from their lack of loyalty, a by-product of their economically impoverished status. Although Panther co-founders were aware of such criticisms, they balked at such assertions and welcomed the lumpen proletariat into the fold. Unfortunately, theorists’ warnings proved correct as the inclusion of such individuals led to exploitable weaknesses within all Black Nationalist groups. One Panther remembers, “Many of the younger brothers in Karenga’s organization were from eastside gangs. The young Panther cadre were from the same, or rival camps, regardless of whether there were orders to do so. By the code of the street this was known as gang fighting and they had been gang fighters long before they were nationalists.”

US provided the FBI with ample opportunity to intensify their rivalry with the BPP. According to an FBI memo of November 25, 1968:

a serious struggle is taking place between the Black Panther Party and the US organization. The struggle has reached such proportions that it is taking on the aura of gang warfare with

attendant threats of murder and reprisals. In order to fully capitalize upon BPP and US differences as well as to exploit all avenues of creating further dissension in the ranks of the BPP, recipient offices are instructed to submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP.

In part due to the FBI's covert manipulations, and in part due to the nature of the membership base of the two organizations, the Black Power Era took a horrific turn as the BPP and US began a lethal battle for vanguard status.

Ironically, this warfare occurred at a notable moment for African-American students. After years of struggling to integrate segregated centers of higher education, African-American collegians had succeeded in forcing predominantly white administrations into accepting African-American Studies courses and a commitment to recruit African-American faculty and students. Yet, while winning such advancements, African-American students' protests also provided a fertile ground for COINTELPRO operations, resulting in lethal BPP-US conflict between the Panthers and Karenga's group on UCLA's Westwood campus.

On the Westwood campus, various Panther rivals were attempting to secure the directorship position of a proposed Afro-American Studies program, a move that the majority of Black students viewed unfavorably. These students requested the BPP attend the organizational meeting to ensure that it was not hijacked by US's menacing cadre. Tempers ran so high during the meeting that it ended with US militants gunning down Panthers Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins. Displaying bizarre logic, in the wake of Carter's and Huggins's deaths, the police immediately raided Huggins's house and arrested a host of mourning Panthers, including the widowed Ericka Huggins, on charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

Hoover ordered a misinformation campaign aimed at “fully capitaliz[ing] upon BPP and US differences as well as to exploit all avenues of creating further dissension within the ranks of the BPP.” Along these lines, FBI agents created a cartoon that depicted United Slaves members gloating over the bodies of Carter and Huggins with an overhead scoreboard reading “US 2 Panthers 0.” The agents secretly mailed the cartoon to BPP headquarters and posted it throughout the African-American community, clearly hoping to prompt a lethal retaliation for the fallen Panthers. The agency quietly gloated, no doubt, when shortly thereafter Panther members fired into the home of a US member and Karenga’s followers responded by gunning down Panther John Savage.

Such success encouraged the FBI to repeat its campaign. Upon learning that US had begun stockpiling weapons in anticipation of a Panther retaliatory attack, Assistant Director William Sullivan approved a series of inflammatory letters to US bearing the signatures of prominent BPP members. These letters threatened harsh reprisals for the spilling of Panther blood. A short time later, in a pre-emptive strike, US cadre shot down three Panthers, killing Sylvester Bell. In retaliation, the BPP firebombed the US offices. This rampaging and endless violence lends credibility to Amiri Baraka’s recollection that “agents would ‘shoot at one organization knowing that the other would get blamed’, and . . . retaliate in kind.”

Newton loyalist Elaine Brown in retrospect believed that Karenga and followers were government operatives.

It is my belief now, as it was then, that Karenga works for and with the FBI.... If the FBI, by rearranging facts or by some working form of the art of illusion, is only indirectly responsible for certain events, and was working against *all* “Black militant” organizations, how do we reasonably

explain that reports indicate the FBI supposedly tried to divide the Black Panther Party from all other organizations, but not other organizations from each other? Or that Karenga, for example, is responsible for four killings of Panther members, according to reports, but the Black Panther Party is not responsible for any deaths of United Slaves' members? Why is it that this sort of confrontation never took place between the P. Stone Nation and the Black Panther Party, even though letters *were* sent, or between the Panther Party and the Nation of Islam or SNCC? The question can be logically answered. It was felt our Party was the most dangerous. The FBI sought, bought and paid for willing Black agents to help in our destruction, as they masterminded and contrived the raid and following assassinations of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

Although Karenga dismissed Brown's charge, he agreed wholeheartedly with Baraka's assertion that the FBI "interjected the violence" into the "normal rivalries of two groups struggling for leadership of the black movement...We knew it wasn't going to be a tea party, but we didn't anticipate how violent the U.S. government would get." Karenga's recollection reveal that few, if any, Black Power Era organization fathomed the resources the FBI was willing to dispense to destroy them.

The use of lethal violence marked the final stage of COINTELPRO operations and culminated in the murder of Chicago Panther leader Fred Hampton on December 4, 1969. Framing the FBI's determination to attack the Chicago Black Panther Party chapter were three factors: 1) the presence of the dynamic Fred Hampton; 2) the frequent clashes between the Panthers and the Chicago Police Department that had already led to the deaths of three officers;

and 3) the remote possibility that the Black Panther Party could politicize the Black Stone Rangers and other street gang. FBI operations initially concentrated on preventing the Chicago Panthers from aligning with the formidable Black Stone Rangers, Chicago's largest and most powerful gang. Thus, agents baited each organization's leadership into an ego-driven, testosterone-filled conflict that would hopefully lead to their destructions. One attempt began with an FBI generated letter sent to Black Stone Ranger leader Jeff Fort that read:

I've spent some time with some Panther friends on the west side lately, and I know what's going on. The brothers that run the Panthers blame you for blocking their thing, and there's supposed to be a hit out on you. I'm not a Panther or a Ranger, just black.

From what I see, these Panthers are out for themselves, not black people. I think you ought to know what they're up to. I know what

I would do if I were you. You might hear from me again.

The FBI's intention was clear. Chicago's Special Agent in Charge informed Hoover that the missive was mailed "in anticipation that its receipt by Fort will intensify the degree of animosity existing between these two black extremist organizations."

In November 1969, law enforcement agencies notched-up their campaign after yet another lethal shootout between local Panthers and the Chicago police. The gun fight served as the catalyst for Special Agent John Mitchell ordering informant William "Gloves" O'Neal, who served as the Chicago Panther's Chief of Security, to provide detailed floor plans and information regarding Fred Hampton's dwelling. O'Neal, a trusted member of the BPP, was receiving \$450 a month from the FBI and an additional \$125 in expenses for his Panther information. The most important information provided by O'Neal was details regarding Fred

Hampton's bedroom and the location of weapons caches because it would be under the guise of a search for illegal weapons that officers would enter Hampton's dwelling.

The plan of attack was meticulously constructed, with the raiding party leaving nothing to chance. On the night of the raid, December 4, 1969, informant O'Neal prepared a late dinner for everyone in the dwelling that included Kool-Aid. This seemingly inconsequential detail is significant because, although it was known by all, including informant O'Neal, that Hampton was not a drug user, an autopsy done after the raid found traces of Seconal in his body. In all probability, O'Neal drugged Hampton and the others through their beverage that night. When the raiding party barged into the dwelling, officers spotted a slumbering Mark Clark who was on night security detail. They shot him in the chest at point-blank range, but as he fell a round from his gun went off. After killing Clark, officers quickly moved towards Hampton's bedroom, firing a .45 caliber Thompson submachine gun into the door and wall leading into the room. After firing an undetermined amount of shots into the bedroom, the agents ordered Hampton's female companion who was asleep beside him from the room. Then the shooting began again. The *Chicago Daily News* wrote that "when [the initial salvo] didn't kill Hampton...one of the unknown raiders stood over the 21-year-old Panther leader's bed and fired two shots into his brain." The *Chicago-Sun Times* reported the raid and gave reason for such Gestapo tactics: "The Chicago raid was part of a nationwide FBI effort to 'encourage police to raid the Panthers.' The FBI justified the policy as a precaution against violence...The real reason was they didn't like the political rhetoric and the political stance the Black Panther Party took."

The official police account of the raid alleged that the mere act of officers announcing their arrival provoked the Panthers into a gun battle. The *Chicago Tribune* reported the FBI's official position along with a photo of a door allegedly riddled with bullets fired by the Panthers.

Likewise, State Attorney General Edward Hanrahan praised the agents for “their restraint, bravery, and professional discipline” during the raid. However, this rendition of what happened began to unravel quickly as an independent investigation revealed that the marks in the photo were actually nail heads not got shots. Congressional investigations revealed that the Panthers had not discharged their weapons at officers; in fact, the only shot fired by a Panther weapon was from Clark’s which fired when it hit the floor after he had been shot at point-blank range.

Fred Hampton’s execution received voluminous headlines and led to a congressional inquiry of the actions and behaviors of agents under Hoover’s charge. After reviewing the evidence, investigators concluded that “although the claimed purpose of the Bureau’s COINTELPRO tactics was to prevent violence, some of the FBI’s tactics against the BPP were clearly intended to foster violence, and many others could reasonably have been expected to cause violence.” Various Panther members filed a law suit against the FBI and other government agencies for violating the Black Panthers’ civil rights. While the congressional investigation and legal case help uncover evidence of the government’s actions, no concrete results came from either. The charges filed against the nine white and five African-American officers who participated in the early morning attack were dismissed. The government continued to dodge responsibility for its acts against the Panthers and other civil rights and Black Nationalist groups. Years after the attack, Illinois State Attorney General Edward V. Hanrahan still denied any knowledge of the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program to subdue the BPP.

While public disclosure of the FBI’s nefarious activities eventually led to its closing down the operations, the program of suppression had succeeded. Elaine Brown succinctly sums up the feelings of victims of the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program when she boldly declared: “These motherfuckers intended to kill everyone of us.” From October 1967 to December 1969,



lethal violence between the state and the BPP resulted in the deaths of over thirty Panther members. The fear of violence and possibly death, combined with never ending internal bickering, convinced more thoughtful members and supporters to distance themselves from the doomed organization. Their departure, in turn, allowed militant Cleaverites and non-ideological street thugs to gain greater influence within the Panthers. Their behavior, based on values far removed for that Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had enunciated a little over two years before, further alienated the Black Panther Party from the urban African-American community and insured ongoing state repression. In Oakland, and elsewhere, a group calling itself the Black Panthers would live on into the mid-1970s, but it was the same only in name.

