

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY: COMMON CRIMINALS OR CRUSADERS

by

Christopher V. Weeks

English 101

Professor F. Adams

December 16, 1992

**BPP Archival Collection o.
Frankye Adams Johnson**

OUTLINE

Thesis: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and the members of the Black Panther Party were not born revolutionaries. They were forced into this mind set by the oppressive ways of this society, and deemed all of their action necessary to bring about the end of injustice for people of color in America.

I. The founding of the Panther Party and the reasons for it being started.

A. The continual oppression of blacks throughout the U.S.

II. Intentions of the Black Panther Party

A. The Ten Point Program

1. Conditions of the program

2. How many of the conditions were satisfied

III. Programs and institutionalized events brought forth by the Party.

A. Self Defense Courses

B. Community Food Distribution

IV. The dissolving of the Party and those who were responsible for shutting it down.

A. The FBI

B. Local government and police

If something is not going in the way in which it should, it is common sense to at least put forth an effort to change that thing. This is the reason for the coming of the Black Panther Party. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale saw an unchanging oppressive society going to work on every single black community. They saw a need for an organization to establish a colony and defend it properly from the capitalist, racist, oppressive country. It was impossible for the black man and black woman to ever make it out of the situation that they had been put in by the establishment. The black person in this country had no control of their own destiny. They owned nothing, they learned solely what was taught to them by this same society who preferred them to know as little as possible. The establishment soon became the enemy as well did the police and the military, the protectors of the establishment.

Many people of this establishment viewed the members of this organization as radical racist criminals and troublemakers. True, they were radical, but this is the easiest way to accomplish things in a timely manner. If you were to take things as they come then you will spend a much greater time waiting for these things to come to you, The Panther Party was not willing to wait. As far as being racists, this also does not hold true for two reasons, firstly, it is impossible for someone to be an effective racist unless they are able to discriminate. In order to discriminate you must have something that someone else desires. Blacks in America in no way

represent the infrastructure and have any assets to be desired, therefore it is impossible for a black person to be a racist.

Secondly, it was stated by Huey P. Newton, "We don't hate white people, we hate the oppressor: if the oppressor happens to be white, then we hate him."¹ As far as being criminals, they did have records, but these records were from the system in which all crime derives so therefore the establishments claim that they were criminals is illegitimate.

The intentions of the Black Panther Party were to provide Blacks in America with ample opportunity, and means to maintain a higher standard of living than they had lived previously. This was clearly pointed out in the TEN POINT PROGRAM AND PLATFORM². These were demands aimed at the establishment to allow Blacks to advance within there respective communities.

The Ten Point Program started with the Most Important factor, in my opinion, "We demand freedom. We demand the power to determine the destiny of our community." They were sick and tired of the establishment determining the fate of every black community. This fate should be in the hands of those who live in these communities.

Guaranteed employment was the goal of the second point, the Party felt that if employment was not guaranteed by the establishments representative then that representative should

¹ Taken from HUEY NEWTON TALKS TO THE MOVEMENT, Students for a Democratic Society.

²The Ten Point Program; as explained in Revolutionary Suicide, Huey P. Newton, 1973 p. Harcourt, Brace, Jonavich

forfeit his means to the black community to employ all within and allow for everyone in the community to live comfortable. This is important because even today there is almost still a complete lockout fo blacks in their own communities. On every corner in Bed-Stuy, Watts, and Harlem you find a store of some sort, none of which is owned by someone in the community, let alone a black person. Restitution was demanded as the third point, forty acres and a mule were promised, so it is only fair that we receive some sort of pay back, The platform compares the Germans paying the Jews back for Hitler's deeds to what has been the slaughter of over fifty million Blacks in America at the hands of Americans. Tenement buildings are not the answer to the housing problems, they are created sub-standardly, maintained sub standardly, and funded in the same. It is essential that the establishment provide every Black in the community with adequate housing and if the land owners are not will to provide blacks with this the we should be subsidized with the materials to developed these things. This was the fourth point to the program.

