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"Some Abstract Thing Called Freedom": Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Legacy of the Black Panther Party

The idea was obviously twofold for the specific purpose of serving those people who were directly benefited by our programs. But also secondarily, to influence the minds of people to understand not only that the Black Panther party was providing them this, but more importantly, that if they could get food, that maybe they would want clothing, maybe they'd want housing, maybe they'd want land and maybe they would ultimately want some abstract thing called freedom.

—Elaine Brown, quoted in *Eyes on the Prize*, episode 3, "Power! (1966-1968)"

A Revolution in the Unmaking of the Black Panther Party

In a 1956 speech, Martin Luther King, Jr., warned, "Always avoid violence. If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in your struggle unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos" (1).

King's engagement of the issues of violence and legacy are instructive when one considers the long dominant interpretation of the civil rights movement and its relationship to the Black Power movement. Lauded for their sustained commitment to nonviolence, organizations such as King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have received privileged attention. Long dismissed as little more than an angry reaction to the slow pace of progress associated with the civil rights movement, groups and individuals associated with the Black Power "phase" of the movement stand accused as "prophets of rage" whose lack of a moral center and violent posturing helped to curtail the civil rights era.

Perhaps no group is more closely identified with this legacy than the Black Panther Party (BPP). Founded in Oakland, California, in 1966, the BPP rose to prominence as the most radical of the black militant organizations. In 1968, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover called the BPP the "single greatest threat to the internal security" of the United States. By 1971, at least in the minds of the members of the House of Representatives Committee on Internal Security (the reincarnation of the House on Un-American Activities Committee), the Panthers' moment of influence had passed. Speaking for the committee, North Carolina Congressman Richardson Preyer made what at first blush appears to be an overly generous assessment of the influence of the BPP whom he proclaimed, "fascinated the left, inflamed the police, terrified much of America, and had an extraordinary effect on the Black community." "Even moderate Blacks," he concluded, "who disagreed with their violent tactics, felt that the Panthers served a purpose in focusing attention on ghetto problems and argued that they gave a sense of pride to the Black community" (2).

Behind the scenes, however, fear proved the motivation behind this backhanded praise. As the committee prepared its report in August 1971, members were especially cognizant of the importance of their findings in shaping the legacy of the BPP. In an appended summation to the final report, Preyer lobbied his fellow representatives for an account "in the spirit of fairness and balance," to avoid "any possibility of reviving a flagging Panther Party by making available the charge of 'oppression.'" Despite bitter debate, Preyer's position won out. The final document sprinkled tempered remarks over a tacit warning. "Regardless of the fate of the BPP as an organization," it read, "knowledge of its wellspring sheds great light on groups of similar origin, which are now arising or may be formed in the near future in the Nation's inner cities" (3).

Four representatives, John Ashbrook of Ohio, Roger Zion of Indiana, Fletcher Thompson of Georgia, and John Schmitz of California, challenged the committee's conclusions in a minority report. Castigating the document's treatment of the BPP's relationship with the Communist Party as "grossly inadequate," the dissenters further concluded that "in tone and emphasis," the report was "unfair" not only to "to the police and to the American people," but "especially to blacks who have to cope with Panther crime and violence" (4).

Manifestations of these two perspectives of the BPP's legacy continue to shape discourse on the party with a chorus of apologists and detractors contributing to a large body of literature advancing some variation of the two, each of which in their own way pronounce the party as a failure. The first maintains that while the Panthers did achieve some good, particularly in the realm of raising black pride, they were a dangerous and unlawful element that warranted federal attention. The second characterizes the BPP as little more than "a subversive criminal group, using the facade of politics and Marxist-Leninist ideology as a cover for crimes of violence and extortion" (5).

The latter view of the BPP received its fullest expression in journalist Hugh Pearson's 1994 book, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America*, which dismissed the party as little more than a media creation that fed its own demise in an orgy of pathological behavior and violence. Given the popular civil rights master narrative, Pearson's account of the party's violent history conformed to historical memory that blames Black Power militants for replacing nonviolent social movements with urban rioting and organized violence. In scholarly and popular discourses that seek to ex-

Black Panther Party reunion, Oakland, California, 2006. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.)

plain the 1960s, the Panthers represent the proverbial "black sheep" of the era whose celebration of retaliatory violence ultimately doomed them to failure.