## **CONCLUSION**

**“Creating Revolution As We Advance” examines the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense’s ascension to vanguard status during the Black Power Era. The Nationalist aesthetic under examination is contextualized by the non-violent civil disobedience theory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nationalist rhetoric of Malcolm X. The genesis of the Black Power movement is most easily traced to the majority community’s unending attacks upon African-American human rights. This work cites the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts failure to affect Black lives tangibly as the final factor mandating African-American activist to abruptly alter traditional Civil Rights strategies.**

**In the post-Voting Rights Act period, California’s Bay Area served as the epicenter of American radicalism. Within this locale, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale created a viable alternative to well worn integration politics. Despite being created in reaction to specific problems facing their local community, the Black Panther Party held revolutionary promise to urban centers throughout the nation. Deriving notoriety via picking-up-the-gun, the Panther co-founders became infamous amongst downtrodden Blacks for all the wrong reasons. Consequently, admirers who sought to replicate the Panther model in their indigenous community were surprised that the group’s ideological roots and philosophies differed greatly from those espoused by key nationalist figures such as: Malcolm X, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Marcus Garvey, and Albert Cleage. The Black Panther**

**Party betrayed racial formulations in favor of a class analysis. Ironically, such progressivism set the stage for the Panther's demise.**

**The Panthers transcended race-first politics as they forged alliances with a racially diverse cadre of left-leaning groups. According to Federal Bureau of Investigations Director J. Edgar Hoover, such strange bedfellows made the Black Panther Party “the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.” Despite such an ominous threat to the Nation's stability, initial attacks upon the Panthers emanated from local level political officials and law enforcement agencies. However, the Panther threat was lent greater credibility via its becoming the most prominent target of FBI and CIA repression. “Creating Revolution As We Advance: The Revolutionary Years of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and Those Who Destroyed It” culminates with the political assassination of Chicago Illinois Black Panther Party chairman Fred Hampton. Hampton's murder signals the demise of the Black Panther Party's revolutionary period for several reasons. Particularly poignant are the realities that Hampton was largely unrivaled, with the exception of Black Stone Ranger gang lord Jeff Fort, as the voice of Chicago's Black community. Hampton's leadership of the Black Panther Party Chapter in Chicago had garnered the support of his fellow Chicagoans. Despite his importance to the Black community, Hampton was still fell by the long arm of the Law. This work displays that Hampton's demise is the most prominent ingredient in the Panthers retreat from their revolutionary politic to seeking refuge as a reformist group.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Although this study begins with the “modern” Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's, this in no way dismiss the historical Civil Rights struggle that many accurately argue begin the moment the first bonded person of African descent arrived on these shores in bonded or subjugated status. Towards gaining more information about the “modern” Civil Rights Movement also known as America's second reconstruction, the reader should consult, Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon, 1964); Anthony Lewis, ed., *Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution* (NY: Bantam, 1965); Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s*

---

*Civil Rights Movement* (NY: William Morrow, 1987); and Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (NY: New American Library, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s relatively harsh judgment and condemnation of his white activist peers on the matters discussed above has been largely erased from the national memory. Particularly, as many have seemed steadfast in their attempt to present a sanitized parochial King that can be exploited for contemporary personal political gains. In reality, King's judgment of the trajectory of the Civil Rights Movement was greatly altered in the wake of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts ratification. Indicative of such alterations are public queries regarding the soul of America and if she were able to do what was fair and just toward African-Americans, particularly after so much had been done to stunt their growth. Toward addressing such issues King questioned the entire nation *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* See, Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) pg. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> A significant segment of the Civil Rights community offered warnings to the nation that mere legislation, particularly the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, was incapable of closing a racial divide that had been wrought over centuries. It is during these foreboding moments that Dr. King is at his best as a social/political theorist. Contrary to popular belief, King, as well as many of his lieutenants, was never surprised that African-Americans found the legislative changes wanting as they had very little impact upon their daily existence. For more information regarding the reaction of the progressive wing of the African-American Civil Rights community, please consult Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Viking, 1987); Howell Raines, ed., *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc.,) p. 16. Huey P. Newton is partially correct in his analysis of what the urban rebellions of the mid-sixties meant to Black America and the nation in general. Although it would suit his and his later organizational purposes perfectly for the Black masses to be moving towards revolution, it is not clear in the mid-sixties if we are witnessing what Harold Cruse refers to in the title of one of his most poignant books; *Rebellion or Revolution*. Newton himself would at moments doubt the veracity and/or legitimacy of claims that African-Americans were interested in overthrowing capitalism. In fact, Newton himself, frustrated by an inability to recruit educated African-Americans into the Black Panther Party, would muse that such populations problem with American Capitalism is not its inherent nature, rather their location at the bottom of the pecking order.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* p. 3. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had long held pressing questions regarding American whites intentions toward African-Americans among matters of freedom justice and equality. Although King often fought the notion that such realities were veritable impossibilities within the average White American's psyche' the irrefutable reality remains that American Whites', regardless of social class or geographical region, was anathema to the concept of racial equality in America. Particularly troubling for King, and his followers, black and white, was that the really difficult work of power-sharing and integrating African-Americans into America's centers of political, educational, and economic power had yet to even begin. It was this stage that King knew would be the most difficult, so he must have been particularly dismayed as the nation could not even reach the stage, let alone successfully deal with the inherent issues awaiting such measures.

<sup>6</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press) p. 256. Having fallen victim to an extreme desire to have the question of "race" and its place within American democratic and politicoeconomic institutions addressed, African-Americans not only cheered the governments decision to investigate the issue, but also uncritically accepted, if not championed, its results. The Moynihan Report did little other than equip racial opponents with ammunition to support a backwards-political policy that boils down to a posture of benign neglect. Meaning, it would be in the best interest of African-Americans if the government pulled all support from them and allowed them to work out their problems and issues themselves devoid of government influence, but most importantly devoid of the tax dollars that they paid on a weekly basis. It was the fallacy of the black matriarch which stood at the center of this tragedy according to whites. Unfortunately, more than a few African-American leaders, particularly clergymen accepted such a diagnosis for

---

their race's ills and set out to put Black women back in their place. It would be this stringent attempt at establishing a hegemonic patriarchal order that would give whites permission to abandon racial progressivism and black men to abandon gender equality. See., Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* and Rainwater and Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press)

<sup>7</sup> Rainwater and Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press) pg. 125-32. One should not be fooled into thinking that the unveiling of this most poignant terrain shifting and shaping argument in front of a predominately African-American audience does not have meaning. In fact, such a context ensures that the speech is pregnant with subdiscursive commentaries and repercussions. Put simply, a white President espousing a new national trajectory on the issue of race to a Black audience cannot be taken lightly as it is bound to affect the latter for decades, if not centuries. Hence, it is the author's contention that this speech is little more than the initial salvo in what promises to be a prolonged battle over the issue of "race" and the nation's duty towards aiding those who have for so long been held back by official, and unofficial, state policies that flow out of the concepts of blackness and whiteness.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Undoubtedly, such racially progressive intones, must have been appreciated by the African-American listeners. However, such measures amounted to little more than "the sound, before the fury."

<sup>9</sup> Civil Rights leaders were woeful of tactics and trickery from racial opponents that blamed African-Americans for their plight. Hence, it should have been with heavy hearts that the Black intelligentsia listened to one of their staunchest supporters propagate such politics. However, the exact opposite was occurring as many within the African-American leadership, including such luminaries as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., failed to discern the sub-discourse that transmitted Johnson's intentions. Unbeknownst to the African-American leadership, President Johnson's utterances ensured that the racial terrain would never be the same.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson's Howard University address is reprinted in Rainwater and Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967), 125-132. As previously mentioned, both the Civil Rights leadership and the Howard University graduating class were duped by Johnson's rhetoric. Their reaction to the commencement address conveyed either an unbelievable amount of politeness and naiveté or an inability to decipher the President's true intentions. The best evidence to support such assertions are found in the *Washington Evening Star* (June 5, 1965), which reported that the majority African-American audience interrupted the President 18 times with applause. Moynihan himself later writes that he took the applause of the Howard audience as nothing less than Black approval of the new liberal agenda that ultimately was utilized to demonize African-American women and brand the African-American familial structure dysfunctional at best. Please consult, "The President and the Negro: The Moment Lost," *Commentary* 43 (February 1967): 34.

<sup>11</sup> Once white liberals put action to the President's rhetoric, Civil Rights leaders were horrified at the alteration. The majority of African-American Civil Rights Leaders possessed an insight that was largely absent from moderate whites. That being, the securing of legal equality was the initial stage in a larger movement designed to make African-Americans active participants in American society. The alluded to participation, or exercise of equality, mandated that the entire politico economic and educational infrastructure be overhauled and aimed at guaranteeing African-Americans unprecedented access and achievement. African-American leaders from the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth to Stokely Carmichael questioned the nation's commitment to such change, particularly as they focused upon tangible goods beyond integrating a park so black and white children could swing together. White liberals' abandonment of moral consciousness in the wake of the securing of theoretical equality forced African-American integrationists closer to the Nationalist alternative as propagated by Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown. Fortunately, there were some whites who recognized this attempt to abandon the movement before African-Americans were equipped to fully exercise their new found equality. For example, in the midst of Congressional debates, Sen. Hubert Humphrey rhetorically asked all in attendance, "What is the value of winning access to public accommodations for those who lack money to use them?" (Epstein, Richard A., *Forbidden Grounds* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 400.) Bayard Rustin echoed similar sentiments verbatim. See, "From Protest to Politics: the Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* 39 (February 1964): 25.

<sup>12</sup> The government's conscious decision to divert its attention from the American racial divide that Gunnar Myrdal had so eloquently highlighted in his work *The American Dilemma* would have reverberations that most failed to

---

realize. Despite the appearance of more militant political postures from secular leaders, the vast majority of movement participants held fast to traditional Christian principles of long suffering and eventual victory of good over evil. The inability of recent Civil Rights legislation to convert into tangible goods forced a re-evaluation of not only movement goals, but of more significance tactics and the utility of inter-racial coalitions; matters that could possibly cause many movement participants to question the vehicle that had guaranteed victory, The Black Church and its version of the Gospel. See., Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* p. 81

<sup>13</sup> Civil Rights integrationist's greatest fears regarding the abandonment of principles such as integration or assimilation and the relinquishing of patriotic civil disobedience appeared to be coming to fruition. Although secular SNCC would be the greatest challengers to existing leadership identities, in reality similar challenges were to be found via alternative Nationalistic versions of the Gospel. The greatest articulator of Afro-centric and/or Nationalistic Gospel would be found in Albert Cleage's *The Shrine of the Black Madonna*. See., Carmichael, Stokely, "Power and Racism", in *New York Times Review of Books*, September 22, 1966 pp. 76-83.

<sup>14</sup> Saul David Alinsky. *Rules for Radicals*. (NY: Random House, 1971), p. 45. The warning that African-Americans would abandon their non-violent patriotic civil disobedience roots is a reality that is not only acknowledged in the works of such noted white scholars as Howard Zinn and William Van De Burg, but all but championed by white radicals. Zinn is particularly forceful in his admonishing of his white compatriots with works such as *You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train*. The primary thesis under girding Zinn's position is that the majority of white's are afraid to truly divest from their personal stake and place in a racist and unjust American stake. Zinn is very much like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he remarks that the integration of a park is simple, however, the greatest resistance awaits the movement when the children of leading white's must relinquish their monopoly upon scholarships, jobs, money, homes, etc. It is at this moment that King predicts the nation will witness a white backlash. And for all intents and purposes, the Johnson commencement address was a harbinger for things to come on the American racial frontier.

<sup>15</sup> Most political pundits within the African-American community considered the movement at best a partial failure. Such political views grew in intensity as one drifted towards the Nationalist community and white radical intelligentsia. Civil Rights supporters were unable to refute Nationalist charges that integration had failed to secure tangible gains for the masses of African-Americans. In fact, such themes were commonly found amongst moderate Civil Rights leaders in the wake of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts respectively. See, Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) pg. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> The timing of Whitney Young's assertion signals several things about the Civil Rights Movement and its leadership. Considering his centrality to the entire moderate activist community, it is safe to deduce that Young's comments reflect larger opinions regarding the linkage of economic success with overall progress. Additionally, Young's comments precede King's later, public, contentions regarding American economic inequalities along class and racial lines. Insider's consistently reported that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was never unaware of the economic ramifications of African-Americans entrance into the American mainstream, he was simply politically savvy enough to realize that such rhetoric would threaten to dismantle all that he had worked to achieve on the front of racial reconciliation. However, even King would ultimately decide that he could keep quite no more in the face of the hundred's of millions spent on the Vietnam War while American men, women, and children, of all races and hues, went to bed hungry on a nightly basis. Please consult Whitney M. Young, Jr., *To Be Equal* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> The absence of a noticeable increase in African-Americans politico economic capital tilted the on-going battle over movement direction, tactics, and goals in Nationalists favor. Nationalists advanced a host of criticisms regarding the Civil Rights Movement: pace, tactics, strategies, goals, leadership style and ideological underpinnings supporting the movement. William H. Chafe, and Harvard Sitkoff, eds., *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*. (NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1987), p. 279.

