

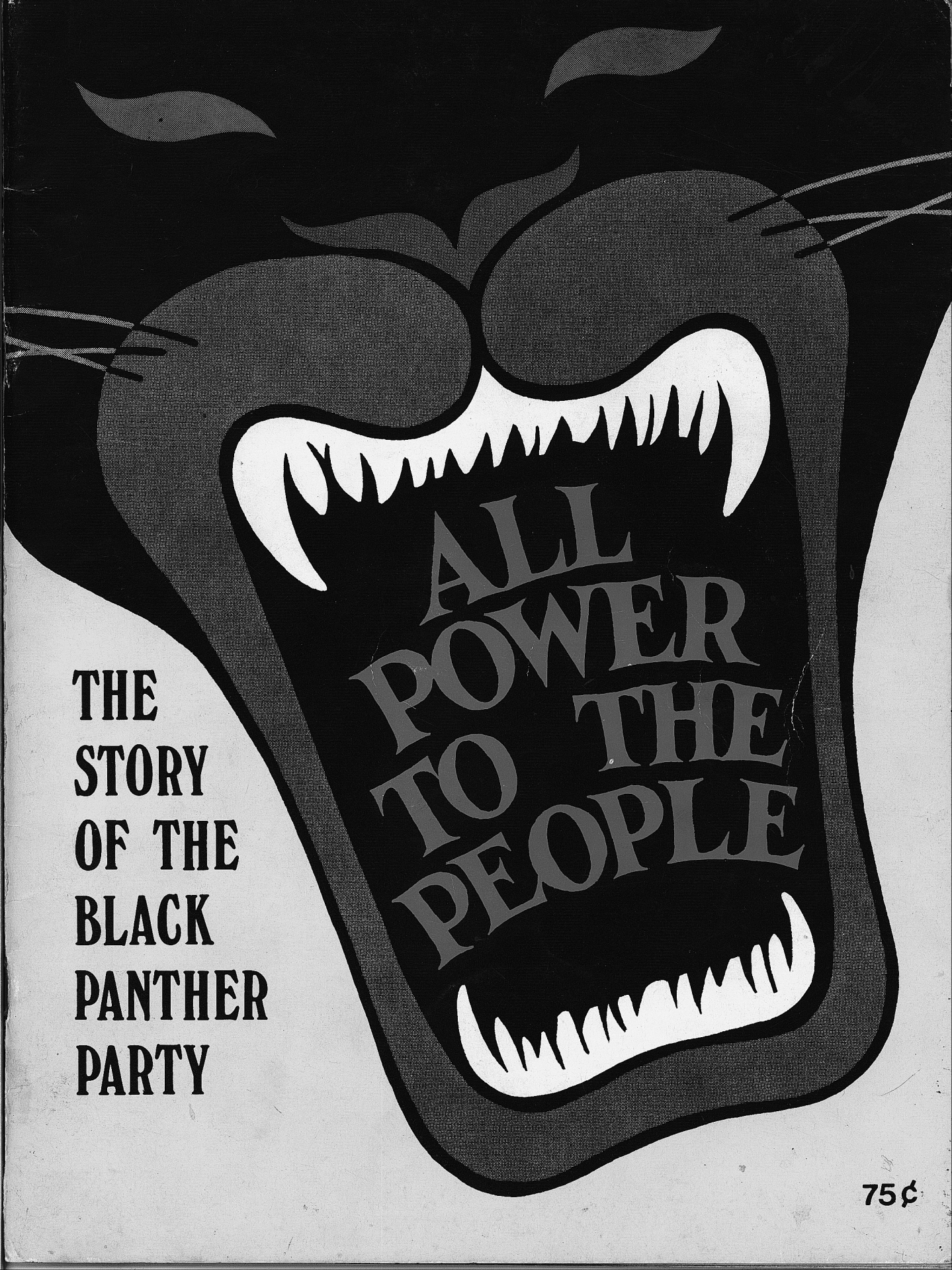
DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

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**BLACK PANTHER PARTY
PUBLICATION**

