

Ballots or Bullets: Militant Movements of the 1960s

An Honors Thesis
by
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Richard Neel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

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Abstract

Many people believe that the black militant movements of the 1960s were all about “getting whitey”, burning cities, and carrying guns. While some militants had this mentality, the reality is that the majority just wanted change in American society and an end to the racism and discrimination that blacks had faced since the founding of the nation. A group that is especially misunderstood is the Black Panther Party. Following a brief background of the Civil Rights Movement, an introduction to “Black Power” and the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers are discussed in their roles in both the United States and Australia.

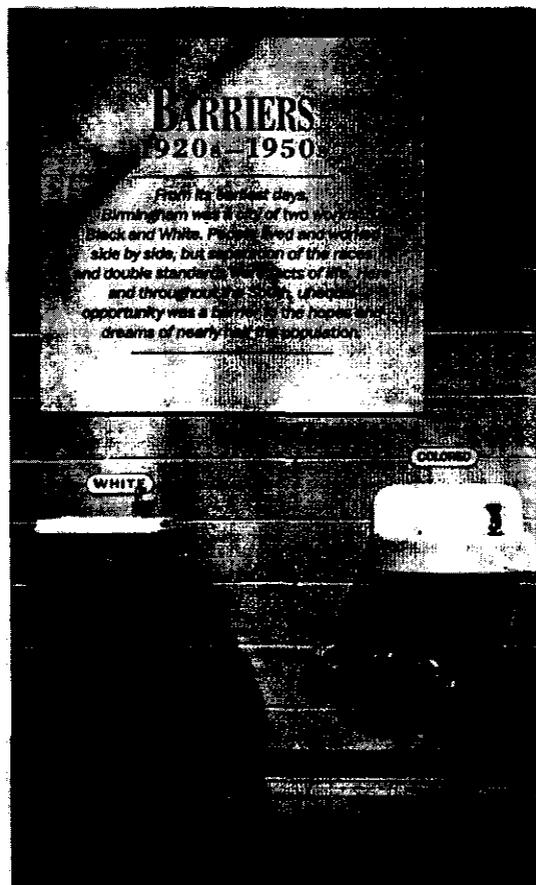
Thank you, Dr. Neel, for keeping me motivated,
Dave, for keeping me militant, and
Paul, for keeping me company.

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Acknowledgement

Amidst all the social and racial fervor of the 1960s, many approaches were taken to challenge the state of racial relations within the United States. Black militant movements, especially the Black Panther Party, expressed a need for a more active involvement of the African-American community in making change in America. Often thought of as the dangerous radicals, militants did not always advocate violence and separation from whites. There were different levels of militancy, with a plethora of diversified militant groups. There were civil rights workers, who worked nonviolently for change; militants, who wanted radical change; and extremists who wanted to sever all ties with the white man.¹ One of the most well known of the militant groups of the 1960s was the Black Panthers. Frequently, the Panthers are thought of as “angry black men with guns”; while these men and women were often angry, usually carried guns, and always black, their main goal was not to induce fear and violence within the community. The Panthers wanted change.

There has been a long history of oppression of blacks in the United States. When a group feels it is unwanted by the system sometimes turn outside the system and go to extremes, which in this case, was militancy. From slavery to Jim Crow, black men and women had been seen as everything from chattel property to second-class citizens. For over three hundred years blacks had suffered in America; people wanted change, and they wanted it fast. In the 1950s, the Civil Rights movement gained momentum and pushed for change, but some felt that the societal advances were too slow and something new was needed. Others had always thought that the peaceful movements of the early Civil Rights movement would never achieve anything. There were many other reasons for joining the militant movement, but one thing is sure, the people in the Civil Rights

movement and the militants that followed them all wanted some sort of revolution. Blacks needed to capitalize on the fact that though they were a minority in the United States, their minority was larger than most of the nations of the world and that they played a role in the American system and therefore could disrupt that system. American democracy was based on the exploitation of another race, and the nation was the “first and only country which, having freed its slaves legally, by proclamation, by law and in the courts, then continued to enslave them and deny them equal rights on the basis of their color.”²



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Thomas Jefferson wrote, “all men are created equal”, but “it took 335 years, from 1619 to 1954, before an effort was made to extend the definition of manhood to blacks.”⁴ In 1954, the Supreme Court decided that the doctrine of “separate but equal” which was

set under *Plessy v Ferguson* was inherently unequal in the landmark *Brown et al. v Board of Education of Topeka et al.* civil rights case. Charles Houston, a Howard University law professor, sparked this stage of legalism in the civil rights movement, with Thurgood Marshall arguing many of the cases. In 1955, *Brown II* was released and said that desegregation was to take place “with all deliberate speed.” Then in December of 1955, Rosa Parks’ refusal to vacate her seat on a bus started the 40,000-passenger boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system and rocketed Martin Luther King, Jr. to national prominence. From the Montgomery bus boycott, the Civil Rights movement gained momentum and pushed for the enactment of change. The Southern Christian Leadership Council is just one example of a group that was committed to the advancement of civil rights in a peaceful way. In 1963, the March on Washington was one of the largest political demonstrations to that point and was also one of the first events broadcast live around the world.⁵ Even the nonviolent approach to civil rights was not respected. Diane Nash, the wife of one of the SCLC leaders, was sent to prison for teaching nonviolence to young people. Though she was pregnant, she refused bail, stating that “since my child will be a black child, born in Mississippi, whether I am in jail or not he will be born in prison.”⁶

The black civil rights movement was sometimes thought of as the “second American Revolution” and brought injustice to the forefront.⁷ One of the frequently used types of protest of the nonviolent movement was the student sit-ins at lunch counters across the south. Many Woolworth lunch counters saw the strength of these young volunteers refusing to leave a lunch counter because of their race. The Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a major coordinator of these sit-ins and would later play a part in the Black Power movement that emerged in 1966.