<sup>18</sup> Disappointment regarding what most African-Americans considered an unforgivable betrayal buoyed Nationalists hopes for seizing control of the movement. It was integrationist minded African-Americans who were most disturbed by Whites' abandonment of progressive politics on the racial front. Consequently, it was not uncommon

---

to see such individuals gravitating toward the Nationalist aesthetic. Martin Luther King Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* pg. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Bobby Seale's observations regarding the non-utility of existing laws and the futility of securing additional measures are mere echoes of the Nationalist Titan Malcolm X's analysis. Such liberal usage of Malcolm's analysis was common throughout the Black Power Era as figures from competing groups attempted to co-opt Malcolm's legacy. Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*. (NY: Random House, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Huey P. Newton Papers, Reel 1

<sup>21</sup> According to James Robert Ross, there was a chasm between the leadership offered by moderate non-violent African-Americans and the allegiance of America's urban dwellers. Towards illuminating such a gulf Ross writes that "[o]ne of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that up to this point there has been no national organization which could speak to the growing militancy of the young black people in the urban ghettos[...]There has only been a civil rights movement whose tone of voice was adapted to an audience of middle class whites" Ross, James Robert. *The War Within*. (NY: Sheed and Ward, 1971), p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> This fact in no way diminishes the impact that Malcolm X made during his tenure with the Nation of Islam. However, the fact remains that Malcolm X's impact upon the American political culture was limited due to the reticence of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad to engage American politics. Although African-Americans sympathized with Malcolm X's views, it cannot be disputed that others held the loyalties of African-American grassroots activists.

<sup>23</sup> The alluded to transition of the Civil Rights Movement toward a position of racial exclusivity is best displayed by SNCC. Toward gaining a better understanding of SNCC's identity politics, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995.)

<sup>24</sup> The refusal of Civil Rights activists, particularly African-Americans, to continue down a road that luminaries such as Malcolm X were analogizing to suicide was considered an insult to most whites. However, they proved incapable of understanding that even when tragedy struck whites, there was usually an additional insult placed upon African-Americans; almost as if their burden was made unnecessarily weightier. For example, the disappearance of the three Civil Rights workers, (James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman) was marred with an extra insult of African-American activists. This insult results from the reality that James Chaney's body was mutilated in ways that the other dead bodies were not. See., Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., *Voices of Freedom, an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement*, (Bantam, 1990), p. 195. James Robert Ross, *The War Within*, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Despite SNCC's historical position as a moderate organization, the national tenor created space for the organization's radical elements to ascend to power. Most notable of the events that created additional possibilities for Nationalist elements in their midst was the 1964 Democratic Convention. It was this moment that highlighted the distance between their tactics, strategies, and goals and those of older white liberal organizations. The alluded to events combined with the censorship of John Lewis' prepared speech at the March on Washington to further alienate SNCC from both liberals and the Democratic Party political machine. See, Meier, August and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

<sup>26</sup> For an organizational history of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, pronounced (SNICK) see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*; Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*; Cleveland Sellers, with Robert Terrell, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (NY: William Morrow, 1973).

<sup>27</sup> The Meredith shooting was the last straw for SNCC's Nationalist elements. The often-remembered chant of "Black Power" was unveiled in Greenwood, Mississippi by Willie Ricks. The slogan has nevertheless been attributed to SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael. "Ricks provided Carmichael with a new weapon in his ideological struggle with King when he demonstrated the enormous appeal of the slogan "Black Power" --- a shortened version of "Black power for Black people," a phrase used by SNCC workers in Alabama." Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle:*

---

*SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1981) p. 209. For information concerning the battles surrounding the use of such a loaded term/slogan in the African-American freedom struggle, see Young, Andrew, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (NY: Harper Collins, 1996) pg. 396-404. Robert C. Smith, "Black Power and the Transformation from Protest to Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (1981): 431-44; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960's*, 215-28; and William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Additionally, the ascension of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), James Forman, and H. Rap Brown to the leadership position was implicitly a sign of the direction the organization was not willing to travel. That position was undoubtedly the one advanced by the deposed SNCC head John Lewis. Lewis was at best a young Martin Luther King who proceeded at a cautious and steady pace that his southern upbringing had instilled in him. Unfortunately for Lewis, such caution and analysis was considered at best passé and at worst cowardice during the Black Power Era. For information concerning John Lewis ideological beliefs and Civil Rights tactics he agreed with see Taylor Branch, *Parting The Waters*, (Simon and Schuster, 1988) pg. 261-263.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (NY: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 30. Despite the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s belief in the achievement of the beloved community, King himself realized that white's bore more responsibility in African-Americans gravitation towards Black Nationalism than any other entity. In one of his most remembered works, King admonishes the South in particular, but America in general about its blatant refusal to do what it new was morally correct. King pinned in his "Letter From a Birmingham jail" that "The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed towards gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter." It would be America's inability to embrace African-Americans in a comely fashion that would most damage King's credibility in non-Southern areas. In fact, when King decided to venture away from his Southern roots to tackle the urban blight found in Chicago, he not only proved incapable of providing solutions to the problems, but also was soundly defeated, if not embarrassed, by the political machinations of Mayor Richard J. Daley. See., Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land* (Knopf, 1991) pg. 234-240.

<sup>29</sup> Particularly problematic for moderate Civil Rights leaders was the ominous presence of Malcolm X. Malcolm's presence was never forced upon SNCC, and like organizations, rather these groups membership base sought the Black Nationalist Titan out. It is not accidental that Malcolm's influence is first felt in a major way within SNCC. This is the same organization that imported southern students to the North to hear Malcolm's ideology. Additionally, SNCC would offer invitations to Malcolm to come and speak at their events. See., Hampton and Fayer, *Voices of Freedom, an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement*, pg. 206-207; *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> One could simplify this gravitation towards Black Nationalism raging through Black Civil Rights organizations and simply state that it was simply a sign of the times. However, there was something much more important occurring. That being, the issue of Black agency and inherent contradictions found within many Civil Rights organizations which saw whites either occupying major leadership position or possessing a disproportionate amount of influence via their control of much needed caches of money. See., William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff, eds. *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*. (NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1987), p. 192. Taylor Branch, *Parting The Waters*, (Simon and Schuster, 1988) pg. 417-477; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Macmillan, 1972) pg. 150-157

<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (NY: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> See Carson, Clayborne, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* for an account of the painful process that both Black and White activists endured prior to and during the process that led to the dismissal of Whites from Civil Rights organizations such as SNCC. SNCC was not alone in its gravitation towards a racially exclusive political posture as other Civil Rights groups such as CORE followed their lead.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. King was highly critical of the divisiveness emanating from Black Power leaders rhetoric and the white liberals who dropped African-Americans in the post-Voting Rights Act era. See Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (NY: Bantam Books, 1967).



---

<sup>34</sup> To see the writings of SNCC leaders as they moved closer to Black Nationalism, see, Stokely Carmichael, "It Seems to Me," *Movement*, Aug, 1966, p. 4; "A 'Black Power' Speech That Has Congress Aroused," *U.S. News and World Report*, Aug. 22, 1966, p. 6; Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power," *Ebony*, Sept. 1966, p. 32; H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!* (NY: Dial Press, 1969).

<sup>35</sup> Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*,

<sup>36</sup> James Baldwin achieved largely unprecedented standing within the American academy as an astute theoretician on the issue of race. It was Baldwin who publicly questioned the utility of integration in the face of unbridled white opposition to the possibility. Additionally, Baldwin was the one individual on the dais at the March on Washington who was not allowed to address the audience, Malcolm X mused that Baldwin received such treatment because 'there was no telling what he may say.'

<sup>37</sup> It was H. Rap Brown's voice that polarized the nation along racial lines. Brown is best remembered for his public proclamations to the nation that the race riots occurring throughout the nation were merely dress rehearsals for the coming revolution. Assertions that struck unprecedented fear in middle America and were seized by opponents to curtail leftist rebellion under a banner of 'law-and-order'. See, H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*; Julius Lester, *Look Out, Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get your Mama!* (NY: Dial Press, 1968).

<sup>38</sup> Sellers, Cleveland and Robert Terrell, "From Black Consciousness to Black Power", *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle*, eds. Clayborne Carson, David Garrow, et al. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 279.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* pg. 30-31; Hampton and Fayer, *Voices of Freedom, an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement*, pg. 284-294. Oft-forgotten when the issue of Black Power as a slogan is discussed is the influence of Willie Ricks on the entire process. It was Ricks, not Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) who popularized the term "Black Power" in the modern era. In fact, even SNCC luminaries such as James Forman give Ricks the credit for such, as does the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., See., James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 456. Hampton and Fayer, *Voices of Freedom, an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement*, p. 289-290.

<sup>40</sup> William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.19.

<sup>41</sup> Hamilton, Charles V., "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," in *New York Times Magazine*, April 14, 1968: pp. 22-27, 79-83.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Stokely Carmichael, "Power and Racism", in *New York Times Review of Books*, September 22, 1966: pp. 76-83.

<sup>44</sup> It was SNCC worker Courtland Cox who simplified the groups aims down to the simplest compound when he illustrated on a blackboard during a staff meeting that SNCC's primary goal was to "Get power for black people". See., James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 444; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), p. 96.

<sup>45</sup> For a comprehensive account of Black political thought throughout the freedom struggle, see, John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African-American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); and Smith, Arthur L., and Stephen Robb, *The Voices of Black Rhetoric*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971).

<sup>46</sup> Carmichael, Stokely (Kwame Ture), and Charles V. Hamilton. *Black Power, The Politics of Liberation*. pg. 44-45.

<sup>47</sup> As "Black Power" became such a hot topic within the American activist community, particularly as many whites sought to gain as much information about the concept as possible for their personal safety and sanity, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) became somewhat of the poster-child for the concept. The shadow of Carmichael has

---

unfortunately blocked out the presence of such lesser known SNCC activists and Black Power theoreticians such as Willie Ricks who have a greater claim to generating the slogan. However, Carmichael's analysis of the term "Black Power" is at times so keen that there is little doubt by believers that it is the next logical and correct step for the Black movement. See., Stokely Carmichael, "SNCC Chairman Talks About Black Power", *New York Review of Books*, September 22, 1966. Carmichael, Stokely (Kwame Ture), and Charles V. Hamilton. *Black Power, The Politics of Liberation* p. 45; *Daily Californian*, "What's Black Power?", November 1, 1966.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> A clear example of the type of infighting that occurred during the Civil Rights movement can be found in Joanne Grant's biography of Ella Baker, the mother of the Civil Rights movement. Grant writes that Baker was highly critical of the intense rivalries that manifested itself not only between different Civil Rights organizations, but also between leaders with the same group. According to Grant, Baker went so far as to question if the leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Council's intended to denigrate the movement into a sophomoric oratorical contest as they noticeably replaced organizational and movement information and content in favor of rhetorical flair. See, Grant, Joanne, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound*, (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) pg. 105-124. For a firsthand account of the rivalry and propensity to protect activist territory among Civil Rights leaders, see, Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White*, (NY: The Viking Press, 1948).

<sup>50</sup> Austin, Curtis Jerome, *The Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, 1966-1972: Menace to Society*

<sup>51</sup> Lonnie G. Bunch, Laurence P Couchet, and Kendall Winnacker, *Beyond Tomorrow: The History of the East-bay Afro-American Community, 1852-1977*. (Oakland: Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life, 1989), p. 45. See also, Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Tom Berkley, "On The Sidewalk", *Oakland Post*, October 9, 1968; Jessica Mitford, *A Fine Old Conflict*, (Knopf, 1977) pg. 106-107; Warren Hinckle, "Metropolis: The Story of Oakland California," *Ramparts*, February 1966.

<sup>52</sup> Oakland Office of Community Development, "Oakland, 1979," unpublished. Located in the Oakland History Room in the Oakland Public Library, Oakland, California. The impetus for African-Americans to escape the South with little more than the clothes on their backs and children in tow undoubtedly results from the Push of Jim and Jane Crow and the Pull of greater opportunities in industrialized Norther areas. Of particular importance to African-American migrants was the culpability, if not outright participation, of southern law enforcement in racial attacks. See., Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey, Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (University of Illinois Press, 1989) pg. 228-233.

<sup>53</sup> Rod Bush, "Grassroots Organizing Against Reagan," in *The New Black Vote: Politics and Power in Four American Cities*, ed. Rod Bush (San Francisco: Synthesis Publication, 1984), pp. 319-321.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 321.