**THE
STORY
OF THE
BLACK
PANTHER
PARTY**



**ALL
POWER
TO THE
PEOPLE**

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

THE STORY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

Text by Terry Cannon

Illustrations: original drawings by Frank Ciecioraka,
reprinted drawings and photos from
the Black Panther newspaper and other sources

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Patrolling the Cops	3
II. Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense	5
III. "What We Want, What We Believe" The 10-Point Program	9
IV. A Shotgun and a Law Book	19
V. Free Huey!	24
VI. Why the Panthers Don't Hate Whites	27
VII. "Serve the People" What the Panthers Do	33
VIII. Murders and Frameups	37
IX. The Government Declares War on the Panthers	43
X. Why the Rulers of America Are Scared	46

This primer is written by a white person to other whites who want and need to know what the Black Panther Party is all about. So when I use the words "we" and "us," I usually mean ordinary white Americans.

There's a lot in here that is the opposite of what we've been taught. You'll probably want concrete facts to back some of the statements up: ask the person who gave you this book. If they don't know, keep on trucking. We've got a lot to learn and not much time to learn it.



I

PATROLLING THE COPS

A crowd of black people gather on the sidewalk and spills out into the street. Children push their way between the adults, trying to get a better look at what is happening out there in the ghetto street on a summer afternoon.

Their faces are whipped by the turning red lights on the roofs of five Oakland, California police cars. Cops are swarming all over, yelling at the people on the sidewalk—Get Back! Beat it! Get in your houses! The people don't move. The cops carry shotguns and have strained, grim looks on their faces.

The source of all the interest is two young black men standing by their car in the street. One carries a 45 automatic pistol in plain view in a holster. The other holds a shotgun in one hand and has a lawbook in the other. The two men are Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, Minister of Defense and Chairman of the newly formed Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. It is early in the year 1967.

In the back seat of their car are two more young men. Between them, the crowd can see another shotgun, a camera and a tape recorder. The Panthers have been patrolling the Oakland cops, making sure the police stay inside the bounds of the law. The Panthers are there to stop the beatings, false arrests and harrassment that go on nightly whenever black citizens run up against the occupying army in their community—the police.

Newton and Seale are like the eye of a

hurricane. They stand perfectly still. Newton tells the crowd in a clear, firm voice that they have a right to stay where they are. They do not have to go back in their houses. "These guns are perfectly legal," Newton says. "The Constitution of the United States, Second Amendment, gives every citizen the right to bear arms."

Suddenly one of the cops, a tall fat man, puts his hand on the butt of his pistol, advances toward Newton and says,

"Are you a Marxist?"

Newton loads a round into his pump-action shotgun. The "clack!" from his shotgun quiets the crowd.

"Are you a fascist?" he replies.

"Are you a Marxist?" The cop's voice is louder.

"Are you a fascist?" Huey says, loud enough for everyone to hear.

"Are you a Marxist?" the cop shouts.

"Are you a fascist?"

The cop's tone breaks and he repeats his question a little softer.

"Are you a fascist?" Huey Newton says.

Almost whimpering, the fat cop says, "Well I asked you *first!*"

"And I asked you second," replies Newton, cold and clear. "Now tell me—are you a fascist?"

The cop turns, takes his hand off his gun, and walks fast back to his prowl car. He has just come face to face with a proud new force growing in the black community and he is scared.



II

HUEY P. NEWTON, MINISTER OF DEFENSE

When Huey Newton was two years old, his family moved to Oakland, California from Louisiana. He was the youngest in a family of seven children.

There's a kind of wisdom that you get from being on the bottom looking up. Huey Newton, like the rest of his people on the bottom of American society, wised up fast. School was a drag. Huey sat in his classes, listening to the teachers drone on about things that had nothing to do with his life.

He looked out the window to the street where real life was. His teachers said America was the land of opportunity. He could see with his eyes that this was not true. His teachers said America was a democracy. That wasn't the America he was growing up in.

When he graduated from high school he could hardly read. His teachers had given him nothing he wanted to read, nothing that was meaningful. And school taught him nothing about his own race.