In 1964 the Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination in voting, public accommodations, and employment. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act banned voter examinations and provided for federal registrars to be sent to recalcitrant counties. These two laws together gave blacks the rights they already had as citizens but had been denied because of Jim Crow laws. In 1898, Alfred Waddell was running for mayor of Wilmington, North Carolina and told the whites of that town to, “go to the polls tomorrow and if you find the Negro out voting, tell him to leave the polls, and if he refuses, kill him.”⁸ The American way of life applied only to the white man, no matter how much ability or education a black man had, he could only get the menial jobs and the poor housing that was dilapidated while the white man kept advancing to new and better things. These Civil Rights movements achieved many goals for African-Americans, but some people, especially the militants, thought that the advances were coming too slow. Blacks had been denied participation in the American Dream for too long.⁹

A few days after the Voting Rights Act was signed into law in August 1965, rioting broke out in the Los Angeles, California neighborhood of Watts. Sparked by police brutality, six days of violent rebellion ensued in which 14,000 National Guardsmen were sent in. Thirty-four people were killed, thirty-one of them were black; one thousand people were seriously injured and four thousand were jailed.¹⁰ President Johnson commented on the rioting, saying that, “A rioter with a Molotov cocktail in his hands is not fighting for civil rights any more than a Klansman with a sheet on his back and a mask on his face. They are both more or less what the law declared them to be:

law-breakers, destroyers of constitutional rights, and liberties, and ultimately destroyers of free America. They must be exposed and they must be dealt with.”¹¹

Something needed to galvanize the movement, that thing was militancy.

Although things were being accomplished in the Civil Rights movement, they weren't happening fast enough. Oddly enough, one of the important militant movements came from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The leader of SNCC, Stokely Carmichael, realized that blacks needed a new call to action, and popularized the term “Black Power”. The phrase was not new, in 1872 Frederick Douglass urged the National Colored Convention to use “black moral and political power” to correct problems.¹² In the 1940s, when Tennessee blacks wanted the governor to appoint blacks to the State Draft Board, he replied: “This is a white man's country...the Negro had nothing to do with the settling of America.”¹³ Ideas of what “Black Power” meant varied amongst and within the races. Some saw it as a way for blacks to gain prominence in the community and influence in their own lives, some saw it as reverse racism, and some saw it as hatred of anything white.

Charles Evers, brother of Medgar,¹⁴ believed that the “Black Power” slogan sounded like it was calling for “black domination” rather than equality between blacks and whites. In June of 1966 in Greenwood, Mississippi, at the “Meredith March Against Fear” rally, reporters heard the term “Black Power” and took the slogan as a turn from nonviolence and the ideas of Martin Luther King to violence that was best expressed by SNCC and Stokely Carmichael. This view assuaged that the civil rights movement was split and dying. Personally, King was opposed to the phrase “Black Power” because it

implied violence to the press and the public, but he supported the idea of blacks becoming more involved in their communities and taking an active role in society.¹⁵

But “Black Power” was an ideology; it meant different things to different people and could constantly change, according to the needs of the movement.¹⁶ According to Stokely Carmichael,

Black Power was ...a call to action, a call for organization, for consciousness raising. Its concreteness was expressed by dangerous, grassroots campaigns for voting rights in the South, countless meetings, memos, study groups, alliances erected and dismantled, its growth and change, the business of raising and spending money, jail time, street time, hospital time, friendships formed and shattered, press releases and world tours, its birthing of SNCC, the bodies and minds sacrificed, the songs, poems, narratives, and fashions it generated, its failures and successes that radically transformed the lives of so many.¹⁷

This idea that black people could do things for themselves was a revolutionary idea and only black people could present this idea, if it came from the whites it would not prove anything.¹⁸ For blacks to achieve this power they need to have full incorporation into decision-making practices that involve their communities and lives; without such authority, blacks could not achieve “Black Power”. When he was arrested for the twenty-seventh time, Carmichael said he wasn’t going to jail anymore and that the only way to stop the white men from oppressing blacks was to take power. It was time for talk to turn to action. Floyd McKissick commented, “1966 shall be remembered as the year we left our imposed status as Negroes and became *Black Men*...1966 is the year of the concept of Black Power.”¹⁹ Blacks needed to reclaim their identity, unite, and create a sense of identity.²⁰ The common visualization of the movement was the raised fist of solidarity. At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised the black power salute while the Star Spangled Banner played. The world watched as these two men blatantly protested the practices of the nation they were representing.²¹