<sup>55</sup> Reginald Major, *A Panther Is a Black Cat: A Study in depth of the Black Panther Party – Its Orgins, Its Goals, Its Struggle for Survival*, (New York: William & Morrow Co., 1971) p. 38

<sup>56</sup> Huey P. Newton's father was a particularly shocking figure for the family, particularly on topics such as racial oppression and manhood. For instance, the following account is recounted in Huey P. Newton's autobiography about his father's run-in with a local white man who attempted to disrespect the elder Newton. "My father replied...that no man whipped him unless he was a better man, and he doubted that the white man qualified. This shocked the white man, and confused him, so that he backed down by calling my father crazy...my father became known as a "crazy man" because he would not give in to the harassment of whites. Strangely, this "crazy" reputation meant that whites were less likely to bother him." See., Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 30; For a greater understanding of the migratory patterns that eventually led Southern-based African-Americans to seek residence in the Bay Area of California, see, Bruce Campbell. "Bay Area Migrant." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 19-22, 1944; Crouchett, Lawrence, Lonnie Bunch III, and Martha Kendall Winnaker, eds. *Visions Toward Tomorrow: The History of the East Bay Afro-American Community 1851-1977*. (Oakland: Northern California

---

Center for Afro-American History and Life, 1989); Marilyn Johnson. *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed account of the problems Newton faced with the Oakland public school system, see, Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg 19-59.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pg. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 31

<sup>60</sup> Despite southern-based African-Americans attempts to escape the horrors associated with Jim Crow, they quickly discovered that similar issues awaited their interaction with the public school system. For many whites, appears that the only economic role they could perceive African-Americans occupying was either in the service sector or entry-level menial work in East Bay industries. To ensure that African-Americans were incapable of mounting a serious challenge to their obvious politico economic monopolies, whites refused to put money in urban school districts. See., Warren Hinckle, "Metropoly: The Story of Oakland, California," Ramparts, February 1966. Brown, William Henry, *Class Aspects of Residential Developments in the Oakland Black Community*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980, 1970), p. 169.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 169

<sup>62</sup> Haskins, *Power to the People*, pg. 5.

<sup>63</sup> See, Huey P. Newton. *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 53-55.

<sup>64</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 60-66

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 66.

<sup>66</sup> Information concerning Seale's upbringing were derived from his work, *Seize the Time: The Story of The Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991) pg. 7-12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, pg. 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, pg. 24-28.

<sup>69</sup> Seale details his meeting with Newton on the campus of Merritt College. Seale recalls that he was immediately impressed with the intellect that Newton displayed as he subdued an audience of rivals on the validity and wrong direction of the Civil Rights movement, particularly the role of the African-American middle-class in the grassroots freedom struggle. Ibid., pg. 13.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pg. 59-112.

<sup>71</sup> See, David Burner, *Making Peace with the Sixties*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. For a detailed account of the interplay between the White Radical movement and the Black activists who would serve as the advocates for the myriad Black Nationalist ideologies manifested throughout the Black Power era.

<sup>72</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 105-113.

<sup>73</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, pg. 30-34.

<sup>74</sup> From early on in his political development, it was clear that Huey P. Newton had some beliefs and ideals that were not matched by his Bay Area activist contemporaries. Although many individuals had talked about the gun or Malcolm's most noted axiom to achieve freedom and power 'by any means necessary' the vast majority of activist

---

believed that such rhetoric clearly did not include the gun. However, Huey attempts on several occasions to organize the average brother off the street into a black army to protect, not necessarily to attack, and defend the community against outside aggressors. It would be such politics that led to Newton's expulsion from several organizations. See., Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 30-31; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 108-109; Heath, Louis. *Off the Pigs*. (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> Seale, *Seize The Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 24

<sup>77</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 111. There were several factors that combined to mandate the formation of the Black Panther Party in the minds of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. In his autobiography *Revolutionary Suicide*, Newton relates that "We had seen Watts....seen how the police attacked ...after causing trouble in the first place....We had seen Martin Luther King come to Watts in an effort to calm the people, and we had seen his philosophy of nonviolence rejected....We recognized the consciousness of Black people was at the point of explosion....Everything we had seen convinced us that our time had come." Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 110.

<sup>78</sup> The initial attempt of Newton and Seale into the activist arena as leaders can be best characterized as a reformist venture. During this early stage of their ideological development, Newton and Seale concentrated upon improving the day-to-day conditions of their Bay Area community and warding off external aggressors. This reformist position would eventually be amended as the organization moved further into the realm of leftist politics. Symbolizing the group's movement from pure reformism to revolution is the decision to drop the words "Self Defense" from the organizational name.

<sup>79</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 113.

<sup>80</sup> Seale's comments are particularly poignant when one considers the comments of scholar Herb Boyd. That being, the ten-point platform and program that was serving as the ideological underpinnings of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense "...is nearly identical to earlier ten point programs proposed by Marcus Garvey and Elijah Muhammad." Herb Boyd, *Black Panthers: For Beginners*, (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1995) p.5; See Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 62.

<sup>81</sup> Bobby Seale, *The Black Panther*, 9 August 1969, p. 26.

<sup>82</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, p. 62.

<sup>83</sup> Although this issue is often overlooked by works dealing with the Black Panther Party, the reality remains that one of the by-products of all African-Americans being the victim of Oakland Police Department brutality was a loose camaraderie amongst the aggrieved. In the Black Panther Party's case, this loose camaraderie translated into a working alliance, from the genesis of the Party, with what many people would term undesirable elements of the community. However, Newton is clear that often these populations would be the only reliable source of revenue for the Party as they often proved very generous with their ill-gotten wealth. See., Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 127; Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time: The Story of The Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, pg. 64-65.

<sup>84</sup> James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Notes from a Black Worker's Notebook* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 183.

<sup>85</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of The Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 69-71.

<sup>87</sup> Marable, Manning, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), pg. 121.

---

<sup>88</sup> Huey P. Newton, *To Die People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, pg. 14-16.

<sup>89</sup> Marable, Manning, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*. pg. 121-126. James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Notes from a Black Worker's Notebook* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 183.

<sup>90</sup> See Huey Newton Talks to the Movement About the Black Panther Party, *Cultural Nationalism, SNCC, Liberals and White Revolutionaries*, Movement Pamphlet. In this pamphlet, Newton borrows one of the most famous metaphors ever utilized by Malcolm X, when he refers to the Panthers as Field Negroes and the Black middle class as House Negroes. Newton characterizes the middle-class as "...pro-administration. They would like a few concessions made, but as far as the overall setup, they have a little more material goods, a little more advantage, a few more privileges than the black have-nots; the lower class. And so they identify with the power structure and they see their interests as the power structure's interest...if the black bourgeoisie cannot align itself with our complete program, then the black bourgeoisie sets itself up as our enemy. And they will be attacked and treated as such." Allen, Robert. *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969).

<sup>91</sup> *The Black Panther*, 20 June 1967.

<sup>92</sup> During the post-Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act periods, there was a serious internal debate occurring within Black America regarding the next logical step of progress. For middle-class African-Americans, and those aspiring for such a status via integration/assimilation, the next stage entailed the exercise of their theoretical equality by engaging mainstream politico economic and educational structures. It is such political priorities that caused a particularly harsh repudiation of Newton and Seale's Panther Program. See., George Draper, "Prominent S.F. Negroes View The Militants", *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 27, 1968; Newton, Huey P., *Revolutionary Suicide*, 119.

<sup>93</sup> From "On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party," *The Black Panther*, June 6, 1970.

<sup>94</sup> *The Black Panther*, March 3, 1969.

<sup>95</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, p. 72.

<sup>96</sup> Folder: "Bobby Seale – Herman Blake Manuscript," Box 7, Huey P. Newton Papers. Bobby Hutton, or Lil' Bobby Hutton as he was affectionately called, has particular prominence to the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense's history as he was indeed the first citizen to join Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in the Panther ranks, but he would unfortunately be the first Panther fell by local officers bullets. It would be Lil' Bobby Hutton's death, or murder as Black Panther Party members remember it, that serves as a major demarcation point for the Party. Hutton's death signaled to many that its Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, had completely gone awry and was attempting to spark an armed Black revolution in American streets.

<sup>97</sup> Eldridge Cleaver, *On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party, Part I* [pamphlet] (San Francisco: Black Panther Party, 1970); Eldridge Cleaver, "On Lumpen Ideology," *Black Scholar* 3 (1972): 2-10, and Kathleen Cleaver, *On the Vanguard Role of the Black Urban Lumpen Proletariat* [pamphlet] (London: Grass Roots Publications, 1975).

<sup>98</sup> The discord occurring between the African-American community and local officers has been a long and protracted battle that seemingly knows no ends or boundaries. In his work about the utility of revolutionary violence, H.L. Nieburg remarks that "For decades police have responded to the acts of Negroes (including children) as though a state of undeclared war existed between the two communities. They interpreted their duty as requiring them to intimidate and terrorize at every opportunity, creating an automatic riot syndrome which could be triggered by any claimant to leadership, irresponsible youth or irresponsible policemen" H.L. Nieburg, *Political Violence: The Behavioral Process*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969) pg. 150-151. Jacobs, Paul, *Prelude to Riot*. (NY: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> All of the Panther memoirs cite this hostile environment to be a factor in the formulation of the organization in the Bay Area. See Seale, *Seize the Time*. pg. 44-58. Brown, Elaine. *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*. (NY:

---

Pantheon Books, 1992.) Hilliard, David. *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); Leon Friedman, ed., *Violence In America – Volume III: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, (New York: Chelsea House, 1983) pg. 2-3.

<sup>100</sup> *Oakland Tribune*, May 25, 1968; *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 21, 1968.

<sup>101</sup> The practices of Bay Area government officials in regards to controlling migrant African-Americans can be termed as little other than extremely hostile and blatantly racist. Towards controlling Blacks in the Bay Area "...the white powers-that-be decided that shock troops were necessary...following World War II, Oakland police recruiters traveled to the American South and recruited whites to join the police force to keep the Negroes 'in line'. Such politics over an extended period undoubtedly had a most unfortunate impact upon citizen and community relations. See., Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power In America*, (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994) p. 49.

<sup>102</sup> This most contestable issue of police brutality within the African-American community has often served as the catalyst to untold problems within said communities. It is not difficult to discern the innumerable catalyst to Newton and Seale's designation of their local police as a colonizing army, particularly when one looks at the geographical set up of the area. One would be on solid ground to term the presence and actions of officers to be aimed at containing African-Americans in the run-down Oakland area and out of more affluent areas such as Richmond and San Francisco. See., Warren Hinckle, "Metropolis: The Story of Oakland", *Ramparts*, February 1966; "Police Vow Court Battle on Review," *Oakland Tribune*, 23 May 1966.

<sup>103</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, p. xvii.

<sup>104</sup> Gilbert Stewart Moore, *A Special Rage*. (NY: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 19-21.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>106</sup> Panther leaders were very aware that the Panther Patrols were most certainly going to trump their ideological underpinnings and leftist politics in the minds of the lumpen proletariat of the African-American community. Foner reports that "The Party's considerable appeal among young African Americans was based less on its program or its leaders' Marxist rhetoric than on its willingness to confront police. The issue of police brutality was of great concern to black urban residents, and the Panthers articulated these widespread anti-police sentiments." See., Philip S. Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995, pp. x-xi); Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 114-127.

<sup>107</sup> Black Panther Party Ten-Point Platform #7 Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 117.

<sup>108</sup> Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998) 28. This concept of armed self-defense, particularly its utility to the African-American freedom struggle has been the source of unending debate. Such disagreement has continued despite ample evidence that self-defense was implemented by African-Americans throughout the Jim Crow period. Most scholars are now in agreement that such activities have their roots in the last likely of places, the Jim Crow South. For further information dealing with this issue please consult Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *Journal of American History* 85, no.2 (September 1998). Further evidence is also substantiated by Akinyele Omowale Umoja in his Doctoral Dissertation titled "An Eye for an Eye: The Role of Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement" (Emory University, 1996).

