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**THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
MYTH AND REALITY**

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This pamphlet was written by a group of employees, students and faculty on strike in the Harvard Medical Area in order to

-- dispel the distorted views and irrational fears of the Black Panther Party fed to the public by the government, the police and the news media;

-- show that the Black Panther Party is working to meet the basic needs of the people; it is a real threat only to those whose profits result from the exploitation of the people;

-- support the Black Panther Party against the nation-wide campaign of political repression and help the People's Free Health Movement initiated by the Black Panther Party as a concrete, humane and revolutionary program serving all people.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
MYTH AND REALITY

THERE IS ONE TRADITION:

Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government.

Declaration of Independence, 1776
Black Panther Party, 1967.

AND THERE IS ANOTHER:

The streets of our country are in turmoil. The universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting.

Communists are seeking to destroy our country. Russia is threatening us with her might and the republic is in danger. Yes, danger from within and without.

We need law and order.

Adolf Hitler, 1932.

ARE THE PANTHERS RACIST ?

Many people have accused the Black Panther Party of being a black racist or separatist organization. But in fact, Bobby Seale, the Party chairman, has plainly stated that "The Black Panther Party is not a black racist organization." The Panthers make alliances with white groups who work to overthrow all forms of racism or repression. For example, the Panthers sponsored the United Front against Fascism which included mainly white liberals and radicals. The Black Panther Party has rejected the black separatist or cultural nationalist notion that makes no distinction between racist whites and non-racist whites.

Most of us have concluded that since we support the concept of black equality and since we don't hate blacks then we're not racists. But to a black who spends every day under the moral, spiritual, and physical oppression of the ghetto, any person who does not actively work for absolutely equal opportunity for all people is a racist. The Black Panther Party's goal is to insure the basic human rights of land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace.

The Panther Party's leaders have many times indicated that they are not anti-white. In answer to Stokely Carmichael, Huey Newton (founder of the Black Panthers) said, "I would say that until you get rid of racism -- racism is a psychological theory that stems all the way back to England and Europe and in general -- no matter what kind of economic system you have, black people will still be oppressed. Eldridge Cleaver another leader of the Panther Party, said:

... it makes no sense to holler for freedom for the black community and have no interconnection with white groups who also recognize the need for fundamental change. It's by coalition that we intend to bring together all the elements for liberation ... I'm not saying most white people don't have racist attitudes. They do, because the values taught in this country inevitably result in whites having racist attitudes. But I think a lot of whites are made racists against their essential humanity and without their conscious knowledge.

When asked about revolution, Cleaver responded:

I've said that war will come only if these basic demands (Panther's 10 points) are not met. Not just a race war, which in itself would destroy this country, but a guerilla resistance movement that will amount to a second Civil War, with thousands of white John Browns fighting on the side of the blacks we think there is a hostile core of

whites, particularly young whites, who are very alarmed at the course this country is taking. They recognize that more than freedom is at stake --- They are turning into a revolutionary force, and that's why we believe the Black Panthers can enter into coalitions with them, as equal partners ... That will depend on what is done against us and on whether real change can be accomplished non-violently within the system. We'd much rather do it that way because we don't feel it would be a healthy situation to have even black revolutionaries going around distributing justice. I'd much prefer a society in which we wouldn't have to use -- or even carry -- guns, but that means the pigs would have to be disarmed too In the meantime --- we're faced with a situation in which our survival is at stake.

In his recent book Seize the Time, Bobby Seale, chairman of the Black Panther Party, said:

If people want to integrate -- and I'm assuming they will fifty or one hundred years from now -- that's their business. But right now we have the problem of a ruling-class system that perpetuates racism and uses racism as a key to maintain its capitalistic exploitation. They use blacks, especially the blacks who come out of the colleges and the elite class system, because these blacks have a tendency to flock together toward a black racism which is parallel to the racism the KuKlux Klan or white citizens groups practice.

We, the Black Panther Party, see ourselves as a nation within a nation, but not for any racist reasons. We see it as a necessity for us to progress as human beings and live on the face of this earth along with other people. We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism.