In June of 1967 Stokely Carmichael was drafted into the Black Panthers and H. Rap Brown succeeded him as the chairman of SNCC. Brown saw America as preparing for a war amongst the races and wanted black people to be ready to defend themselves. He had stated two years earlier that he wanted to “keep as much pressure on the honkies as ever.”²³ He was quoted as saying that, “If you can’t give a gun, then give a dollar to somebody who can buy a gun” to fight in the revolution that he felt was coming.²⁴

One early example of how black power was being used was in 1965 in Lowndes County, Alabama. With a population of 15,000, there were 12,000 blacks, not one of which was registered to vote. When the Selma to Montgomery march came through, Stokely Carmichael promised to return and help organize local blacks; he kept his promise and returned the next day. Lowndes County was one of the first places to get federal registrars to enforce the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Blacks needed a new party to vote for because the chairman of the Democratic Committee in Lowndes County had been federally accused of evicting black tenant farmers who had registered to vote. The party they developed was the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), organized

by Carmichael. They adopted the symbol of the black panther because the symbol of the Democratic Party in Alabama was a strutting white rooster with the words “White Supremacy for the Right.”²⁵ The chair of the LCFO, John Julett said they symbolized the party with a black panther because it is an animal that “when it is pressured it moves back until it is cornered, then it comes out fighting for life or death. We felt we had been pushed back long enough.”²⁶ In twenty months, 3,900 blacks had been registered to vote, a political party had been formed, and seven members ran for election, all of which was important, since before not even one black had been registered to vote.²⁷ However, the Black Panthers in Lowndes County did not get any blacks elected in 1966, even though they were 80% of the population in the county.²⁸

Another way that some blacks expressed their ideas, which were frequently deemed militant, was through the Nation of Islam. Wali Ford Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam claimed to be a prince of Mecca and the original “Afro-Asiatic black man of the tribe of Shabazz, first humans and creators of civilization” who had come to release his people from the bondage of white America.²⁹ Blacks needed to escape the “mental poisoning” of the “blue-eyed devils.” He created a program for self-development that gave suggestions on how to live in society with whites.

“We must stop relying upon the white man to care for us. We must become an independent people. So-called Negroes should:

1. Separate yourselves from the ‘slave master.’
2. Pool your resources, education and qualifications for independence.
3. Stop forcing yourselves into places where you are not wanted.
4. Make your own neighborhood a decent place to live.
5. Rid yourself of the lust of wine and drink and learn to love self (sic) and your kind before loving others.
6. Unite to create a future for yourself.
7. Build your own homes, schools, hospitals, and factories.
8. Do not seek to mix your blood through racial integration.

9. Stop buying expensive cars, fine clothes and shoes before being able to live in a fine home.
10. Spend your money among yourselves.
11. Build an economic system among yourselves.
12. Protect your women.”³⁰

Elijah Muhammad did not see why black people needed whites and did not want any association with them since, in his opinion, the white man had constantly tried to oppress blacks. For some blacks this made them feel that they were men in every sense of the word because they could be independent of and even reject white society.³¹ Elijah Muhammad wanted a black nation within the United States and told Black Muslims to be ready for hate and violence from whites and to prepare themselves to return the same attitudes.³²

Malcolm X emerged from the Nation of Islam and quickly overshadowed Elijah Muhammad. Due to his charismatic interactions with the people he was able to make blacks conscious of militancy.³³ Malcolm did not tolerate nonviolence and wanted self-defense and revenge against the Ku Klux Klan and any other white terrorist groups.³⁴ In his opinion, "Freedom is gotten by ballots or bullets. These are the only two avenues, the only two roads, the only two methods, the only two means – either ballots or bullets." One has to speak the language of whom he is speaking to, and if that language is violence, then one must learn the language of violence.³⁵ The Black Muslims, according to Malcolm, were not anti-white people, they were anti-oppression. It just so happened that the oppressor was white.³⁶

When some SNCC activists visited New York from Mississippi, Malcolm X told them that the problem of race relations needed to go beyond the jurisdiction of the United States because the government would only act to improve the lot of the black man if there

were outside pressures or a problem in their image abroad.³⁷ Some people had said that race relations were only a problem in the South and should be dealt with by those states that had problems, but Malcolm pointed out that the nation is one place and racism is not an issue of just one area.³⁸

Taking inspiration from some of the other militant movements, in October 1966 two young militants, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California.³⁹ The party referenced the symbol of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, which had been formed six months earlier in Alabama. The name was later shortened to Black Panther Party to broaden the base of the group to things larger than just self-defense.⁴⁰ The Panthers created a Ten Point Program called, “What We Want, What We Believe”, which laid the basic structures of party ideology. Newton said that the party was structured after the Black Muslim program without the religion. He was very impressed with Malcolm X and the program that he followed, but then became disillusioned with the Muslims after Malcolm X was assassinated in February 1965. Newton said that he had not been following Elijah Muhammad or the Muslims, but Malcolm X;⁴¹ Newton was also influenced by men such as Mao Tse-tung, and Fidel Castro.⁴²

One of Huey Newton’s main goals was to destroy racism and end all forms of slavery, having every man be his own master. He also wanted to destroy capitalism because he felt that it could be blamed for everything that is wrong in society and that socialism was a precondition for any kind of freedom. He said that the Black Panther Party is the people’s party, alluding to the socialist and communist ideas that he admired.⁴³ One of the intellectual influences of Huey Newton was Robert F. Williams’