Education plays an integral role in the development of a positive society, however what is taught to us blacks by the establishment's education system does not inform us of the truth. If it is told about the decadent, oppressive ways of this society it would give the black a better idea of what he is up against. The continual portrayal of America as a good place does nothing but damage our right to succeed even more so. They demand the teaching of the truth in the fifth point.

The military is the protector and the defender of the

oppressor, it in essence is the enforcer of evil and provides the black community with an instilled fear of their arms and tactics. It would be totally unfair to expect a black man to be required to enlist into the institution whose sole mission is to destroy or at least hinder the progress of black people. In turn the black man must prepare to defend himself from the military "...by whatever means necessary." This was the meaning in my opinion, of the sixth point of the program.

Even today, police brutality has become a topic of growing concern in the black community, the seventh point deals directly with this problem. Self Defense was the key to maintaining safety from the murderers(POLICE), commonly known as the pigs. These defenses were set up to protect the community from those who the establishment paid to protect, its interests. These defenders of the community were armed and given education on how to protect the community from the pigs.

The eighth and ninth points coincided, the eighth called for all blacks to be released from any incarceration, whatever level it may be. This was demanded because it was known that none received a fair trial. This still continues to be a problem today because the judicial system continues to find ways to incarcerate blacks and keep them there, if not actually in prison, then they make even that much more easy to end up right back there. This is commonly known as "being caught up in the system". In a trial you are to be judged by a jury of your peer. Nine out of ten inmates that are convicted in an urban area are convicted by a jury who lives in the suburbs. How can they be considered peers if the only heard about

"PEOPLE LIKE YOU".

"10. We demand land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace."

This is the whole program in a nut shell. But, when forced to reside in a society in which every aspect of life unfavorable, these things are further out of reach than imaginable. These demands of citizens not being conformed to will instigate a movement of necessary actions to attain whatever it is that is need. I feel personally that you must do whatever it take, right or wrong in the establishments eye to get yours.

Unfortunately, the establishment has yet to fulfill a single point of this platform and therefore I believe that a platform is in desperate need of being re-submitted with even further extensive demands. We as a people are still owed. It is necessary to make sure that actions are taken to bring the community back together. If the establishment refuses to help, then we should take what we must to do it ourselves. If our communities can unify I strongly beleive that **POWER IS STILL POSSIBLE TO THE PEOPLE!**

There were Party Memberships and Headquarters in just about every major city in the U.S. The establishment became aware if this and quickly mobilized to discount and incriminate these local chapters. The Party offered the previously mentioned Defense Programs, classes on maintaining and bearing arms, political programs as well as breakfast centers and clothing deposits accessible to the communities of the respective location.

The Party has been forced into an underground mode by the establishment. Anything for the most part is not as successful if

forced to retreat to the underground. The reason for this is that the information necessary to make a difference has a problem reaching the masses when coming from the underground. I strongly believe that it will soon resurface in one form or another to make an attempt to get what is rightfully ours.

J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation responded in a timely manner to place field agents in every area in which a Party affiliation was located. They carried out numerous attacks on these Party members, and either sent members to jail or laid members to rest. They did it in the most deceitful ways, they drafted blacks to do these dirty deeds. This in turn made it as if we were killing our own when in actuality they were the ones slaughtering our people and breaking our spirit.

We are still falling victim to this trap. We are not bringing the guns and drugs into the communities, the establishment is getting them to make easily accessible to us so we once again can do there dirty work.

By doing this research I have gained respect for an organization that all I knew about was the fact that they were just a bunch of criminals. Now I know different, I know they were men who were willing to die so that we all may eventually get ours. I honestly believe that amongst the right people the expectations of the Party can still be met. I will encourage my peers and the youth of today to take a closer look at this organization and respect it for what it was.

WORKS CITED

CLEAVER, ELDRIDGE, "EDUCATION AND REVOLUTION", MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

NEWTON, HUEY P. "THE GENIUS OF HUEY P. NEWTON", MINISTER OF DEFENSE

NEWTON, HUEY P. REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE, HBJ, 1973

"THE POLITICAL MISSION OF THE F.B.I."

"HUEY NEWTON TALKS TO THE MOVEMENT"