Those who want to obscure the struggle with ethnic differences are the ones who are aiding and maintaining the exploitation of the masses of the people; poor whites, poor blacks, browns, red Indians, poor Chinese and Japanese, and the workers at large.

Racism and ethnic differences allow the power structure to exploit the masses of workers in this country, because that's the key by which they maintain their control. To divide the people and conquer them is the objective of the power structure.

What the Black Panther Party has done in essence is to call for an alliance and coalition with all of the people and organizations who want to move against the power structure.

All of us are laboring-class people, employed or unemployed, and our unity has got to be based on the practical necessities of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, if that means anything to anybody. It's got to be based on the practical things like the survival of people, and people's right to self-determination, to iron out the problems that exist. **S**o in essence it is not all a race struggle.

BLACK PANTHER PROGRAMS - SERVING THE PEOPLE

"We maintain that no human should be made to suffer so that a few can profit; all people are entitled to the highest life we as people can provide." B. P. P.

All the Black Panther Party programs are people's programs, initiated and designed to meet the needs of the people. A lot of people misunderstand the politics of these programs; some people have a tendency to call them reform programs. They are not reform programs; they're actually revolutionary, community, socialistic programs -- set forth by revolutionaries, by those who want to change the existing system to a better system.

FREE BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM: initiated by the B. P. P. in about forty cities across the country, this program feeds thousands of children every month and is supported by donations of food and money from businessmen and other concerned individuals inside and outside the community.

FREE HEALTH CLINICS: these serve the people in the communities on a very practical level through free medicine and medical care.

FREE CLOTHING PROGRAM: the B. P. P. solicits donations of new clothing from businessmen and distributes it to school age children.

DECENT HOUSING COMMITTEES: the B. P. P. has established new Tenants' Grievance Committees or cooperated with existing groups to assist the people in getting their homes fixed up by the landlords so that they are fit for living.

VOTER REGISTRATION: the primary objective is to increase the number of ghetto people serving on juries, so that defendants from the community may indeed be tried by juries composed by their peers.

FREE LEGAL SERVICES: established in conjunction with community centers to handle both civil and criminal cases for the people of the communities; also, Legal Defense Funds attempt to provide bail and defense costs for the many B. P. P. members throughout the country who are on trial or awaiting trial.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: Liberation schools supplement the education received from existing institutions and educate young people to the fact that the revolutionary struggle is not a race struggle but a class struggle. Political Education classes are held in evenings at community centers, and black caucus.

within labor unions, educate and inform other members of the union of actions that can be taken to improve the living and working conditions of all lower class working people, both employed and unemployed. Also, the weekly newspaper, BLACK PANTHER, plays an invaluable role in the community.

COMMUNITY CONTROL OF POLICE: a petition drive for community control of police is being started throughout the country, since this is one of the most functional and necessary programs to make others work.

BLACK PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM AND PROGRAM

What we want

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

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.

We believe that black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will prote

ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

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 Second Amendment to 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.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

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.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man: of the black community".

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major 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.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

ARE THE PANTHERS BEING SYSTEMATICALLY REPRESSED?

Recently, a Harvard faculty member received the following letters in response to his public announcement that he was turning over a \$1,000 prize he had received to the Panther Free Clinic and the Panther New York 21 Defense Fund:

You stupid idiot - I hope you are shot by one of these guns.

It will be pleasant and interesting to listen to the death gurgle in your throat after one of your beloved black panthers has slashed it. These savages, these evil things of filth, hate, terrifying crime, with these you find kinship? Your name and attitudes are anathema to decent people who will live to celebrate your death.

Why do people react this way to the Panthers? Let's look at some of the headlines that frequently confront us when we read our newspapers and magazines:

1. "HOW THE BLACK PANTHERS PREACH VIOLENCE" (Cover headline, Saturday Evening Post, April-May, 1967).
2. "ARMED INVASION OF LEGISLATURE BY PANTHERS" (San Francisco Chronicle, May 3, 1967).
3. "2 PANTHERS DIE IN POLICE BATTLE" (Boston Globe, December 5, 1969).
4. "LOS ANGELES PANTHERS FIGHT 300 POLICE" (Boston Globe, December 9, 1969).