Negroes With Guns. Williams had been a favorite of Malcolm X and spoke at the Nation of Islam temple number seven whenever he was in New York. A friend of revolutionaries such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, Williams was a proponent of matching violence with violence, Williams pointed out that rattlesnakes were immune to moral appeals, as were white terrorists in the South.⁴⁴

The Panthers first gained national attention on May 2, 1967 when thirty Panthers, including six women, marched on the California State Capital wearing black leather jackets and tams with guns and bandoliers in protest of a bill that made carrying firearms illegal. Because of this propensity for guns, the Panthers tended to attract people with criminal records, so they had a record of reforming former criminals, and all the ex-convicts made the Panthers seem, in many people's eyes, to be a group of thugs.⁴⁵ They were gearing toward sterner action, and although small in number, the Panthers were large in influence.⁴⁶ Across the country, the influence of the Black Panther Party was spreading as blacks in forty-eight states formed chapters of the party.⁴⁷ Because they gained such extraordinary attention, the Panthers tended to overshadow other militant groups.⁴⁸

The Black Panthers had strict rules about not committing crimes against other blacks, using firearms unnecessarily or being under the influence of any substance while doing party business. Panthers were also instructed on the platform of the party and how to keep in contact with headquarters. There were also instructions that upon being arrested only to give ones name and address and no other information until a Panther lawyer was present. There were also rules about politeness, such as returning things that are borrowed, not swearing at people, not damaging property of the poor, and being

respectful of women.⁴⁹ The Panthers were opposed to rioting and expressed willingness but work with white groups as a way to fight class oppression and racism, but only if it was on an equal basis.⁵⁰

One of the white groups that the Panthers were willing to work with was the White Panthers, supported by Abbie Hoffman. In one of many writings, Hoffman noted his idea of the purpose of violence, which fit well with the Panther view, by stating, “Every rock or Molotov cocktail thrown should make a very *obvious* political point. Random violence produces random propaganda results. Why waste even a rock?”⁵¹ Association with white radicals might seem to be against the goals of the Black Panthers, but as Lester Julius, a major supporter of Black Power pointed out, “White is not in the color of the skin. It is a condition of the mind: a condition that will be destroyed. It should be possible for any white radical to yell ‘honky’ as loud as a black radical. ‘Honky’ is a beautiful word that destroys the mystique surrounding whiteness.”⁵²

One of the most well known activities of the Black Panthers was the “Free Huey” campaign of 1967. In October, Newton and Gene McKinney were driving through Oakland when they were pulled over by police officer John Frey. After Newton handed Frey his license and registration, a second squad car arrived and officer Herbert Heanes got out. It is not officially known what happened next, but Newton got a bullet in the stomach, Heanes received several wounds, Frey was killed, and McKinney escaped unscathed. On November 13, Newton was charged with the first-degree murder of Frey but was convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter. This led to the “Free Huey” campaign that the Panthers waged.⁵³ In July of 1970, the manslaughter charge was overturned and Newton was released.⁵⁴

During the “Free Huey” campaign, the Panthers stretched their political muscle by joining with SNCC to create a political party in 1968. Called the Peace and Freedom Party they put a candidate, Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, on the November presidential ballot. He obtained 195,134 votes, but most people were realists and knew that Carmichael would not get elected, but it made the point that a Black Panther could run for president.⁵⁵

As a way to stress the importance of involvement in the local community, the Black Panther Party had community information centers from which they ran many neighborhood programs. They had community political action classes, liberation schools, voter registration, community news reports, student action committees, legal aid, a community “pig” watch, and breakfast programs for children. These actions were intended to inform the community of what was happening and what the people could do about it. It was very important for the Panthers to let black people have a say in their own communities, be it through voting, taking charge of community improvement projects, or policing the police. Many of the police departments in Oakland and around the nation had animosity against the Panthers, but Bobby Seale pointed out that there was a difference between a police officer and a “pig”. If a police officer respects a person’s constitutional rights and doesn’t unjustly beat and murder citizens, then he is not a pig. A pig is the one who violates these constitutional rights.⁵⁶

Some people believed that because of their violent image, the Black Panthers never built a solid base within the black community outside of Oakland.⁵⁷ Even if that is the case, there was much media coverage of the Panthers, even in Hollywood, with the blaxploitation films of the 1970s and Gordon Park’s movie *Shaft*.⁵⁸ In *Shaft*, Detective

John Shaft, is assisted by his Panther friends in fighting against the mob to rescue a kidnapped girl.⁵⁹ The assistance of the Panthers to a detective is ironic because of the real-life hostility between the Black Panthers and most police officers. There is a great deal of difficulty in assessing the truth in relations between the police and the Panthers due to the nature of the relationship between the two.⁶⁰ David Hilliard, the Panther's chief of staff, somehow obtained the plans that the Police Task Force had for an attack on the Black Panther Party headquarters in Berkeley.

