

I hope that this missive finds you in the best of health and optimistic spirits. This is to share a few personal feelings, opinions about how things are going, at this point, with the B.P. Foundation (as its tentatively called).

First, its good to be among old comrade travellers, few of whom I knew personally. I'd think, though, that such a gathering is a mixture of both good feelings and skepticism. Its a normal mixed emotion, don't you think? Panthers together - Right On! - Panthers... together? Am??? Lawd knows that that experience itself leaves one to wonder, and worry, and possibly wander away from such a gathering. Lett we forget about conspiracies, guns, prisons, graves and what we put (in terms of hell) each other through.

Yet, here, some of us are meeting, not to re-organize the Party. Primarily, we're here to "bury our dead" properly and preserve that Panther Spirit and the significance of our claw-mark on the historical plight of our people. I recently finished a novel by Harold Courlander called, "The African." Its one of the best historical novels I've ever read. Its centered around the life of the fictional character, 'Wes' Huncu'. Wes was an African man-child, a teenager, who was captured and sold into slavery here in the Western Hemisphere. He was one of many millions.

As a youth in the African Cosmology of his village, Wes understood the importance of "Proper burial" for those who died or were killed. One must talk to the Gods who takes care of the dead and ask that their Spirits be set free in order for that Spirit to remain with the "village living" for guidance and protection.

Torn from the Motherland and thrust onto strange territory after a brutal ocean voyage, what became key to Wes' Huncu's sense of bearings and guidance were his People's traditions, beliefs, rituals and what have you. Confused, angry, afraid, determined... Wes had to deal with one ~~&~~ traumatic experience after another while continually trying to make sense of this nightmare.

Little help, he discovered, came from most fellow Africans who refused to be called "Africans" (or their tribal, village or kingdom name); who refused to practice their traditions, beliefs, rituals, etc.; who refused to accept Wes' Huncu unless he became a nigger slave like them.

Wes fought back. He found other Africans who were willing to fight back with him. Or him with them. It didn't matter. All that mattered was to escape to freedom, to maintain dignity and to fight for the only

experience they honored: Africa!

Well, there were battles in which some of Wes' comrades were killed. Automatically, Wes thought, the dead must have a proper burial and ceremony to the Gods for their spirits. When conditions permitted, burial and ceremony were given. Yet there were certainly times when it was not possible immediately. No matter how much time had passed, though, Wes would remember the Fallen Comrades. He would seek out the other Africans who knew how to perform the ceremony, the rites, so that those "Fallen's" spirits could be at peace and at the service of those who're still living and fighting. This, Wes Hunu the African, took responsibility to see that it be done. (for his own inner peace as well as in loyalty to the African cosmology & belief system).

Our coming together is very much in this spirit. We made it through one of the most revolutionary and turbulent times in America's history! When you think about it, how different are we from <sup>Wes Hunu or</sup> Vietnam Vets? Shocked by war (domestic war), exposed to terroristic fascist hounding, fearful for our very lives, yet too angry to care about anything other than Liberation in the Streets of Babylon, Now!

I've read alot of American History: Black History. Beyond the dry, standard, safe civil-rights oriented historical texts (John Hope Franklin, etc), I've researched deeper and discovered that there were always Nats, Harriets, Denmark, Ahmed Evans and Clughalas willing to organize for our Liberation "by any means necessary!" Groups like the Abyssinians (Chi-town or Detroit) and the African Blood Brotherhood (especially in Tulsa, Oklahoma 1921; the First Black Community bombed from the air, Philly and MOVE being the second). These were turn-of-the-century Liberation groups. And lest we forget, even the N.A.A.C.P. and early anti-racism, voter-registration groups in the South were met with vicious reprisals for their non-violent movements. Regardless of our differences in belief and methods, there were consequences. The consequences were meted out, not <sup>only</sup> ~~really~~ at our activists. It was meted out to the whole of our community. The hangings, bombings of churches and homes and businesses, shootings, drownings, mob beatings and killings, landlord terrorism and law enforcement lawlessness. But what of the psychological damage this left behind?

I'm not really digressing. I'm trying to indicate an atmosphere... A vicious, racist, terroristic atmosphere that intended to scare us back into "our place" in society - "By Any Means Necessary" - and a war that wrecked havoc on the Black mind, body and spirit. It destroyed many, many more

in spirit than in body (physical death). ~~Activists~~

Activists caught a special hell. Do you think many were not broken? In mind, in body, in spirit? We did not win those struggles. How many would be favorable, willing to re-group and make another advance? Life risked once... Thou I walk through the valley in the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me... the lord and thy staff shall comfort me... " Who wants to walk it again? Second thoughts are normal. We Panthers are as subject to the universal laws of human behavior as anyone else, at any other period in history. Right? Right.