What are the stories behind these headlines?

1. The article to which this advertising headline referred turns out, in fact, to be a sympathetic description of the defensive nature of the Panthers' activities.
2. Members of the Panther party had gone to Sacramento with their guns to protest the introduction of an anti-gun law (termed the "anti-Panther bill") by an Oakland legislator. This was not an invasion and the carrying of guns into the legislature was not illegal!
3. This headline referred to the deaths of 2 Illinois Panther leaders, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, in a pre-dawn police raid in Chicago. A subsequent story in the New York Times, December 7,

entitled "The Black Panther Toll is Now 28", contradicts the implications of the above headline:

An inspection of the 5 room first floor apartment did not seem to square with the police accounts of a torrid gun battle. Most of the walls were not scarred with the bullet and shotgun marks one would expect of a shootout. There were no bullet marks around the 2 doors through which police said they entered. There were no bullet marks in the kitchen and dining room. There were a lot of bullet marks where the Panthers were shot.

Most of Chicago's white community accepted the police version of the affair. Some white and many blacks, including hundreds who toured the wrecked apartment, did not believe the police.

State's attorney E. V. Hanrahan, however, issued a statement which said "We wholeheartedly commend the police officers for their bravery, their remarkable restraint and their discipline in the face of this vicious Black Panther attack and we expect every decent citizen of our community to do likewise".

Five months later, the seven Panthers arrested at the time of the raid were released because, according again to State's attorney Hanrahan, "there was not sufficient proof that any of the defendants had fired a weapon at the police". (New York Times, May 9, 1970.)

Finally on May 15, a special Federal Grand Jury in Chicago charged that the police report of the incident "was so seriously deficient that it suggests purposeful malfeasance" and that it "had grossly exaggerated the Black Panthers' resistance". While obtaining evidence that the police had "fired from 82 to 99 total shots", there was evidence for only one shot from a Panther gun! (New York Times, May 16, 1970).

4. This headline refers to a raid by the police on a Panther headquarters, which was "part of a 3-way-move against facilities of the Panther Party on Los Angeles' South side" "Officers said the raids . . . stem from an incident last week when Lt. Ted Morgan went to Panther headquarters to ask that a loudspeaker blaring a Panther's speech be turned lower".

It may be noted that these "battles" represent police attacks on Panthers, not vice versa. These distortions in media representations of incidents involving the Black Panther Party have created an atmosphere

of hate and fear of the Panthers in a large segment of the white community.

There is, however, a growing conviction in parts of the white community that the federal government and local police are conspiring to eliminate the Black Panther Party. The ACLU has stated that "the Black Panthers have been subjected to illegal police harrassment and denied constitutional rights". (Boston Globe, December 29, 1969.) Cecil F. Poole, a black Justice Department attorney, resigned in January from his government post, saying "They're out to get the Black Panthers". (Boston Globe, January 14, 1970.) "Seattle Mayor Wes Ulman says he turned down a federal proposal for a raid on Black Panther headquarters in Seattle" stating that "a great many people are having second thoughts about midnight gestapo type raids". (Boston Globe, February 9, 1970.)

A group including Ralph Abernathy, Julian Bond, Mrs. Leonard Bernstein, Ewart Guinier (Chairman of Afro Studies at Harvard), Nat Hentoff and Murray Kempton are sponsoring a "Committee to Defend the Panther 21" in New York. They accuse the government and local police of carrying out "search and destroy operations against the Black Panther Party". They cite the trial of the 21 as "part of the nationwide effort to destroy the Black Panther Party and with it the momentum of the Black Liberation struggle and other protest movements in this country".