<sup>109</sup> John Henrik Clark, ed., *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* (NY: Macmillan Company, 1969), pg. 336-337. Newton and Seale's gravitation to the ideological underpinnings of Malcolm X's theoretical position is understandable as he clearly occupies a central position on the Black Nationalist landscape. In fact one could clearly argue that the Black Panther Party was in reality bringing Malcolm's logic to action by picking up the gun. It was Malcolm who admonished that "it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks....we should form rifle clubs that can be used to defend our lives and our property in times of emergency,...we should be peaceful, law abiding-but the time has come for the American Negro to fight back in

---

self-defense whenever and wherever he is being unjustly and unlawfully attacked.” See., George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pg. 47-48.

<sup>110</sup> Further prodding the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense’s co-founders towards picking up the gun was Huey P. Newton’s exposure to the militant side of the Civil Rights Movement via the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Newton posited that there was little contradiction between his most public position of remaining within the law with a larger desire to weather the lethal attacks that African-Americans realize that the State is capable of distributing. For Newton, he had every intention of remaining within the law as long as his life was not threatened, in which case he felt that he would be fully justified in protecting himself against those lawbreakers who were attempting to do him harm. Such thinking flows directly from the Deacons for Defense and Justice, an organization that saw little contradiction between its church membership and the use of weapons in protection of themselves and loved one’s. For more information about the activities of the Deacons for Defense and Justice see., Franklyn Peterson. “The Deacons: They Fight for Survival” *Sepia* (May 1967), pg. 10-14. However, it is clear that Malcolm X is the most direct influence upon the Panthers. An editorial in *The Black Panther* explicitly states such when it reveals that “the Black Liberation forces have Malcolm X who is like unto John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of another. Malcolm prophesied that his people were going to pick up the Gun and that it would be the Ballot or the Bullet. Huey P. Newton is like unto Jesus, in that he fulfilled the prophesy by picking up the gun.” Editor, “Speeding Up Time”, *The Black Panther*, March 16, 1968, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> Manning Marable, *The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 110. The Panthers decision to highlight the gun and abandon the propagation of the Party solely through Leftist rhetoric would serve as a boon. Newton and Seale realized that the vast majority of the lumpen proletariats were wholly unaware, despite the major leftist movement occurring on the University of California at Berkeley campus, of leftist theory and ideology. Newton’s best friend gives voice to such a position when he remarks, “...if anybody had told any of us that the Panther Party was Marxist-Leninist or Communist at the time we probably never would have joined it.” David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party*, (Boston: Little, Brown and co., 1993) p. 215.

<sup>112</sup> An interesting aside to Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale’s decision to pick-up the gun results from the reality that Newton was presently on probation for a prior attack upon a Mr. Odell Lee. Newton and Lee had a very heated confrontation in-front of several bystanders and Newton, attempting to protect himself against Lee’s attack, stabbed his rival. Newton was serving his probationary period for the attack when the Black Panther Party was created. It was Newton’s inability to carry a handgun which led to Bobby Seale carrying the single handgun that Mr. Aoki gave them and he carrying the shotgun. Newton realized that such a handgun would not be a violation of his aforementioned probation. Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 88; Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 73.

<sup>113</sup> “Pig Brutality.” *The Black Panther*, 21 1970, pp. 4-10.

<sup>114</sup> Bobby Seale is very forthcoming on the reason for the Black Panther Party’s reaction to the colonizer’s army in an interview with Herman Blake. The Panther leader relates that such thought emanated as a result of being exposed to the Black Nationalist theory of figures such as Malcolm X. Seale relates that he and Newton were particularly enchanted by Malcolm’s contentions that it was the right and duty of the oppressed to “...defend themselves with guns, because the U.S. government wasn’t doing its job to protect the poor, oppressed people.” Folder “Bobby Seale-Herman Black Manuscript,” Box 7, Huey P. Newton Papers, p. 14. See also, Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 65.

<sup>115</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 184.

<sup>116</sup> Contrary to popular belief, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was not the first African-Americans to pick-up arms in protection of the community against marauding and unlawful police officers. In fact, the Panthers were not the first Bay Area organization to take such a major step, they were preceded by Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). Unbeknownst to most individuals is the fact that Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale was a member of RAM and thus had been exposed to such “revolutionary” activities such as patrolling officers. See., Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 106. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 72-176. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 114-127; Pearson, Hugh, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey P. Newton and the Price of Black Power in America*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1994) pg. 113-116.

---

<sup>117</sup> Seale relates the uncertainties and apprehensions that he and Newton possessed during the initial patrols. Seale states that the Panther Patrols were initially so covert that neither citizens nor community members realized that the project was being implemented. See., Seale, *Seize the Time*, 85-93.

<sup>118</sup> For a greater understanding of the guarded admiration that Newton and Seale initially received from a small segment of the community. See Heath, Louis, ed. *The Black Panther Leaders Speak: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and Company Speak Out Through the Black Panther Party's Official Newspaper*. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976).

<sup>119</sup> See Newton's biography for details surrounding his fascination and desire to master the laws of the land. Ironically, this desire was borne of a desire to avoid prosecution for his numerous illegal dealings in the Bay Area. See Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 53-72.

<sup>120</sup> For a detailed account of the lengths that Newton and Seale went to stay within the confines of the law, see Seale, *Seize The Time*, 59-112 and Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters": *The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: The Free Press, 1989) 293-325.

<sup>121</sup> Van Peebles, Mario, Ula Y. Taylor, and J. Tarika Lewis. *Panther: A Pictorial History of the Black Panthers and the Story Behind the Film*. (New York: New Market Press, 1995) pg. 28.

<sup>122</sup> "The Black Scholar Interviews: Bobby Seale," The Black Scholar, Vol 4 No 1, (September 1972): 13.

<sup>123</sup> Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power*, p. 43.

<sup>124</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 93-99

<sup>125</sup> See Kit Kim Holder, *The History of the Black Panther Party 1966-1972: A Curriculum Tool for Afrikan-American Studies*. (Ph.D. diss., University of Mass., 1990). Holder's piece goes a long way towards detailing the locations of not only the national headquarters, but a variety of other Panther headquarters and chapter locations throughout the nation. Heath, Louis, ed. *The Black Panther Leaders Speak: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and Company Speak Out Through the Black Panther Party's Official Newspaper*. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976).

<sup>126</sup> Jim Fletcher, Jones, Lotinger, *Still Black Still Strong: Survivors of the US War Against Black Revolutionaries* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993) p. 222.

<sup>127</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 365.

<sup>128</sup> Despite the growth of the Panthers numerically, there were still major segments of the African-American community who vehemently disagreed with the Panthers, particularly as they made the gun integral to their operations. Representative of such a perspective are the statements of Theodore Cross when he states "...a group embarking on violence as an empowerment tactic embarks, too, on the path to self-destruction...Whatever claim to legitimacy the Black Panther Party might have possessed disappeared completely when it adopted the strategy of "offing the pigs." Theodore Cross, *The Black Power Imperative: Racial Inequality and the Politics of Nonviolence*, (New York: Falkner Books, 1987) p. 54.; Ibid, pg. 147-149.

<sup>129</sup> The group most commonly associated with the Panthers is their organizational Bay Area predecessors, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). RAM fell victim to the onslaught of area officers after they attempted to implement patrol activities very similar to the Panthers. See Stanford, Maxwell (Akbar Muhammad Ahmad), *Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM): A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement in Western Capitalist Society*, Masters thesis, Atlanta University, 1986.)

<sup>130</sup> Coming on the heels of the Civil Rights movement and a political climate that saw Blacks participating in riotous behavior with increasing frequency, many Blacks withdrew from the option of utilizing the gun. Many mistakenly



---

made the Panthers and their position of armed self-defense on a par with white supremacist groups of yesteryear, such as the Ku Klux Klan and Knights of White Camelia. See Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's treatment of the issues concerning the older Civil Rights generation, including the concept of Black Power and the use of the gun. King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

<sup>131</sup> Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), *Daggers and Javelins: Essays of Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones)* (New York: Quill, 1984); John A. Courtright, Rhetoric of the Gun: An Analysis of the Rhetorical Modifications of the Black Panther Party, *Journal of Black Studies* 4 (1974), 249-267; Manning Marable, "The Legacy of Huey P. Newton," *The Crisis of Color and Democracy* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1992), 202-203.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>133</sup> Walker, Alice, "Black Panthers or Black Punks?" *New York Times*, 5 May 1991, p. A23.

<sup>134</sup> Davis, Angela, *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (San Francisco: The National United Committee to Free Angela Davis (NUCFAD), 1971). Seale, *Seize the Time*, 146-149.

<sup>135</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 114-127; Marine, *The Black Panthers*, p. 35-47, p. 57-66.

<sup>136</sup> Gene Marine, *Black Panthers*, p. 46.

<sup>137</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, 79-84; Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther*, p. 113.

<sup>138</sup> Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 79-84

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p. 93.

<sup>141</sup> The Panthers were still being criticized repeatedly for their reformist stance during this initial period; Manning Marable called this initial period of Party history both naive and reformist, a dubious critique considering the contemporary romanticized image of the Panthers as the personification of revolution. See Manning Marable, "The Legacy of Huey P. Newton," *The Crisis of Color and Democracy* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1992), 202-203. and James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Notes from a Black Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 183.

<sup>142</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, p. 369.

<sup>143</sup> One of the problems that the Panthers would eventually run into was that many of the cadre members could not, or did not really care to, grasp the revolutionary ideology with which Newton was so enamored. For many of these ghetto youth, the allure of the Party was nothing more than that it had stood up to a police force that had been victimizing them for so long. If they knew nothing else, they knew that they would like to reverse roles with officers. This would be an increasing problem as the Party progressed into more abstract revolutionary stances. See Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 373-393.

<sup>144</sup> The issue surrounding the utility of weapons was such a concern for the Panthers that Newton found himself having to touch upon the subject repeatedly. For his most infamous message concerning the gun, see Newton, "The Correct Handling of a Revolution," *The Black Panther* 18 May 1968.

<sup>145</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 366.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, pg. 368-369.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

---

<sup>148</sup> For an example of the types of issues the BPP dealt with in the Political Education classes, see Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, pg. 167-182.

<sup>149</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, 59-71; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 110-113.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, pg. 99-105.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, pg. 373-392.

<sup>152</sup> Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, p. 119.

<sup>153</sup> San Francisco Chronicle, February 22, 1967

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 145.

<sup>156</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 127-130.

<sup>157</sup> Of all the Black Powerites on the scene within the mid-sixties, it was Cleaver who had been most obviously touted as the next Malcolm X. Cleaver and Malcolm were seemingly kindred souls as their life experiences had so obviously paralleled each other. Hugh Pearson observed that "Cleaver had revered Malcolm X, having, like Malcolm, converted to Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam while in prison. Like Malcolm he also broke with the group. He had dreams of using his own budding fame as a writer to follow in Malcolm's footsteps, perhaps even taking up the challenge of rejuvenating Malcolm's Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). In fact, it was the stated aim of Cleaver's communist sponsors to promote him as the next Malcolm X. And Cleaver had originally hoped to use the Malcolm X memorial as the springboard for a new OAAU." Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther*, p. 123; Having emerged from jail via the aid of wealthy white radicals, Cleaver had entrée to financial resources that were unfathomable to the majority of Black Powerites. Hence, he was the perfect person to begin a center for Black cultural expression and development. If nothing else, Cleaver had the means to keep the lights on. Actually, the Black House quickly became the place for cultural and Black Nationalists within the Bay Area. One most prominent name that graced its halls on a regular basis was Leroi Jones aka Amiri Baraka. For information regarding the start and maintenance of the "Black House" see., Eldridge Cleaver, "A Letter From Jail", *Ramparts*, June 15, 1968; Earl Anthony, *Spitting In The Wind* (Roundtable, 1990) p. 15; Eldridge Cleaver, "The Courage to Kill: Meeting the Panthers," in *Eldridge Cleaver: Post Prison Writings and Speeches*, ed. Robert Scheer, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pg. 29-30.