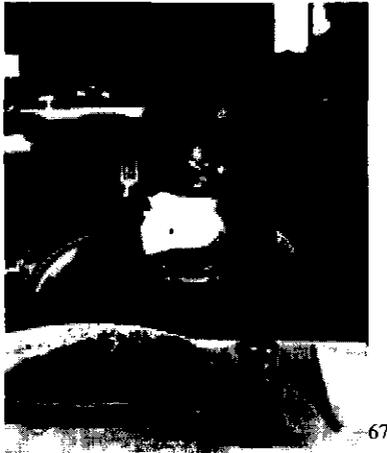
“Assign two man squad to front with shotgun (solid slugs) and armor piercing rifle to blast plate armor plate off upper windows....Upper window shields to be shot out, and use 00 buckshot to shoot out all lower windows. Use rifle slugs to try and knock open main front door....Front and back guard lay down fire on the second floor....Assault squad (three men) armed with sub-machine guns approach building from the south....Squad enter building through front broken windows or doors....Two men enter and move left and to right center of ground floor. Fire thirty rounds each up through the second story floor, reload....The entire building should be flooded with tear gas. Then entire upper floor should be covered with intense fire....Assault squad will then proceed upstairs and bring down the wounded and dead.”⁶¹

This was part of the detailed plan of attack that the Berkeley Police Task Force had ready to use upon the Panthers. When the media interviewed the chief of police, he said that he did not know anything about the plan, but that his sergeants had probably laid it out.

There were also national counterintelligence programs against black nationalists and hate groups. Some of these hate groups were specified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to be SNCC, CORE, Deacons for Defense and Justice, and the Nation of Islam. There was additional watch kept on those who were leaders of these militant groups, Stokely Carmichael, H. “Rap” Brown, and Elijah Muhammad.⁶² J. Edgar Hoover, who wanted to completely eradicate the Black Panther Party, had already called them “the greatest threat

to the internal security of the U.S.”. By the end of 1969, most Panther headquarters in major cities had been attacked by either the police or the government.⁶³

At the same time the Panthers were having to deal with the police, they were strengthening their community programs, the biggest of which being the free breakfast program. In January of 1969, the Panthers set up their breakfast program that would feed children every day before school. They had two locations, in Berkeley at the Concord Baptist Church and in San Francisco at the Fillmore Auditorium. With the slogan “The Youth We Are Feeding Will Surely Feed the Revolution”, the Panthers saw the breakfast program as two-fold; it would nourish the children of the black community and also influence these children to fight for the revolutionary ideas that the Black Panther Party believed in. In the summer, liberation schools would replace the breakfast program for the children. They would start off the day with a free breakfast and then learn the teaching of the Panthers and other revolutionaries.⁶⁴ By the end of 1969, with branches across the nation having set up free breakfast program, the Panthers were feeding an average of 10,000 children a day.⁶⁵ But, even the free breakfast program was not spared from police brutality. During one raid of Panther headquarters, the police destroyed the food supply of the program and the mayor of Sacramento reprimanded the police for their reckless destruction.⁶⁶



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The free breakfast program was a very socialist measure. Socialist and communist ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Mao were represented frequently in the paper of the party *The Black Panther*, which was first published in San Francisco in April 1967. The social and political ideas of the party were very prominent in the paper. The 1969 New Year's message of Ho Chi Minh was featured on the front page of *The Black Panther*, in which he praised the progressives in the United States who supported the Vietnamese people's struggle against American aggression in the name of national salvation. There was also a birthday tribute to Ho Chi Minh in May of that same year. It read, "The Black Panther Party and the revolutionary peoples of racist America wish Ho Chi Minh a very happy birthday and many returns to the day. Having faced the same enemy for four hundred years, we the Black Panther Party want him to know that we stand in complete solidarity with the revolutionary people of Vietnam. We will fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism."⁶⁸ Stokely Carmichael noted his attitudes of the conflict in Viet Nam by inferring that it was "white people sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from red people."⁶⁹

In addition to taking influence and ideas from foreign lands, the Panthers also influenced people in foreign nations. The Black Panther momentum even spread to

Australia. The blacks in Australia were not of African descent, as in America, but were Aboriginal. This group applied some of the principles of “Black Power” and the Black Panthers to their own situation of oppression. From the time of early European settlement in Australia, the Aborigines were either harassed or ignored from the new society that was being formed in their country. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in South Australia, the government issued orders not to employ Aborigines, as a way to avoid any approach or comparison to slavery; but such laws were generally not obeyed. Governmental actions such as these were not usually based on the well being of the Aborigines, but on limiting an annoyance to settlers.⁷⁰

Some towns in South Australia used the “colour bar”, comparable to the Jim Crow laws in America. People of Aboriginal descent were not allowed to patronize cafes, boarding houses, hotels, certain shops or hospitals. No matter how much money they had, there were still these restrictions against how late they could stay out in the town and what schools their children could go to. Some people rationalized this discrimination by saying that natives were “dirty”, “smelly”, or morally corrupt.⁷¹