A vocal chorus of journalists, scholars and ex-Panthers have challenged this view with decidedly mixed results (6). October 2006 marked the fortieth anniversary of the BPP's founding. On its previous anniversaries pundits, police officials and ex-Panthers were trotted out and expected to perform according to what has become the accepted script. That is, the FBI was wrong for harassing the party, but the party invited violent retribution through provocative rhetoric and a confrontational posture.

The publication of dozens of books since the appearance of *The Shadow of the Panther*, and a half dozen more around the BPP's fortieth anniversary is part of a larger field of scholarship devoted to chronicling the Black Power era. However, even as this scholarship recasts our understanding of Black Power, the discussion of its legacy remains mired in outdated models. To some extent the problem is inherent in the venue in which most of this discussion is taking place. Like all "public history," given the dictates of memory and the notions of a usable past, there is an expectation that the BPP story follow narratives that privilege the southern nonviolent civil rights struggle. As Panther cofounder Bobby Seale insisted in a 2006 interview, "Our legacy is one of social-change activism that was probably one of the most profound grassroots anti-institutionalized racism messages." "The Black Panthers," added Clarence Walker in the same article, "represented that phase of Black Power that believed black people should be armed and defend themselves and turn away from the nonviolent resistance movement" (7).

The field that historian Peniel Joseph has characterized as "Black Power Studies," provides fertile ground for analysis and reinterpretation of the problematic Civil Rights/Black Power dichotomy. Curiously, the subtitle of Pearson's *Shadow of the Panther* was "the Price of Black Power in America," but besides reporting many of the misconceptions about the movement and by extension the party, Pearson's fundamental misunderstanding of the Black Power movement proved a major impediment toward an objective reassessment of the group. This same distortion and devaluing of Black Power as an independent movement has left ex-Panthers, scholars, and the media scrambling to define its legacy ever since. Take for instance, the words of former Panther chief of staff David Hilliard who complained during a campaign for the Oakland city council in 1999 how the BPP remained "probably the most misun-

Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party and presidential candidate for the Peace and Freedom Party, speaking at the Woods-Brown Outdoor Theatre, American University, Washington, D.C., 1968. (Image courtesy of Library of Congress, LC-U9- 20018-9A.)

derstood organization in the history of the civil rights movement." He continued, "You know about our imagery and about our guns . . . but you don't know about the (community) programs" (8).

The debate over the Panthers' legacy is certainly not a new phenomenon, but one that has evolved over the last four decades. In 1983, for example, Oakland Mayor Lionel Wilson praised the BPP for the part it played in his 1977 election. "I think the Panthers, as leaders in an activist program," he observed, "brought to the attention of many people many of the inadequacies in terms of race relations and how minorities had been treated." "That," he concluded, "is their real legacy" (9). Panther scholars balance such insightful praise against the party's more popular reputation as a murderous gang of cop hating thugs, who managed to dupe the white left into following them down a path of destructive violence and revolutionary theater. Yet the BPP never espoused blanket antiwhite racism as their critics allege. Instead, they formed alliances with white radicals even as they touted an armed revolution and promoted community service programs. The group's well publicized confrontations with law enforcement reinforce the view of the party as primarily a self-defense unit while ignoring its multifaceted approach to political revolution. Ex-Panthers, at times, have contributed to this misconception. Heralded in the early days of the party as its primary legacy, the BPP's stand on armed self-defense was viewed by many supporters as a badge of honor. Consider, for example, BPP cofounder Bobby Seale's take on Panther police relations in a 1983 interview: "They wounded 60-odd of us," Seale explained but "we wounded 32 of them." "I think the reason we killed less and wounded less," he continued was "because they had . . . more equipment" (10). Presently ex-Panthers seem less inclined to engage that history. "We didn't want to shoot anybody," Seale noted in a 1997 speech at Allegheny University, "Our objective was to capture the imagination of the people in our community" (11).