Leading Democrats including Arthur Goldberg and Ramsey Clark have formed a "commission to investigate allegations of a national extermination plot against the Black Panthers". Goldberg said "The fatal shootings in Chicago on December 4 and the raid in Los Angeles on December 8 underlines the sobering assertion by Black Panther spokesmen that, within the past 2 years, as many as a score of Black Panthers have been killed by law enforcement officers". (Boston Globe, December 16, 1969).

There are numerous other cases where Black Panthers have been killed or arrested under doubtful circumstances. The facts in these cases may never be clarified because, as Yale's Kingman Brewster has pointed out, it is virtually impossible for Black Panthers to get a fair trial in America today. This is of course not an isolated instance of judicial suppression of an unpopular group - the world may never know the facts about the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

Another element in the repression of the Panthers is a routine harrassment which has become a fact of daily life for Panthers all over the country. Police stop Panthers on every pretext, arrest them in connection with any ghetto crime, hold them for the maximum time,

and often release them without charge. Although any trials resulting from these charges most often result in acquittals, these tactics very effectively keep the Panthers out of circulation and deplete the meager funds of the Party with bail and legal fees.

WHY ARE THE PANTHERS BEING REPRESSED ?

1. The Black Panthers have attempted to organize the community around self-defense. This represents a threat to the police, who maintain their oppressive hold over the black community, and thus to the white power structure which depends upon the passivity of the black community.

2. Other groups which are black nationalist, such as the Black Muslims, are not subject to these attacks. The Black Panther policy of allying with white radical and working class groups raises the spectre of a Black-White coalition. Attempts to form such coalitions have historically represented a strong threat to the established order, and have consequently been viciously suppressed by the Establishment.

3. The Black Panthers have been successful in mobilizing support within the black ghettos;

A Wall Street Journal sampling of opinion among black citizens in four metropolitan areas across the nation (New York, Cleveland, Chicago and San Francisco) indicates a clear majority of blacks across the nation strongly support both the goals and the methods of the Black Panthers. An even larger percentage believes, moreover, that police officials are determined to crush the party by arresting or killing its key officials.

(Boston Globe, January 27, 1970)

4. These threats to the Establishment, their success in the black community, the socialist politics of the Black Panther Party, and the racist attitudes of the government and white people in this country, make the Black Panther Party a prime target for political repression.

In Germany they came for the Communists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me - and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Niemoeller

THE PANTHERS AND VIOLENCE

The Black Panther Party was organized in 1966 to protect the black community of Oakland, California against the illegal, arbitrary and violent actions of the police. With this aim in mind, the Panthers originally called their party the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The Panthers armed themselves legally for protection and have only advocated violence as a last resort to defend themselves and their community.

In so doing the Panthers have remained scrupulously within the law. In the so-called violent history of the BPP it is difficult to find one verified incident in which the Panthers assumed the role of aggressors. In fact the report of the President's National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence "credits the Panthers with helping keep Oakland cool after the King assassination." (Boston Globe, December 16, 1969)

The respective roles of police and Panthers in violent confrontations is well illustrated by the raid of Chicago police on Panther headquarters in December 1969 described earlier in this pamphlet. It is exactly this sort of unpunished police onslaught with which Panthers and other blacks have had to deal which has forced them to arm for defense.

But the Panthers have never encouraged purposeless violence and have resisted any inclination to it. The Chairman of the Party, Bobby Seale, put it quite explicitly:

"Some brothers would come into the Party, and see us with guns, and they related only to the gun. But one of the things the Party did from the very beginning was to sit them down and politically educate them. . . (In this way) the brothers would understand that we had guns not for foolish criminal activity . . . , but for self-defense since there's so much brutality and murder unjustly committed on the part of the cops against black people." (Seize the Time, p. 365).

What of the rhetoric that labels the police as pigs? Huey Newton, founder and Minister of Defense of the BPP, stated clearly the purpose of this approach when the Panthers initiated it:

"This defining of the police as pigs will hopefully make some of them think, and oppose what the racists in the police departments are unjustly doing. It will

spread to millions and millions of people who know that the cops are "pigs" and will hopefully generate some political movement for real community control of the police. The police departments are acting like the old German Gestapo who the world called 'swine', which is the same as 'pig'. (Seize the Time, p.405).