There were additional restrictions on alcohol consumption by Aborigines. It became illegal in 1880 for anyone to “sell, supply, or give spirituous or fermented liquor to any Aboriginal”.⁷² In the early days of Australia, the most important places for social interactions were hotels, so this excluded Aborigines from the lives of most Australians. The Australian hotel, which housed a pub, has historically been the center of the Australian community and the prime meeting space of early communities.⁷³ Regarding this practice of Aboriginal prohibition, an Aboriginal man decided to trick the system. “One part-Aboriginal, for instance from Lower Murry,⁷⁴ was very indignant about the

whole business. And so one day, while visiting the city, he borrowed some toweling and wrapped it about his head like a turban. Then, in his 'Afghan' disguise, he walked boldly into the bar of a city hotel, seated himself on a stool by the counter, and made the most of his position by slowly consuming several beers. He was quite pleased at the way in which he had 'tricked' the authorities, but at the same time he criticized the restrictions that had led him to do so. It's a funny thing,' he remarked moodily. 'When they thought I was an Afghan, it was all right; and if I'd been a Greek or Italian, that would have been all right too. But just because this country belonged to my people first of all, if they'd known who I was there'd have been a whole pack of trouble.'"⁷⁵ Aborigines were not given the right to drink until they gained citizenship in 1967.⁷⁶

The twentieth century in Australia brought about many policies on Aboriginal culture. In the early twentieth century came the protection policy, which rounded up the remains of indigenous groups and had them concentrated on stations far from their tribal lands; people were also forbidden from using their language or practicing their native culture. Then in the 1930s came the assimilation policy, which tried to "breed out the colour". During this time, many children of indigenous parents were removed from their families as part of the assimilation policy; these children were known as the "stolen generations." A national inquiry reported that up to one in three children were taken and every family and community was affected. The policy amounted to cultural and spiritual genocide.⁷⁷ Not until the 1980s were Indigenous Australians given the power to control their own affairs.

As recently as the 1970s there were theories as to why Aborigines did not advance as much as other Australians did. These theories included ideas such as the "low

intelligence theory” and the “Aborigines are like children theory”. Another theory is the “solution in America” theory that suggests that the best thing to do for Aboriginal advancement is to do what the United States did in administering Indian reserves, creating a war on poverty and other post-war liberalism ideas.⁷⁸ In the 1960s though, it wasn’t the government that looked to the United States as an example, it was the people. And the people that looked were Aborigines; they were looking to the Black Panthers and those in the Black Power movement. Although short lived this Australian black militancy gained worldwide attention.⁷⁹

Around Australia, Aborigines wanted more strength and respect in their communities. In Melbourne, the emergence of the term “Black Power” grew out of the Aborigines Advancement League. The press in Melbourne, much like the press in America, took the phrase to mean violent outbursts of revolution and black dictatorships. In Redfern, a suburb of Sydney, the Black Power movement was inspired by many things, including Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and the American Black Panthers.⁸⁰ Much like their American counterparts, the Australian Black Panthers “had little patience with legalistic methods”.⁸¹ The young leaders of the movement were very aggressive; they tended to reject white leadership and association with white organizations. They spoke militantly and used demands instead of requests and were very proud of their Aboriginal identities. These Australian Panthers, led by men such as Bobbi Sykes, Gary Foley, Bill Craigie, and Michael Anderson made an Australian Black Panther Ten-Point Platform which is almost word for word the Ten-Point Platform of the American Black Panthers.⁸² They called for freedom, full employment, protection from a

racist government, decent housing, education, a fair judicial system, and exemption from military service.



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It may have been the early 1970s, but there was still the militant air of the 1960s in Australia where these Black Panthers were. Gary Foley, one of the field marshals of the party was active in Redfern with the Aboriginal Legal Service and Medical Service. He no longer worked for a living because in every job he had in the past, they had treated him as the “token Aboriginal”. In December of 1971, he was planning to train a group in urban guerilla tactics and explosives to be ready to fight the system. He said that the re-education that the Panthers give usually sorts out those who just want to be in the movement because of the violence. The party was very disciplined with films, lectures, books, and discussions required, the new recruits met in Redfern three nights a week for a month to become re-educated on the system and the issues of the Panthers.⁸⁴

These Panthers considered their enemies to be white radicals, the Nazi Party, Aboriginal “Uncle Toms”, and white society at large. Although friendly with some communists, they didn’t like the communist party because they felt that they were not up to a class struggle yet, they were still fighting to keep their race alive in Australian society. They were also fighting for land rights, they felt that by the government saying that they belonged to the land but that land couldn’t belong to them, they were being compared to plants and animals. One of the field marshals said that they were looking to foreign press to give them some publicity because the Aborigine would never receive it from the Australian press. And people needed to know about these problems so that the Australian government would be embarrassed into action, even if they tried to not make it known that the reason for their actions was protests and violence by Aborigines.⁸⁵

Unlike the American Black Panthers, there is no rule against association with whites; however, whites cannot join the organization because, according to Foley, no white person can ever understand what experiences the black man has in white society. Dennis Walker, son of poet Kath Walker, was a guiding force of the movement, making attempts to spread the Panthers to Brisbane and Melbourne. Walker refused to work with or for anyone but blacks. He does not believe in oppressive violence, but rather the defense of the people for which the Panthers are so well known. In contrast to America, Australians are not allowed to carry guns, but the police are, so there is a great disadvantage to Aborigines when it comes to defending themselves against the “pigs” that claim to be officers of the law.⁸⁶

The term Black Power is very controversial in Australia as well; it means different things to different people and cannot always be understood as a freestanding

term. In an interview in 1972, a reporter asked Bobbi Sykes what black power means to him and how he uses the term. Sykes answered that he did not like to use the term, partially because it is misused so often that people do not know what he means when he uses the term. He said he prefers to use phrases like “black action” to represent black people in motion. Because of all the repression of the past there needs to be more active blacks coming to make change in society. Sykes believes that, “in the past the spokesmen have been what we refer to as good niggers sponsored by whites”⁸⁷

The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League made a statement on Black Power that says, “Black power is not one single style of action. It does not necessarily mean violence or black supremacy. Those expressions have gained publicity because of their dramatic nature.”⁸⁸ As Walker stated in an interview, “Going out and killing people haphazardly would make us just a terrorist group. We must be strategic.”⁸⁹ Black people must work together as a group to achieve power, there can be different expressions of black power, and not all have to be violent.