Until very recently accounts of the party tended to fall between what Ebony Utley describes as vilification and hagiography. In order to excavate the origins of the historical Black Panther Party one must consider its relationship not just to the civil rights movement but also to Black Power and its influence in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the process, we can tease out the BPP's larger significance to Black Power and ultimately gain a better understanding of their contributions and legacy to postwar freedom struggles (12).

Origins

Shortly before the formation of the Oakland BPP, in 1966, *The New York Times* reported the activities of "an amalgamation of militant, youth oriented Negro groups" preparing a protest against Harlem schools. Their demands included the hiring of black faculty and the addition of African American history courses. Among the participants, which included the New York chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was the Harlem-based Black Panther Party. Declining to confirm anything more than the existence of a Harlem branch, an unidentified representative explained the group's agenda. "Harlem is the spiritual and historical home of the Black man in America," said the spokesman, it's "only natural that a Black Panther Party be established here" (13).

Modeling themselves after the SNCC inspired political party founded in Lowndes County, Alabama, the Harlem Panthers interpreted a critical difference in their mission. In Lowndes County, where blacks constituted nearly 80 percent of the total population the possibility of attaining political power was a distinct reality. North and west of the Mason Dixon line the Panthers argued that blacks required strategic alliances to harness political power and facilitate the creation of long-lasting institutions. The political overtones of the party coupled with its connection to Stokely Carmichael (whose 1966 call for Black Power fueled fears about black separatism and violence) also raised its profile among other militant groups operating in the city. Rumors even linked Carmichael directly to the formation of the Harlem chapter (14).

In less than a year the Harlem Panthers and dozens of other groups, like them (invoking the symbol of the Black Panther) would be eclipsed by a West Coast incarnation sporting the same name, the Oakland Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Founded in October 1966, the Oakland BPP became the hub of the Panther movement and later, through the sanctioning of chapters, a national organization. As it sought organizational control of these chapters, it encountered problems. Fiercely independent and at times more oriented to local issues and politics, individual chapters proclaimed an unspoken allegiance to an earlier tradition of black radicalism that predated the BPP and relied heavily on black nationalism and pan-Africanism (15).

Two important factors ultimately distinguished the Oakland Panthers from the other BPP groups. One was the codification of their ideas and agenda into a ten-point program and second was their focus and participation in community service, in particular their newspaper and later their survival programs (a copy of the ten point program is

printed on pages 39-40). While a commitment to armed self-defense was certainly important to those who joined their ranks, the BPP's legacy goes beyond issues of violence.

Two events indelibly shaped the BPP's public image even as it propelled the group into becoming a national organization. The first occurred on May 2, 1967, when about thirty Panthers accidentally interrupted a session of the California Legislature in Sacramento in an effort to protest an impending gun bill that the group viewed as being anti-Panther. As Jane Rhodes has observed, "The press beyond the San Francisco Bay Area knew little or nothing about the Panthers, leading them to search for categories to construct a media frame." They settled on guns, ignoring political implications of the Panther march that were both larger and more subtle. Within a few weeks, the guns would be gone despite the media's persistent referencing of them. Nevertheless, the violent image would dominate the second incident, the first reported Panther-police confrontation where shots were actually fired, resulting in the death of an Oakland police officer, the injury of another, and the serious wounding of Huey Newton (16).

Newton's arrest for murder focused national attention back on the party in Oakland. Newton's subsequent murder trial helped make him an international cause célèbre allowing him and other Panther leaders a much larger platform from which to expound their views. Motivated by a combination of the party's action-oriented politics and the desire to capitalize on the publicity from the trial, Panther minister of information Eldridge Cleaver turned the opportunity into a media bonanza and an organizational boon. Meanwhile, even as Cleaver captured the national spotlight via fiery polemics and his best-selling book *Soul on Ice*, less glamorous Panthers such as Ericka Huggins and Audrea Jones initiated community service plans, including breakfast for children and legal assistance programs as well as community health clinics that were the hallmark of Panther chapters in communities across the nation (17).