We made several calls to Panthers, wherever you are, to gather in order to work on some projects that we feel must be done. I know it's hard. It's not an easy decision to make. Is it going to be like before? Will we be pressed to fully return, in combat-readiness, to the Warfront? Will so-and-so be there? He fucked me around before. I don't need to remember that part of my life. My love was killed. My children's daddy is still in prison. So-and-so is hugged out now. I'm afraid that the same people will monopolize things and jeopardize me. Well, I don't want to be involved in nothing unless we're re-organizing the Party! ... Questions, comments, feelings. All of value, all legit, all indicative of alot of pain, frustration, hope and desire for healing (at the least).

It's been many years, hasn't it? What has post-Party experience taught you about... you, about... struggle, about... people, Panthers, life? We're all generally 30-40-50<sup>yrs old</sup>. We got "slaves," we pay bills, we raise(d) children. We're not quite the same as before. Some got skills now, and are more-or-less settled in personality as well as place of residence. Are there not some positives in all this? Would you not bring more mature offerings to a gathering such as we propose?

So, we're saying that aint nothing changed: oppression and the desire to be free. Yet, because of the significance of the Panther in historical terms, and because of its tremendous impact on our own and many others' lives and aspirations, we ~~do~~ feel the need to do as Wes Hunu. ~~and~~ Let us take care of our Fallen, their offspring, and see to the material ~~and~~ ~~emot~~ preservation of the Panther Story. It truly belongs to the Youth, and they may yet decide to "make the Revolution."

If you havent been to any of the last few meetings, please come ~~and~~ if only to feel it out. Thats your right. Then decide on how you wish to

(ON THE BACK)

STOP HERE  
GO TO: let me share (p.4)  
INCLUDE AFTER  
"It is a legitimate thing to ask" (p.5)

~~STOP HERE~~

relate to it. AND IT NEEDS TO BE SAID LOUD AND CLEAR, WITHOUT ANY MISUNDERSTANDING:

Whatever... WHATEVER YOUR DECISION BE (to work with us in varying degrees - or - to just continue your life as such) IT'S OKAY. IT REALLY IS!

Now, does that sound like a roaring Panther? Uh-huh. But it is. Call it a mellowing, a maturing, a whatever. It may just be that continual search for meaning, making sense out of this madness, and a desire to ~~some~~ heal a troubled spirit. That might be, in itself, what these gatherings and the work involved, are really all about. Again, I hope you take a chance and come.

Power To The People!

If all you want to offer is a prayer or an anonymous donation of some kind. It is fine - and sincerely understood.

Let me share with you my experience in one of our first meetings. At the beginning of this meeting, sitting round the two-joined tables, we suggested and proceeded to have each person introduce themselves and explain why they were at this meeting. Honesty is all you're asking for here. And honesty is what we got!

We have a sort of "5-point" objective with all this, ranging from "Care and Proper Recognition of the Burial Sites of Fallen Comrades," "Preservation of B.P. Memorabilia," to "Aid for the Children" and "Work around Panther Political Prisoners." Some were at this meeting for only specific points, like the burial care or the archive work. Others didn't quite know what the meeting was for and just expressed a desire to know and decide what they might be interested in. Some came hoping to find an interest in re-building the Party because of the terrible conditions and lack of leadership in our communities. Others, probably most, were not in favor of anything on that scale. And some voiced reservations of this "foundation" thing if it were to be confined just to the east coast, as there are Panthers on the west coast who expressed an interest in our efforts. In all, folks spoke their minds, their feelings, and at the end, each one knew something about the other which left little room for assumptions about what each one was there for and willing to do.

I, personally, felt good about this. It eliminated that "pressure" one may have felt years ago, when in the Party, to conform, to go this way or that, decide this way or that. Now we knew where everyone "stood" and so, who we'd have to work with. That's a positive difference, Right On? Right on!

You see, we're older now. More mature. Scarred (and scared). It makes you less inclined to follow blindly, or to be liberal when considering how it all will or may affect your life now. Been through too much hell already, and life is too short. It's a thing of being honest (if only because one is more honny now) with yourself as well as with others. Truth...

"I still hurt. I don't know if I can hack this again. I better be careful. Let me decide to do only what I'm able and willing to do, at this time."

Could this be the inner dialogue that goes through our minds before we actually verbalize our individual positions to the group? I tend to think so, I even hope so, if it is how you feel, because it is where you are RIGHT now. I'd be the first to acknowledge that

it is a spiritually and psychologically healthy thing to do. And it is, in the final analysis, for one's own sense of integrity. "Am I sure I want to do this?" ~~and~~ It is a legitimate thing to ask.