The Aborigines Advancement League is able to provide a forum for all the ways that Aborigines can express Black Power. It was created for the benefit of Aborigines and the non-Aborigines were supposed to step back when decisions about Black Power are being made. But with a board made exclusively of non-Aboriginals, it does not appear to be advancing the idea of Black Power. One way that Paul Coe says people can take a stand in their lives is by opposing white violence, which can be seen as the denial of rights of Aborigines, such as the right to own land, and malnutrition of children and being left in a cultural void, these things are legalized white violence. White Australians

need to respect black Australians, and if violence is the only thing that the white Australians will understand then that is what the black Australians will have to use.⁹⁰

The American Black Panther Party inspired minorities on the other side of the world to stand up for their rights. After the major leaders of the Black Panther Party could no longer run the party, either because of exile or imprisonment, it began to dwindle. Similarly, once Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21, 1965 and Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, the Nation of Islam split into two groups, one heading toward mainstream Islam under the direction of one of Muhammad's sons and the other keeping the name, being led by Louis Farrakhan.⁹¹ The assassination of Martin Luther King and the coming of the militant movements shortened the nonviolent portion of the Civil Rights movement. These movements were built on many issues, so their ends cannot be attributed to one thing, but the combination of internal problems and external struggles led to the end of an era, but not the end of a struggle. Since the founding of the nation, the black man has "heard the noble word, while the whip shredded the skins of their backs."⁹²

All the militant movements of the 1960s era, no matter what their tactics, were fighting for freedom from oppression. From the Civil Rights movement to the "Black Power" movement and the militancy of the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers, there was a change in the structure of American society and even though things have changed drastically, there is still more to be done. As Gordon Parks said, "The give-me-liberty-or-give-me-death cry from a black man in this country has so far meant death. Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X are substantial proof of this."⁹³

Notes

¹ Pantell, Dora and Edwin Greenidge. If Not Now, When?: The Many Meanings of Black Power. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), 3.

² Boggs, James. Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 16, 28, 35.

³ Barriers, 1920s-1950s: From its earliest days, Birmingham was a city of two worlds: Black and White. People lived and worked side by side, but separation of the races and double standards were facts of life. Here and throughout the South, unequal opportunity was a barrier to the hopes and dreams of nearly half the population. (Caption reads: A nation divided: The Barriers Gallery has 14 exhibitions, including these separate water fountains for 'white' and 'colored,' which vividly convey segregation from 1920 to 1954.) "10 great Places to Glimpse into Black History." USA Today 6 Feb. 2004: 3D.

⁴ Boggs, 54.

⁵ Kasher, Steven. The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 12.

⁶ Nash was the wife of James Bevel, one of the leaders of the SCLC. Burns, Stewart. Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 28.

⁷ Kasher, 17, 198.

⁸ Tyson, Timothy B. "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle." Journal of American History. (September 1998: 540-570), 547.

⁹ Boggs, 12.

¹⁰ Kasher, 216.

¹¹ Lester, Julius. Look Out Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama! (New York: The Dial Press, 1968), 23.

¹² Peeks, Edward. The Long Struggle for Black Power. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 362-63, 23.

¹³ Chafe, William H. The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II. 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18.

¹⁴ Medgar Evers was a nonviolent NAACP field secretary that organized investigations of violent crimes against blacks. He was assassinated in 1963.

¹⁵ James Meredith was the first black graduate of the University of Mississippi. In June of 1966 Meredith was going to march from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi to encourage blacks to register to vote. He called it the "march against fear", but on his march Meredith was shot and wounded. Leaders of SCLC, CORE and SNCC decided the next day that they were going to finish Meredith's march. Peeks, 362-64, 376.

¹⁶ Posey, Melvin H. "Toward A More Meaningful Revolution: Ideology in Transition." Black Power and Student Rebellion. James McEvoy and Abraham Miller, Eds. (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), 255.

¹⁷ Carmichael, Stokely and Ekewueme Michael Thelwell. Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture). (New York: Scribner, 2003), 9.

¹⁸ Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton. Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America. (New York: Random House, 1967), 46.

¹⁹ McKissick was a lawyer and became the leader of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in 1966, at which point it became a more militant organization. Kasher, 198.

²⁰ Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America. (New York: Random House, 1967), 237,244.

²¹ Small, 59-60.

²² Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 200meter medal ceremony at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968. "Radio National" Australian Broadcasting Corporation Online (<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/re/rpt/stories/s189334.htm>)

²³ Hubert Geroid "Rap" Brown. The term "honky" was a corruption of the "hunky", popularized by Carmichael to refer to whites. Peeks, 379.

²⁴ Pantell, 140.

²⁵ Kasher, 194-95.