Despite their local origins, the BPP soon spread across the nation. The ten-point program provided new chapters with a blueprint for achieving Black Power in local settings. Couched as a wish list of sorts, the ten-point program offered a uniform statement of the goals and aspirations of the black community. In shifting the debate away from more abstract concepts such as absolute equality before the law and economic justice to more concrete questions like police brutality, a racist criminal justice system, and the need for community action, the Panthers were uniquely situated to communicate a radical political agenda. With major news outlets, political pundits, and public officials struggling to define Black Power, the Panthers articulated a clear set of objectives. As the Panthers summed it up in 1966 and 1972 respectively, "We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace" and "people's community control of modern technology" (18).

The Panthers' roots in the era's Black Power politics are evident in the party's approach to foreign affairs. By the late 1960s the Panthers were treated as important players on the international stage. U.S. domestic and international law enforcement agencies along with military intelligence took the Panthers' foreign travels seriously. Called upon to help mediate the standoff between officials and prisoners at Attica Prison in 1971, Bobby Seale may have been exaggerating when he claimed that the Panthers could secure political asylum for prisoners in Asia (North Korea and North Vietnam) and Africa (via Algeria and Congo-Brazzaville). However, the federal government and the Attica inmates did not take him lightly. After all, the BPP had established important contacts with political leaders in all of those nations and thus the Panthers, like Malcolm X before them, could legitimately speak not only about the global nature of oppression, but also their participation in a worldwide freedom struggle against racism and colonialism (19).

Domestically, the BPP's efforts were equally important. Jeffery Ogbar has written about the Panthers' "Rainbow Radicalism" that extended to other poor and minority groups including the Puerto Rican Young Lords and the American Indian Movement. In doing so, the Panthers developed a cross-racial and international appeal that helped spread Black Power globally (20). Huey Newton and Bobby Seale found their voices as political activists, intellectual theorists, and community organizers via the Black Power movement rather than conventional civil rights struggles. Thus, to appreciate the full legacy of the Panthers requires a comprehensive understanding of the Black Power era (21).

In their conscious engagement with Third World independence movements, the Panthers illustrated an earnest desire not simply to reform the system but to transform American society. . . . [T]he Panthers' real significance and legacy is to be found here, not among the thorny road of civil rights failures, dreams deferred, and radicalism gone wild, but among the lilies of community responsibility, self-determination, and community control, in the hopes of delivering "power to the people"

In emphasizing such important goals as community service and institution building, and in laying out both a nationalist and internationalist agenda, BPP members embraced Black Power's ethos of radical self-determination. "Ultimately," as Peniel E. Joseph explains, "black power accelerated America's reckoning with its uncomfortable, often ugly racial past. In the process, it spurred a debate over racial progress, citizenship, and democracy that would scandalize and help change America" (22).

The Black Panther Party was an important part of this process. In their conscious engagement with Third World independence movements, the Panthers illustrated an earnest desire not simply to reform the system but to transform American society. This is perhaps the most significant part of their legacy in helping America realize "some abstract thing called freedom" (23). In the final analysis, the Panthers' real significance and legacy is to be found here, not among the thorny road of civil rights failures, dreams deferred, and radicalism gone wild, but among the lilies of community responsibility, self-determination, and community control, in the hopes of delivering "power to the people" (24). ❑

Endnotes

1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from "Paul's Letter to American Christians," Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Nov. 6, 1956, Montgomery, Alabama, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/vol3/561104.000-Pauls_letter_to_American_Christians,_Sermon_at_Dexter_Avenue_Baptist_Church.htm>; On the Black Panther Party, see Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (1970; Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1991); Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon, 1992); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*

(Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall, Violence and the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006); Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2005); Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Panthers in New Haven* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1998); William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-75* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1994); Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Robert O. Self, "To Plan Our Liberation: Black Power and the Politics of Place in Oakland, California, 1965-1977," *Journal of Urban History* 26 (September 2000): 759-92; Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., "Black Power Studies: A New Scholarship," *Black Scholar* 31 (Fall/Winter 2001).