The rhetoric like the guns is a calculated response to police violence.

We have also heard such statements as "kill the pig" or "we will kill Richard Nixon." It may be difficult for us to imagine, but consider the effect of the systematic persecution and harrassment, the police murders of Panthers and the media distortion of their positions on a Panther member; how it would be nearly impossible to react in any other way than with violent rhetoric. "We can call it a metaphor. It is the language of the ghetto. This is the way we relate." (David Hilliard, Panther quoted in Boston Globe, December 29, 1969). A few comments of the white Kent State students printed in the New York Times of May 11 may give us an indication of how we might react to just a single case of senseless slaughter:

"Later on I called a guardsman a 'pig' and then I felt better.

".... he and his friends are bringing guns back to school because they said if a guardsman comes after them, they'll kill him."

Perhaps, the clearest brief statement of the Panthers attitude to violence is contained in part of an interview with Eldridge Cleaver, BPP Minister of Information, by Nat Hentoff:

"In everything you say, there are the intertwining themes of vengeance and forgiveness, of violent revolution and nonviolent social reform; and that leads to a good deal of confusion among many whites as to what the Black Panthers are really for. On the one hand, you write of the coming holocaust and of bodies littering the streets. And yet the day before you wrote that article, you were at a junior high school in Oakland, where the black kids had decided to burn down the school in anger at the murder of Dr. King, and you talked them out of it. Similarly, you and other Panthers speak of a black revolutionary generation that has the courage to kill; yet when a group of seventh and eighth graders at another Oakland school tried to emulate what they thought the Panthers stood for by turning into a gang and beating up other kinds, several Panther leaders went to the school at the invitation of the principal and told the

kids they were in the wrong bag. The Panthers advice was for black youngsters to study hard, so that they could be in a better position to help their brothers. They also told them not to hate whites but to learn to work with them. Which is the real Black Panther philosophy?"

Eldridge Cleaver: There is no contradiction between what we say and what we do. We are for responsible action. That's why we don't advocate people going around inventing hostilities and burning down schools and thereby depriving youngsters of a place to learn. What we do advocate is that hostilities in the black community be focused on specific targets. The police are a specific target. As I said before, we are engaged in organizing black communities so that they will have the power to stop the police from wanton harassment and killing of black people. And that also means self-defense, if necessary. Beyond that, it means getting enough power so that we can have autonomous black departments of safety in black communities. We have the courage -- and the good sense -- to defend ourselves, but we are not about to engage in the kind of random violence that will give the pigs an opportunity to destroy us. We are revolutionary, but that means we're disciplined, that we're working out programs, that we intend to create a radical political machinery in coalition with whites that will uproot this decadent society, transform its politics and economics and build a structure fit to exist on a civilized planet inhabited by humanized beings.

I'd much prefer a society in which we wouldn't have to use -- or even carry -- guns, but that means the pigs would have to be disarmed, too. In the meantime, as long as this remains an unjust and unsafe society for black people, we're faced with a situation in which our survival is at stake. We will do whatever we must to protect our lives and to redeem the lives of our people -- without too much concern for the niceties of a system that is rigged against us.

Eldridge Cleaver, Post-Prison Writings.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its powers in such forms, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Useful addresses

Black Panther Party of Boston
375 Blue Hill Avenue
Roxbury, Massachusetts. 442-0100

Committee to Defend the Panther 21
37 Union Square West - 4th Floor
New York, New York 10003 (212) 243-2260

Harvard Medical Area Strike Committee
RE4-3300 Extension 389
681
679
722

Recommended Reading

Seize the Time - Bobby Seale, Random House - 1970

The Black Panthers - Gene Marine, Signet - 1969

Soul on Ice - Eldridge Cleaver

Autobiography of Malcolm X - Grove Press

Post Prison Writings - Eldridge Cleaver

Black Panther Party Newspaper
3106 Shattuck Avenue
Berkeley, California.