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- ²⁶ Burns, Stewart. Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 40.
- ²⁷ Carmichael and Hamilton, 98-99.
- ²⁸ Lester, 29. and Peeks, 378.
- ²⁹ He also later told confidants that he was Allah in human form. Van deburg, William L., ed. Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan. (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 110.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 97, 104.
- ³¹ Boggs, 27.
- ³² Parks, Gordon. Born Black. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1971), 25.
- ³³ Kasher, 194.
- ³⁴ Burns, 34-35.
- ³⁵ This quote was also the inspiration for the title of this thesis. Boyd, Herb. Autobiography of A People: Three Centuries of African American History Told by Those Who Lived It. (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 403, 405.
- ³⁶ Samuels, Gertrude. "Two Ways: Black Muslim and N.A.A.C.P." Black Protest in the Sixties: Articles from the New York Times. Meier, August, John Bracey, Jr. and Elliot Rudwick, Eds. (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1991), 40.
- ³⁷ Burns, 34.
- ³⁸ Boyd, 403.
- ³⁹ Kasher, 195.
- ⁴⁰ Draper, Theodore. "The Black Panthers." Beyond the New Left. Ed. Irving Howe. (New York: The McCall Publishing Company, 1970), 222.
- ⁴¹ Kasher, 195.
- ⁴² Draper, 224.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 229.
- ⁴⁴ Tyson, 565.
- ⁴⁵ Parks, 156-57.
- ⁴⁶ The Black Panther Party. The Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation. (<http://www.blackpanther.org>), and Stern, Sol. "The Call of the Black Panthers." Meier, 242.
- ⁴⁷ The Black Panther Party.
- ⁴⁸ Burns, 49.
- ⁴⁹ "The Black Panther Party." Marxist Internet Archive. 11 April 2004. (<http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/Marxist/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/index.htm>).
- ⁵⁰ Pantell, 157.
- ⁵¹ Hoffman, Abbie. Steal This Book. (New York: Grove Press, Inc. Pirate Editions, 1971), 169.
- ⁵² Lester, 139.
- ⁵³ Parks, 157-58.
- ⁵⁴ The Black Panther Party.
- ⁵⁵ Pantell, 156-57.
- ⁵⁶ Heath, 5, 24.
- ⁵⁷ Burns, 50.
- ⁵⁸ Blaxploitation films were usually low-budget action films with an all- or mostly-black cast that was aimed at a black audience. Examples included *Blacula*, *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold*, and *Foxy Brown*.
- ⁵⁹ Shaft. Dir. Gordon Parks. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1971).
- ⁶⁰ Wilkins, Roy and Ramsey Clark (Chairmen). Search and Destroy: A Report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police. (New York: Metropolitan Applied Research Center, Inc., 1973), x.
- ⁶¹ Parks, 143.
- ⁶² From J. Edgar Hoover's "Memorandum to Special Agent in Charge, Albany, New York" in 1967. Van Deburg, 134-35.
- ⁶³ The Black Panther Party.
- ⁶⁴ Heath, 121, 126.
- ⁶⁵ Marxist Internet Archive.

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- ⁶⁶ Parks, 159.
- ⁶⁷ The Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for Children Program. Seale, Bobby. From the Sixties to the Future. (<http://www.bobbyseale.com>)
- ⁶⁸ Heath, vii, x, 70-71.
- ⁶⁹ Small, Melvin. Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds. (Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002), 60.
- ⁷⁰ Berndt, Ronald and Catherine Berndt. From Black to White in South Australia. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 61.
- ⁷¹ Berndt, 98-99.
- ⁷² Schapper, Henry P. Aboriginal Advancement to Integration: Conditions and Plans for Western Australia. (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, 1970), 13.
- ⁷³ Freeland, J.M. The Australian Pub. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966).
- ⁷⁴ Lower Murry is an area around the Murry River in the state of South Australia.
- ⁷⁵ Berndt, 245.
- ⁷⁶ Stubbs, Brett and Maurie Ryan. "Lecture." Australian History. Ball State University Australia Centre, Lennox Head, Australia. 10 April 2003.
- ⁷⁷ Murrie, Lindzi. "Lecture." Australian Life and Culture. Ball State University Australia Centre, Lennox Head, Australia. 24 February 2003.
- ⁷⁸ Schapper, 62-70.
- ⁷⁹ Attwood, Bain, and Andrew Markus. The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History. (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 21.
- ⁸⁰ Foley, Gary. "Whiteness and Blackness in the Koori Struggle for Self-Determination." Gary Foley's Koori History Website. (19 June 1999. Kooriweb. http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/essay_9.html).
- ⁸¹ Attwood, 21.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 21, 174, 252-54.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 168H. Caption for the photograph read: "The Black Power salute from Black Panther field marshals Gary Foley (foreground), Billy Craigie (right), an anonymous field marshall (left) and Dennis Walker (centre)." Courtesy Australian.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 254-56.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 254-56.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 252-56.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 261-62.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 243-44.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 254-56.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 154-56, 263-64.
- ⁹¹ Collier, Peter, and David Horowitz, eds. The Race Card: White Guilt, Black Resentment, and the Assault on Truth and Justice. (California: Prima Publishing, 1997), 112.
- ⁹² Lester, xii.
- ⁹³ Parks, 173.

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