<sup>158</sup> JoNina M. Abron, "Serving the People": The Survival Programs of The Black Panther Party," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 177-192.

<sup>159</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 142.

<sup>160</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, p. 147.

<sup>161</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, 134-149; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 137-144.

<sup>162</sup> Jerry Belcher, "Oakland's Black Panthers Wear Guns, Talk Revolution," *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle*, 30 April 1967, page 1, Section I.

<sup>163</sup> Jerry Belcher, "Oakland's Black Panthers Wear Guns, Talk Revolution," *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle*, 30 April 1967, page 1, Section I.

---

<sup>164</sup> Jerry Belcher, "Oakland's Black Panthers Wear Guns Talk Revolution," San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle, 30 April 1967, p. 1, sec. I.

<sup>165</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, 148-149.

<sup>166</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 148-149.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 153-154.

<sup>168</sup> The Panthers appearance at the State Capitol was a veritable watershed moment for the organization as it was their "coming out" party to the entire nation. Although there may have been much rhetoric bantered about amongst the Panther leadership and cadre regarding the possibilities, the truth is that things would never be the same for the organization after their State Capitol protest. See., Sol Stern, "The Call of the Black Panthers", *New York Times Magazine*, August 6, 1967; *Ibid*, p. 155.

<sup>169</sup> See *The Black Panther*, June 2, 1967. Newton's initial Executive Mandate also charged that the "concentration camps" utilized to imprison Japanese-Americans during World War II were "being renovated and expanded" for use against Black people. The BPP leader further critiqued the civil disobedience protest tactics of the Civil Rights movement by stating in Malcolm X-style that "Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned, demonstrated and everything else to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs that have historically been perpetrated against Black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy....The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for Black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer....Black communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the progression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction."

<sup>170</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 157-161; Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther*, pg. 129-135.

<sup>171</sup> The Panthers were arrested after appearing at the Capitol on charges of conspiracy, carrying concealed weapons, brandishing a weapon in a threatening manner, and possession of loaded weapons in vehicles. Those charged were Bobby Seale (30), Mark Comfort (33), and Eldridge Cleaver (31) for violation of parole; Reginald Forte (18) was charged with assault with a deadly weapon against a police officer. Most of the charges, except conspiracy, were dropped. Those charged exclusively with conspiracy were Johnny Bethea (18), Ardell Butler (17), Kenneth Carter (19), Bruce Cockerhan (18), Albert Commo (21), Emory Douglas (23), George Dowell (28), James Dowell (17), Sherwin Forte (19), Truman Harris (18), Orleander Harrison, Jr., (17), Ernest Hatter (18), Mike Hall (18), Bobby Hutton (17), Lafayette Robinson (17), John Sloan (30), Willie Thompson (20), Lee Torris (22), Warren Tucker (19), and Benny Yates (19). Bail was raised by Newton and Hilliard investing \$500 in a pound of marijuana, breaking it down into nickels and selling it. Van Peebles, Mario, Ula Y. Taylor, and J. Tarika Lewis. *Panther: A Pictorial History of the Black Panthers and the Story Behind the Film*. (NY: New Market Press, 1995) pg. 36-37.

<sup>172</sup> Charles E. Jones. "The Political Repression of the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971: The Case of the Oakland Bay Area," *Journal of Black Studies* 18, No. 4 (June 1988): 424. Many have posited that the Black Panther Party's decision to "storm" the State Capitol in Sacramento was an unwise decision as it placed them front and center of a growing national movement that was operating behind the principles of 'law-and-order'; a concept that was ironically the political platform Richard Nixon implemented on his way to the White House. It was the ominous threat of the unknown that allowed the Republican Party to manufacture the consent of the people, an unknown that would eventually become the flesh of a black body. The national climate of fear and paranoia was integral to later government operations such as the COINTELPRO that destroyed the infrastructure of leftist and moderate protest movements throughout the nation.

<sup>173</sup> Hampton and Fayer, p. 174.

<sup>174</sup> One of the most unfortunate results of the sound bite and menacing image of the BPP appearance at the State Capitol was the perception that the BPP was eventually going to go into the streets of America and willfully kill its perceived oppressors. However, the organization's Minister of Information disputed such a contention: "Let us make

---

one thing crystal clear: We do not claim the right to indiscriminate violence. We seek no bloodbath. We are not out to kill up white people. On the contrary, it is the cops who claim the right to indiscriminate violence and practice it everyday. It is the cops who have been bathing black people in blood and who seem bent on killing off black people." *The Black Panther*, March 23, 1968. Often forgotten in discussions of the Black Panther Party is the official organizational response to the Mulford Bill. Fearing for the safety of his cadre, Huey P. Newton shocked many within the party and outside observers when he made the strategic choice to remain within the confines of legality and order members of the Black Panther Party to put down their weapons. See., "Panthers Expand 'Purge' in move to clear up image," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 January 1969, Folder: "BPP publicity and Misc, 1969," Box 31, Huey P. Newton Papers.

<sup>175</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 151.

<sup>176</sup> Although the BPP was relatively progressive as an organization, particularly when compared to the patriarchal-controlled Black activist church and other Black Nationalist ventures, it would be erroneous to assume that the group was egalitarian on the gender issue. Although the BPP often spoke highly of them, women were ominously devoid of a presence on the Central Committee unless they were married to or romantically involved with, and hence somewhat controlled by, a male leader. See Bukhari-Alston, Safiya, "The Question of Sexism within the Black Panther Party," *Black Panther Community News Service*, Fall/Winter 1993, p. 3.

<sup>177</sup> Indicative of the directionless feel that one gets during the genesis of the Black Power Era, and the obvious influence of the images of armed Black Panther Party members, are a rash of attacks that occurred at the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It was at these centers of learning that African-American youth put action to much of the Black Power rhetoric that was holding many of them mesmerized. For information surrounding incidents that are eerily reminiscent of the urban rebellions occurring during the same period please consult, "Black Power Explodes Again --- Policeman Slain," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1967; "Mississippi: Hot Spring," *Newsweek*, May 27, 1967; "We're Going to Shoot the Cops," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1967; Van Peebles, Mario, Ula Y. Taylor, and J. Tarika Lewis. *Panther*

<sup>178</sup> *The Black Panther*, the literary arm of the organization distributed its first issue on April 25, 1967, in an attempt to address the controversial issues surrounding the death of an African-American male at the hands of the police. Denzil Dowell was the first case of police brutality that the BPP investigated. As a result of its efforts, the BPP became somewhat known as an advocate of the community against the police.

<sup>179</sup> See Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak*, pg. 2-6.

<sup>180</sup> Van Peebles, Mario, Ula Y. Taylor, and J. Tarika Lewis. *Panther*, p. 52.

<sup>181</sup> "Notes on the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and the Peace and Freedom Party," Folder "BPP 1966-1972," Carton 18, SPM Collection.

<sup>182</sup> Newton spoke on the issue of white radicals at several moments of the organization. He even goes so far as to call them an "abstract thing." Newton saw the white radicals as "...rebels, many of them from the middle class and as far as any overt oppression this is not the case....They're looking for new heroes. They're looking to wash away the hypocrisy that their fathers have presented to the world....I personally think that there are many young white revolutionaries who are sincere in attempting to realign themselves with mankind, and to make a reality out of the high moral standards that their fathers and forefathers only expressed. In pressing for new heroes the young white revolutionaries found the heroes in the black colony at home and in the colonies throughout the world". See *Huey Newton Talks to the Movement About the Black Panther Party*.

<sup>183</sup> See Burner, David, *Making Peace with the 60s* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>184</sup> Particularly troubling for the moderates and conservatives who make up "middle-America" was the possibility that the Panthers could very well be either a unifying force for the radical left or persuade white youth to abandon their present lives in favor of a revolutionary future. Despite the appearance of such theory and thoughts within what was technically a center of exploration and free speech, most whites desired to have this black and/or red menace completely removed from their children's reality. Such permission from the moral majority to subdue not

---

only the Black Panther Party, but all such Leftist groups would prove critical in the illegal means the government used to install a hegemonic law-and-order theory. See., Maitland Zand, "Ugly Words at S.F. state --- A Pro-Panther Rally," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 5, 1967; "Black Panthers at Rally, Friendly, Unarmed," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 11, 1967; "An Angry Benefit for Black Panthers", *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 26, 1967; O'Reilly, *Racial Matters*, pg. 290-291.

<sup>185</sup> Huey P. Newton, *To Die For The People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, pg. 14

<sup>186</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 93-98.

<sup>187</sup> *Negro History Bulletin* April-June 1998 p. 14

<sup>188</sup> Although the shooting of Huey P. Newton served as a divisive issue throughout the nation, its symbolism was even more divisive. Radicals and Black Nationalists lined up in support of Huey's actions, if not the embattled Panther leader, while moderates and conservatives took the opposite position while advancing in the name of "law-and-order", a most loaded and contestable slogans of the period. In fact, one could argue that such a pregnant term meant more to its adherents and opponents than terms such as "Black Power" and "Freedom Now". For additional information surrounding the early morning altercation between Newton and Frey please consult, Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 171-176; Gene Marine, "The Persecution and Assassination of the Black Panthers as Performed by the Oakland Police under the Direction of Chief Charles R. Gain, Mayor Reading, et al," *Ramparts*, July 13, 1968; Reginald Major, *A Panther Is A Black Cat*, (William Morrow, 1971), pp. 179-182, 221, 234-235.

<sup>189</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 187-207; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 171-176; Pearson, *Shadow of the Panther*, pg. 145-147; "Bail Hearing for Huey Newton," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 August 1970, p. 3.

<sup>190</sup> Many forget that Newton's arrest meant that for the first time since the Black Panther Party's inception, both of its co-founders were simultaneously incarcerated. Obviously, the alluded to incarcerations left the organization somewhat adrift and directionless. Unfortunately, it would not be until June of 197, nearly four years after the shooting involving Newton, before the co-founders would be on the streets together again.

<sup>191</sup> The Newton shooting publicized the Black Panther Party in a manner that was previously impossible. Not only did it make the Panthers the Vanguard organization of the African-American Freedom Struggle, but allowed their influence to spread into other non-Black activist circles of influence. Akinyele Omowale Umoja remarks that "...efforts of the BPP were responsible for making the defense of Newton a *cause celebre* within the Black liberation movement and leftist circles. Newton became a national symbol of resistance and a Black folk hero. Panther mobilization to free Huey also served as a marketing and recruiting campaign for the organization. In addition, mobilizing support for Huey Newton provided a vehicle for building solidarity with radical and liberal forces outside of the Black community." Umoja, Akinyele Omowale, "Set Our Warriors Free: The Legacy of the Black Panther Party and Political Prisoners" in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, p. 419; Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, pg. 139-140.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 207-213.

<sup>193</sup> Taylor, 80.

<sup>194</sup> Taylor, 79.

<sup>195</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 207-211.

<sup>196</sup> For information on who Eldridge Cleaver was and the peculiar militaristic politics that he brought to the BPP as leader, see Cleaver, Eldridge, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*. (NY: Vintage Books, 1970); Cleaver, Eldridge, *Soul on Ice*, (NY: Dell Publishing, Inc., 1970).

<sup>197</sup> As previously mentioned in the text, monies were not always forthcoming for the Black Panther Party as it largely relied upon sporadic donations. Such economic realities placed Huey P. Newton in a particularly troubling position. That being, he was devoid of funds to hire an attorney to defend him against the state charges. See.,

---

Alamena Lomax and Tom Nash, "Huey Newton takes Stand, Says He's Destitute, Says Can't Pay Lawyer," *Oakland Post*, July 17, 1968; Cleaver, Eldridge, "Solidarity of the People's Until Victory or Death!" *The Black Panther*, 25 October 1969, pg. 12-13.