2. Richardson Preyer's comments recorded in "Gun Barrel Politics: The Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," *Report, Ninety-second Congress, first session, together with minority views and a summation by Richardson Preyer.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971): 92-470.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. For a short critique of Pearson's interpretation of the Black Panther Party, see Errol A. Henderson, "The Lumpenproletariat as Vanguard?: The Black Panther Party, Social Transformation, and Pearson's Analysis of Huey Newton," *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (November 1997): 171-99; for a more detailed discussion of Pearson's work in light of more recent scholarship, see Joseph, ed., "Black Power Studies: A New Scholarship," *Black Scholar*; see also Joseph's introductory essay in, Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-25.
7. Bobby Seale and Clarence Walker quoted in "Black Panthers' legacy at 40, Survivors cite oft-forgot ideals, accomplishments," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 11, 2006.
8. This was an associated press article which appeared among other places as "Ex-Black Panther has same message, new method," *The Chronicle Telegram*, Elyria, OH, January 31, 1999.
9. "Black Panthers are no longer prowling the cities streets," *The Daily Intelligencer*, Doylestown, PA, October 12, 1983.
10. Ibid.
11. "He's Looked at life from Both Sides Now," *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse, NY, January 31, 1997.
12. Ebony Utley, "Between Vilification and Hagiography, The Black Panther Party," conference paper, The Black Panthers in Historical Perspective, Wheelock College, June, 2003.
13. "3 Harlem Schools Facing Boycotts," *New York Times*, August 26, 1966; "Black Panthers Picket A School," *New York Times*, September 13, 1966.
14. Ibid.
15. On the origins of the Black Panther Party see references in note 1, especially, Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour*; Williams and Lazerow, *In Search of the Black Panther Party*; Jones, *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*; Austin, *Up Against the Wall*; Williams, *Black Politics/White Power*; and Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*.
16. Jane Rhodes, "Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord: The National Press and the Black Panther Party," *Harvard International Journal of Press Politics* 4.4 (1999): 95-118.
17. Despite the machismo and sexism often associated with the party typified by a scathing rebuke of the BPP offered by Alice Walker in a 1993 op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, women made up a significant portion of the membership of the party and exercised important leadership roles. In his fascinating essay on the New Bedford BPP, "A Rebel All his life, The Unexpected Story of Frank Grace," in *In Search of the Black Panther Party*, Jama Lazerow, for instance, briefly discusses the leadership of Audrea Jones, who was the head of the Boston Chapter of the BPP. Women played a vital role in the day-to-day functions of the party from political education classes to the community programs. For Walker's critique, see "They Ran on Empty," *New York Times*, May 5, 1993 and Brown's trenchant response, "Attack Racism, Not Black Men," ibid; for a perspective that seems to follow Walker, Breines, "Observation: Sixties Stories' Silences: White Feminism, Black Feminism, Black Power," *NWSA Journal* 8 (1996); On women in the BPP see Angela LeBlanc-Ernest, "The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job:' Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982." In Charles Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press: 1998); Tracye Ann Matthews, "'No One Ever Asks What a Man's Place in the Revolution Is': Gender and Sexual Politics in the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1998); Monica Marie White, "Panther Stories: A Gendered Analysis of the Autobiographies of Former Black Panther Members" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1998). The complex nature of Panther gender relations, detailed in Elaine Brown's autobiography, and treated most carefully in Tracye Matthews' dissertation, continued to be a subject of interest to scholars, though not necessarily historians. For example, Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000). See, too, from another angle, Steve Estes' discussion of manhood and the Panthers in *I Am A Man! Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
18. *The Black Panther*, Nov 23, 1967; revised program printed in T*he Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*, May 13, 1972.
19. On the Black Panthers foreign travels and influence abroad, see Yohuru R. Williams, "American Exported Black Nationalism: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and the Worldwide Freedom Struggle, 1967-1972," *Negro History Bulletin* 60 (July-Sept. 1997): 13-20; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
20. Take for example a manifesto written by a group calling themselves the Israeli Black Panthers in 1972. Although the group claimed to have only taken the name after their movement was compared to the Panthers in the United States, their politics betray the influence of the Panthers and by extension Black Power abroad. As they explained, "anyone who thinks the Black Panthers will be content with distributing milk to the needy and making a little noise will be disillusioned . . . our aim is to bring about a social revolution in this country and build a society so far unparalleled anywhere in the world . . . ." "We must reach a position," they continued, "from which we can combat the regime side by side with the Arabs and the oppressed. Only we Panthers can build a bridge to peace with the Arabs on the basis of combating the regime." On the issue of the use of violence they observed as did Malcolm X and later the Black Panthers, "The laws of the State protect the regime, not the citizen. Therefore we have been obliged to employ violence against violence." "The Black Panthers," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1 (Summer 1972): 146-47; see also, "The Origin and Development of the Israeli Black Panther Movement, "*MERIP Reports* 49. (July 1976): 19-22; Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "Protest Politics in the Israeli Democracy," *Political Science Quarterly* 90 (Autumn 1975): 497-520; for an interesting contemporary view of the civil rights and Black Power Movements positions on the Arab Israeli conflict see Lewis Young, "American Blacks and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2 (Autumn, 1972): 70-85; on the Panthers links to the struggles of other racial and ethnic groups see Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar "Rainbow Radicalism: The Rise of the Radical Ethnic Nationalism, in Joseph, *The Black Power Movement*, chapter 8; for the BPP's connection with Asian Americans, see Daryl J. Maeda, "Black Panthers, Red Guards, and Chinamen: Constructing Asian American Identity through Performing Blackness, 1969–1972," *American Quarterly* 57.4 (2005): 1079-1103; for the Panthers influence on Maggie Khun and the Gray Panthers see my introductory comment, "Black Panther, White Tigers, Brown Berets, Oh My!," *In Search of the Black Panther Party, 183-90*.
21. Rhodes, "Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord; for a longer discussion, see Professor Rhodes engaging new book, *Framing the Black Panthers*, (New York: The New Press, 2007); on the Panthers and the media in the late 1960s and