<sup>198</sup> Seale's work is particularly useful in explaining the planning and implementing of plans concerning the Newton trial. Seale relates the view that it was he and Cleaver who were the primary organizational instruments behind raising money for the trial through fees gained for speeches around the country. Seale is particularly clear concerning the critical role that Cleaver played concerning the alliances and support the BPP received from groups such as the Freedom and Democratic Party, Honkies for Huey, and Students for a Democratic Society. See Seale *Seize the Time*, pg. 201-210.

<sup>199</sup> *The Black Panther* served as a phenomenal mobilizing tool for the masses of Newton's supporters and sympathizers. Unwilling to stand for what they perceived to be the ultimate injustice, Panther supporters and sympathizers, both black and white, took to Bay Area streets in support of the embattled Panther leader. See., Dale Champion, "Why I'm Marching to Free Huey," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 17, 1968; "Free Huey, Free Huey" -- An Awesome Outburst," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 16, 1968; Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, p. 149.

<sup>200</sup> Although the fact that the BPP was able to develop and sustain *The Black Panther* throughout its existence has been applauded and admired by many, there was also a nasty undercurrent surrounding the methods utilized to ensure that the articles included in the paper were distributed in a timely manner. Elaine Brown goes so far as to relate members being beaten for late submission of items. See Brown, *A Taste of Power*.

<sup>201</sup> "Free Huey at the U.N.," *The Black Panther*, 14 September 1968, p. 3.

<sup>202</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 201-203.

<sup>203</sup> "A Letter from Eldridge Cleaver," p.1, Folder 25, Carton 12, SPM Collection.

<sup>204</sup> Central to this issue is an oft-unexplored question. That being, is the Black Panther Party a Black Nationalist organization or some other variant of extreme leftist thinking. The answer to such a query is not easily answered as the Panthers were different things at different times. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 69-70; Earl Anthony, *Spitting in the Wind*, (Roundtable, 1990) pg. 43-44.

<sup>205</sup> Huey P. Newton Files, Reel 8.

<sup>206</sup> The linkage of Black Panther Party members to the wealthy and famous of Hollywood is particularly poignant to the American masses. In relationships that are eerily similar to Harlem Renaissance era patronage arrangements between Black writers and wealthy whites, association with the Panthers and revolutionary politics appeared to be the fad of the moment. Most would be shocked to find out those who reached out, publicly and privately, to the Panthers. See., "Upper East Side Story," *Time*, January 26, 1970; Frank Murray, "Concern Grows on Private Armies," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, March 8, 1970; "Brando Turns Up at Seale Hearing," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 3, 1968; Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, p. 197; Jim Brewer, "Jane Fonda Takes Pulpit --- Her Revolutionary Credo," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 8, 1970.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> One of the most forceful advocates of such flawed thinking is former Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee leader and BPP member, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture'). Although the BPP attempted to work with Carmichael in advancing the movement forward, he flat out refused to work with white activist or organizations fearing that they would eventually take control and derail the advancement of the movement. Obviously, such a belief did not find a home within the BPP, which led to Carmichael's expulsion from the organization. See Cleaver, Eldridge, "An Open Letter to Stokely Carmichael," *Ramparts*, September 1969.

<sup>209</sup> "Eldridge Cleaver campaign committee, 1969" Folder 12, Carton 25, SPM Collection; Earl Anthony, *Spitting in the Wind*, (Roundtable, 1990) pg. 43-44.

---

<sup>210</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 172.

<sup>211</sup> . “What We Want Now! What We Believe” in John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier and Elliot Rudwick (eds.), *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 528.

<sup>212</sup> Huggins, John P., *The American Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 175-176.

<sup>213</sup> Although the alliance between the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party has received the majority of attention for scholars, the Panthers formed alliances with many other activist populations. See The National Office of the Black Panther Party “The Black Panther Party Stands for Revolutionary Solidarity,” *The Guardian*, February 1970; “On Developing a United Front with Communists” *The Black Panther*, 17 July 1969; Ray “Masai” Hewitt, “The Black Panther Party and Revolutionary Trade Unionism” speech given to the Revolutionary Labor Conference, *The Black Panther*, 4 May, 1969. To see organizations that were undoubtedly influenced by the Panthers and their Ten-Point Platform, see “Young Lords Party 13-Point Program and Platform,” *Palante*, Latin Revolutionary News Service; “Ten-Point Program and Platform of the Black Student Union” *The Black Panther*, 2 February 1969.

<sup>214</sup> “Proposed Constitution for the Alameda County Peace and Freedom Movement,” Folder: “Peace and Freedom Party – Area 1,” Carton 12 SPM Collection.

<sup>215</sup> It must also be noted that the Black Panther Party alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party was not a fleeting one. In fact, the P&FP selected the Black Panther Party’s Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, to run on its ticket for U.S. President. See, “Eldridge Cleaver for President” Bancroft Collection on Social Protest Movements, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley; “Position Paper on Coalitions,” Folder “Peace and Freedom Party – Area 1,” Carton 12, SPM Collection; Cecele Levinson, Fundraising Letter of Whites for the Defense of Huey Newton, April 1968, Bancroft Collection on Social Protest Movements, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley..

<sup>216</sup> San Francisco Express Times, 15 February 1968, Folder: “Newspaper Clippings,” Box 43, HPN Papers.

<sup>217</sup> Foner, pg. 16-17.

<sup>218</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 203-206. White radicals displayed their appreciation to the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton in a host of ways: financial support, position papers, progressive political stances upon race and gender, etc. Whites recognized that the ideological underpinnings of the Black Panther Party made the organization markedly different from the standard Black Nationalist organizations that had come to dominate the Black Power Era. Generally speaking, such groups couched their racial chauvinism, hypocrisy, and racism in narrow nationalist or cultural nationalist rhetoric and became a divisive agent in the battle to close and/or heal the racial divide. Towards displaying their progressivism, white radicals had planned to march to the Alameda County Courthouse, where Huey P. Newton was awaiting trial, to demand his release, visit with Newton, and “...express their support of Huey’s struggle for the liberation of black people and for his own life.” “April 23, Stop the Draft week,” Folder 8, Carton 2, SPM Collection.

<sup>219</sup> “Position Paper for Support of STOP THE DRAFT WEEK,” Folder “Founding Convention-Richmond, CA. March 1968,” Carton 12, SPM Collection. The above incident apparently took on a life of its own as the State sought to make an example of those incarcerated and their supporters took an oppositional position that committed them to preventing such an occurrence. W.J. Rorabaugh, in his work *Berkely at War, the 1960s* relates that the “Oakland 7” became movement martyrs as a result of their activities and subsequent arrest during the “Stop The Draft Week”. Such steadfast support of political prisoners would also find voice within the Black Panther Party with groups such as the Panther 21.

<sup>220</sup> “April 23, Stop the Draft Week,” Folder 8, Carton 2, SPM Collection.

<sup>221</sup> Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, pg. 171-172, 202-204. Huey P. Newton clearly realized that the “allure” of the Panthers as a revolutionary vehicle, in no way matched organizational capabilities. In fact, the Black Panther Party was no match for its opponents as it was presently composed. The Panthers had failed to achieve several of the most

---

important goals that would have taken it down the path towards being such a revolutionary vehicle. They had failed to politicize their membership to a point that they were now committed revolutionaries whom the title vanguard would be a fitting description. Additionally, there was the reality of an absence of a real committed cadre. Rather the Panther's were better described as a group of generally unorganized young people who were attempting to create revolution as they advanced.

<sup>222</sup> Although Newton was well meaning in his "drafting" of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) into the fold, the reality remains that Newton was woefully unaware of Carmichael's present Cultural Nationalist ideological position. A position that was wholly incompatible with the Panther's more sophisticated and nuanced posture. See., Huey P. Newton, *To Die For The People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, pg. 10-11; bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, p. 221; David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party*, p. 171.

<sup>223</sup> The debate between who should lead the Black Panther Party, Panther leaders or the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's Nationalist leaders was a source of great angst for Panther members. Particularly, as most Panther's clearly realized that SNCC's relevance to the entire struggle had been eclipsed by the Panther's. Please See., C. Gerald Fraser, "SNCC in Decline After 8 Years in Lead, Pace-Setter in Civil Rights Displaced by Black Panthers," *New York Times*, October 7, 1968; Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 211-223; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, pg. 528-531.

<sup>224</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, p. 218. It is indeed ironic that the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in its original form, one of inter-racial cooperation would have been a better fit for an alliance with the Black Panther Party than its most recent incarnation with Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) at the helm. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee had done an about-face on the issue race and inter-racial relations once Stokely Carmichael, and his Nationalist compatriots, had taken the organizational reins. Eldridge Cleaver cites the ascension of Carmichael to the chairmanship of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee as a positive moment in the Black liberation struggle as it signaled African-Americans taking control of their own organizations. In fact, Stokely is somewhat progressive in his position that inter-racial alliances are of some utility if white people "...go and organize in the white community and black people organize in the black community and when the white people develop something that is functional then we can have a coalition with them, a specific coalition for specific purposes." However, Cleaver would eventually abandon such a politic and adopt a racially chauvinistic perspective and refuse to work with whites at all, regardless of their political leanings, beliefs, or viability. It is this Carmichael that Huey P. Newton drafted into the Party, an obvious mistake as such postures seemingly fly in the face of all Black Panther Party politics.

<sup>225</sup> For information concerning Ella Baker and the development of the philosophy of a decentralized leadership group, see Grant, Joanne, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound*, (NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.,1998) pg. 105-214.

<sup>226</sup> Further evidence to support the view that Stokely Carmichael was on a totally different page from BPP leadership concerning the interracial nature of their struggle is evidenced in a tape that Newton made while still incarcerated to be played at the "Free Huey" celebration. On the tape, Newton deals specifically with the issue of whites being involved in the movement "Today should mark a new time for the TWO-REVOLUTIONARY forces in the country: the alienated white group and the masses of Blacks in the ghettos, who for years sought freedom and liberation from a racist, reaction-system. After approximately three years now that the Panthers have been organized, we have gained even closer relationships with our Latin American brothers, our Chicano brothers in the United States, and the Cuban people, and every other people who are striving for freedom...we must remember that we must never make excuses for such gatherings as this. Today we'll use the excuse of my birthday, but the real issue is the need to come together in unity and brotherhood." *The Black Panther*, March 3, 1969.

<sup>227</sup> Most astute political observers realized that SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), who was heavily influenced by principles of Pan-Africanism and race-first politico economic structures, was incapable of leading the Black Panther Party down any path that they desired to travel. In effect, Ture may have been the most prominent Black Nationalist on the scene during the late-sixties, however, such popularity did not cancel out the ideological diversity that was so apparent within the Black Power Era. For information detailing Ture's exit from the Black Panther Party, please refer to: "Carmichael Quits the Panthers --- Vicious" *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 4, 1969;



---

Clayborne Carson, SNCC, p. 282. Van Peebles, Mario, Ula Y. Taylor, and J. Tarika Lewis. *Panther: A Pictorial History of the Black Panthers and the Story Behind the Film*. (NY: New Market Press, 1995) p. 60.

<sup>228</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 223-228. It is clear that the Black Panther Party had already outgrown its status as a local police problem, particularly as it attempted to expand into a national organization. The alluded to expansion combined with the Panthers full embrace of Leftist, many would argue un-American, principles, theories, and goals made the Panthers a prime target for governmental control, censure, and destruction. Hence, it should not be shocking that Federal Bureau of Investigation memorandums regarding the need to prevent the proposed alliance between the Black Panther Party and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee are not only reality, but have fortunately surfaced. Within these memorandums, and others that detail plans to destroy the Black Panther Party, one finds some of the most wicked and venomous plans ever laid out by the U.S. Government and its officials. For a sampling of the memorandums detailing FBI plans to disrupt the Panther/SNCC alliance see., Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), pg. 127-128.

<sup>229</sup> As the FBI stepped up its campaign to disrupt the BPP through raids and arrests, the still-incarcerated Newton countered in March of 1968 by issuing Executive Mandate #3 that called for all members of the BPP to "acquire the technical equipment to defend their homes and their dependents." Newton, *To Die for the People*, 13.