early 1970s, see Edward Morgan, "Media Culture and the Public Memory of the Black Panther Party," in Lazerow and Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party* and Michael E. Staub, "Black Panthers, New Journalism, and the Rewriting of the Sixties, *Representations*" 57 (Winter, 1997): 52-72.

22. Peniel Joseph, "Black Power's Powerful Legacy," *The Chronicle Review* 52 (July 21, 2006), B6-8.
23. Robin Kelly and Earl Lewis, *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2000).
24. For an opposing view of the Panthers legacy and historical significance, see Jama Lazerow, "Race, Class and Power to the People," in Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* forthcoming from Duke University Press. Professor Lazerow contends, and I partially concur, that the Black Panthers defy classification solely as a Black Nationalist group or a Black Power group primarily because in politics and style they represented what he describes as "a radical departure . . . in composition, tactics, and, ideology" who through their efforts "made the 1960s a far more radical time than it might have been, not just for the black liberation movement but for resistance movements generally." While there is definite value in this argument particularly with regard to Lazerow's assertion that the Panthers always privileged class over race, it speaks more to the party's place in history rather than their legacy. If history can be narrowly defined as the record of what an organization did or accomplished; legacy is often defined as what it leaves behind. Thus while history is an integral part of legacy, legacy can transcend history. Legacy, unlike history, is not measured in successes and failures; it is measured in lasting ideas that transcend time and space. The standard definition of the term as "something that is handed down from a predecessor" is instructive here. As the Panthers have sought to identify their legacy not only in terms of their lineage but their lasting contributions to the American social and political fabric, the Black Power Movement offers more fertile ground for a reassessment of their overall significance to the advancement of American freedom, democracy and even the importance of class. The Panthers most often expressed their consciousness about class in their willingness to work with other organizations similarly situated. Like Malcolm X, they were consciously internationalist in their worldview, another hallmark of the Black Power movement. Thus while they were an important part of the history of both movements and they drew strength and inspiration from both, arguably the most important thing they left behind was a blueprint for revolutionary social change particularly at the community level rooted in Black Power.

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