<sup>230</sup> Huey P. Newton, *To Die For The People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, p. 11. Although some may consider Huey P. Newton's third executive mandate to be a call to arms so to speak, when viewed in its proper historical context, Newton's directive is the exact opposite. The catalyst for the mandate was first of all repeated, and unwarranted, intrusions of the dwellings of untold numbers of Black Panther Party members. In Newton's mind, and this also served as the introduction of this piece, the activities of officer's were eerily similar to the events of February 14, 1929, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre when warring gangs entered their rivals homes dressed as officers with the intention of killing everyone inside of the house. Newton felt that raids upon the Cleaver and Seale households were little more than either attempts to intimidate the Panther leadership and witnesses of the unprovoked illegal attacks or dress-rehearsals for an assassination attempt to come.

<sup>231</sup> Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg. 203-206, 274-288. Seale, a strong advocate of Charles R. Garry, refers to the attorney as the Lenin of the courtroom. Garry was instrumental in several trials of movement participants and always presented exemplary performances in the courtroom. Seale was highly critical of Black attorneys during this period in BPP history. For an example of Seale's criticisms of Black lawyers, see Seale, Bobby, "Black Lawyers are Jiving." *The Black Panther*, 18 May 1968, p. 5.

<sup>232</sup> Foner pg. 14-16. Although the battle being waged between the Panthers and their opponents focused upon who would represent Huey P. Newton in his trial appears to be an issue that could be easily settled, in reality, the issue and its solution had little to do with the trial. In this instance, the trial serve as the venue for a sub-discourse focused upon the ideological trajectory of the Black Panther Party, Cultural Nationalism, and the Panthers place, or lack thereof, in the politic commonly referred to as Black Nationalism. Unbeknownst to casual observers, there are a host of ideological differences to be found within those making up the Black Nationalist community. However, despite such acknowledged diversity there are several core beliefs that most Nationalist groups and adherents must possess. One of which, according to Cultural Nationalists, is the desire to advance the concept of Blackness at every turn. Hence, the Panthers refusal to participate in such inherently racist, xenophobic, and short-sighted political activities placed them totally outside of the realm of what was or was not acceptable within the Black Nationalist community. To the Panther's credit they stood steadfast in their position that the highly questionable and contestable concept of "race" must not be the sole motivating factor in our behavior, visions, and decisions. It would be this inability to permit differing, if not rival, versions of Nationalism that would be exploited by opponents for the good of destroying the entire Nationalist movement.

<sup>233</sup> *The Black Panther*, November 23, 1967. Eric Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, pg. 15-16. Earl Anthony, *Spitting in the Wind*, (Roundtable, 1990) pg. 43-44.

<sup>234</sup> "BPP Ministry of Information Bulletins 1968-1969," Folder 8, Carton 18, SPM Collection. The Black Panther Party's leadership was clearly aware of the power of the media and the need to get the masses mobilized behind their cause during the moments leading up to Newton's trial. Towards solidifying such relationships, the Black

---

Panther Party not only encouraged citizens to attend the trial, and records highlight that they attended by the hundreds on a daily basis, but the Panthers also sought to inform the powers that be that the people were behind their leader Huey P. Newton. "We know the people are with Huey – we must let the court and police know it too. Following the arraignment, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense will hold a people's court on the front steps of the Courthouse."

<sup>235</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, pg. 201-206.

<sup>236</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, pg. 240-241.

<sup>237</sup> Sara Blackburn, *White Justice: Black Experience Today in America's Courtrooms*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1971). p14.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid

<sup>239</sup> Sara Blackburn, *White Justice: Black Experience Today in America's Courtrooms*. p. 43.

<sup>240</sup> The antics of Oakland Police Department officers were fairly representative of the tenor of interactions with the actions and policies of departments throughout the nation. It was not uncommon for officers, in the name of law-and-order, to break the law in their pursuit of eradicating the Black Panther Party from the face of the other. See., "Two Cops Jump Gun in Alleged Panther Headquarters Shootup," *Oakland Post*, September 11, 1968; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 245.

<sup>241</sup> Toledo Blade Newsclips, Toledo Public Library, Radical File

<sup>242</sup> The BPP undoubtedly contributed to US officials' tendency to see the BPP as a threat to national security. For example, the furor against the war in Vietnam infected the BPP as organizational leadership consistently called for Black soldiers to resist participation in the affair. See Cleaver, Eldridge, "Letter to My Black Brothers in Vietnam," *The Black Panther*, 2 May 1970, p. 10B; Cleaver, Eldridge, "Statement to GIs in South Vietnam," *The Black Panther*, 26 September 1970, p. 14; "On Establishing a United Front with Communists," *The Black Panther*, 17 July 1969. Newton offered troops to the National Liberation Front and Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam as assistance in their fight against American imperialism. Deputy Commander of the South Vietnamese People's Liberation Armed Forces, Nguyen Thi Dinh, accepted the offer, thanked Newton, and promised to call for Newton's troops when necessary. *The Black Panther*, 19 January 1971.

<sup>243</sup> *The Black Panther*, March 23, 1968. For the Panther's this trial was not simply about an early morning shooting between a citizen and officers. They perceived it to be in their best interests to portray the conflict as a measure of the utility of the American Constitution, particularly as it intersected the concept of "race". The Panthers propagated through one of their Ministry of Information Bulletins that "what is being decided in Huey's case is whether a black man has the right to defend his life against the attacks of the racist dog police who come into our communities all day and night to brutalize, terrorize, intimidate, harass, and murder black people...Clearly the bullet was not fired solely because of the traffic arrest. The trigger was pulled centuries before Huey Newton was born, and the bullet has been aimed at the same target for hundreds of years...." "BPP Ministry of Information Bulletins, 1968-69," Folder 8, Carton 18, SPM Collection.

<sup>244</sup> Such a charge resonated throughout the entire protest movement as many Blacks were unable to reconcile the staunch oppositional position that the BPP occupied, with its willingness to work with the very population it perceived as its oppressor. Regardless of the socialist theory that the BPP attempted to instill in the Black community, many were never able to get beyond the color complex that has been such an inextricable fixture in American life.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Robert, Black Awakening In Capitalist America, (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969)
- Aptheker, Herbert, American Negro Slave Revolts, (New York: International Publishers, 1969)
- Barbour, Floyd B., Ed., The Black Power Revolt, (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1968)
- Baruch, Ruth-Marion & Jones, Pirkle, The Vanguard, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970)
- Berry, Mary Frances, Black Resistance, White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism In America, (New York: Penguin Books, 1994)
- Black Panther Party, The Black Panther, May 1967 – December 1972, Published by the Black Panther Party (Available on Microfilm from The Ohio State University Underground Collection)
- Blackstock, Nelson, COINTELPRO, (New York: Pathfinder, 1988)
- Bracey, John H. Jr.; Meier, August & Rudwick, Elliott (ed.), Black Nationalism in America, (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970)
- Brietman, George (ed.), By Any Means Necessary Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970)
- Brown, Elaine, A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992)
- Brown, H. Rap, Die Nigger Die, (New York: The Dial Press, 1969)
- Button, James W., Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation In American, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967)
- Carson, Clayborne, In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s, (London: Harvard University Press, 1981)

- 
- Carson, Clayborne, Malcolm X: The FBI File, (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1991)
- Chevigny, Paul, Cops and Rebels, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972)
- Churchill, Ward & Wall, Jim Vander, Agents of Repression, (Boston: South End Press, 1988)
- Cleaver, Eldridge, Soul On Ice, (New York: Delta Books, 1968)
- Cleaver, Eldridge, "Malcolm..." The Black Panther, May 19, 1970
- Cleaver, Eldridge, Post-Prison Writings and Speeches, (New York: Random House, 1967)
- Cohen, Robert Carl, Black Crusader: A Biography of Robert Franklin Williams, (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, 1972)
- Cook, Fred J., The F.B.I. Nobody Knows, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1964)
- Cronon, E. David, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969)
- Cross, Theodore, The Black Power Imperative: Racial Inequality and the Politics of Nonviolence, (New York: Falkner Books, 1987)
- Cruse, Harold, Rebellion or Revolution, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1968)
- Davis, Angela, If They Come In The Morning, (New York: The Third Press, 1971)
- Draper, Theodore, Black Nationalism, (New York: Viking Press, 1969)
- Erikson, Eric H. & Newton, Huey P., In Search of Common Ground, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973)
- Fanon, Frantz, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York: Grove Press, 1963)
- Farmer, James, Lay Bare The Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement, (New York: Penguin Group, 1985)
- Foner, Philip (ed.), The Black Panthers Speak, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970)
- Forman, James, The Making of Black Revolutionaries, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1972)

- 
- Garrow, David J., The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr., (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981)
- Heath, G. Louis, Off The Pigs: The History and Literature of the Black Panther Party, (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976)
- Hornung, Rick, 'The Last Caged Panther,' The Village Voice, 9.19.89:10.
- Jackson, George, Blood In My Eye, (New York: Random House, 1972)
- Kelley, Robin D.G. Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and The Black Working Class, (New York: The Free Press, 1994)
- Lightfoot, Claude M., Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation, (New York: International Publishers, 1968)
- Lincoln, C. Eric, The Black Muslims In America, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961)
- Lockwood, Lee, Conversation With Eldridge Cleaver: Algiers, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971)
- Major, Reginald, A Panther Is A Black Cat, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971)
- Mann, Eric, Comrade George, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972)
- Marine, Gene, The Black Panthers, (New York: Signet Press, 1969)
- Meier, August & Rudwick, Elliott, Black Protest in the Sixties, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970)
- Morris, Aldon, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change, (New York: Free Press, 1984)
- Newton, Huey P., Revolutionary Suicide, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973)
- Newton, Huey P., To Die For The People, (New York: Random House, 1972)
- Newton, Huey P., War Against The Panthers: A Study of Repression In America, (Santa Cruz, California: Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, June 1980)
- NY Panther Twenty-One, Look For Me In The Whirlwind: The Collective

- 
- Autobiography of the New York Twenty-One, (New York: Random House, 1971)
- O'Reilly, Kenneth, Racial Matters, (New York: The Free Press, 1989)
- Payne, Charles M., I've Got The Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)
- Pearson, Hugh, The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power In America, (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994)
- Perry, Bruce, Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America, (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1992)
- Pinkey, Alphonso, Red, Black and Green, (Cambridge University Press)
- Robinson, Cedric J., Black Movements In America, (New York: Rutledge, 1970)
- Scott, Maurice, Jr., Panther Genesis, (Nashville, Tennessee: Aurora Press, 1970)
- Seale, Bobby, Seize The Time: The Story of The Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991)
- Seale, Bobby, "Revolutionary Action On Campuse and Community", The Black Scholar, December 1969:4
- Shakur, Assata, Assata: An Autobiography, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987)
- Smith, Baxtor, Secret Documents Exposed: FBI Plot Against the Black Movement, (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1974)
- Stern, Sol, "The Call of the Black Panthers," New York Times Magazine, August 6, 1989.
- Stuckey, Sterling, The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972)
- Tsetung, Mao, Selected Readings From The Works of Mao Tsetung, (Peking, China: Foreign Languages Press, 1971)
- Tsetung, Mao, Five Articles By Chairman Mao Tsetung, (Peking, China: Foreign Language Press, 1972)
- U.S. Congress, 91<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, House of Representatives, Committee on Internal Security, Black Panther Party Hearing, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1970.

---

U.S Congress, 92<sup>nd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Senate, Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, Nutrition and Human Needs, Part 1, School Breakfast Program Survey, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972)

U.S. Riot Commission, Report of The National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders, (New York: Bantam Books, 1968)

Warren, Mac (ed.) Education For Socialists, Independent Black Political Action, 1954-78, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1982)

Waskow, Arthur I., From Race Riot to Sit-In 1919 and the 1960's, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966)

Williams, Robert F., Negroes With Guns, (Chicago: Third World Press, 1973)

Zimroth, Peter L., Perversions of Justice: The Prosecution and Acquittal of the Panther 21, (New York: Viking Press, 1974)