Huey learned the history of the black race by living it. He ran with his brothers and sisters in the streets. He watched them get busted by the cops for standing on the corner; he saw the law, like a band of steel, circling the black community, cutting his people off from jobs, houses, and power. He felt the terror of a black nation surrounded by White Power: judges, politician, officials, welfare agencies and cops—whose purpose is to keep the black community under control, to

use them like tools in the factories and stores. Tools to make money for other people.

He asked himself the question all other black people were asking: how do we free the black community? Now he had a reason for reading. He taught himself how.

Maybe you've read a book that changed your life, that showed you what your life was all about. One of these books in Huey's life was *Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon. Fanon was a black Algerian who fought to free his country from France. Fanon said that people who live in colonies, whose lives and labor are used and controlled by rulers to make the rulers rich, can't be human until they've made a revolution.

Fanon showed how the white Europeans treated the Algerians as less than human. They passed laws saying where Algerians could live, what kind of jobs they could have; what they could read, and where they could travel.

These laws were backed up with violence. Every Algerian knew if he stepped out of line, if he acted human and challenged these laws, he would be beaten, tortured, jailed or killed.

Fanon said there was only one way out: kick the French out of Algeria and destroy their political power. If that took violence, then violence was the only *human* way to react.

It's no accident that Huey Newton got many ideas from a black man half way

around the world. The world has changed in the hundred years since the American slaves were freed. A hundred years ago American slaves thought they were a minority in a white world. The newspapers and TV still call blacks a "minority group," but it is not true. People of color, black, brown, yellow and red are the *majority* on the planet Earth, and they know it.

* * *

At the same time that Huey was learning how people of color around the world were freeing themselves, some black leaders in this country were meeting their brothers and sisters on other continents.

Malcolm X, one of the most important American black leaders of the 20th century, was traveling through Africa. When he was a young man he thought that all white people were "devils." But traveling around the world he met people with white skins who were willing to fight on the side of his people. In 1964, when he talked to black people, he told them not to hate *all* whites just because some whites—the rich—were their enemies.

"We're all in the same boat," Malcolm X said, "and we are all going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man.

"Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white. It does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us."

A year later, Malcolm was assassinated. He is still a hero to black people. His words are believed and treasured.

* * *

The words of Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X were real to Huey Newton. All he had to do was look around at Oakland, California:

In Oakland, a woman on welfare, Mrs. Harper, had her welfare check cut off because her house burned down. When she went with her children to complain, the welfare people told her they were keeping her check to encourage her to move! But she couldn't move without the money. The Welfare Department didn't care, and Mrs. Harper didn't have the power to make them care. She was stuck.

In Oakland, Mayor Houlihan was a strong law and order man. He didn't understand people who complained about Oakland (or America). He was highly respectable—until he was caught fleecing the estate of an elderly widow and sent to jail.

In Oakland, the district attorney, J. Frank Coakley, got his start during World War II by trying to hang fifty black seamen. They had refused to load ammunition in unsafe conditions after a ship had blown up killing over three hundred people. "Any man so depraved as to be afraid to load ammunition deserves no leniency," said Coakley. Twenty-five years later, Coakley was trying to do the same thing to Huey Newton.

* * *

That's what things were like in the city where Huey Newton grew to be a man. On the other side of America, in Lowndes County, Alabama, black people were creating a political organization that would show Huey the way to move.

Lowndes County is small and rural. Eighty per cent of its citizens are black. None of them had been allowed to vote since Reconstruction. So they formed an independent party of their own, and they took for their symbol a leaping black panther.

Their party got to be called the Black Panther Party. Just before the first primary election in 1966, the sheriff came down and told them they couldn't have their own primary election because the whites would shoot it up.



Malcolm X

May 19, 1925 — Feb. 21, 1965

The leaders of the party made a decision. They told the sheriff, "We won't fire the first shot, but we're bringing our guns and if we're shot at, we'll shoot back." They brought their guns to the election and not a single person bothered them.

* * *

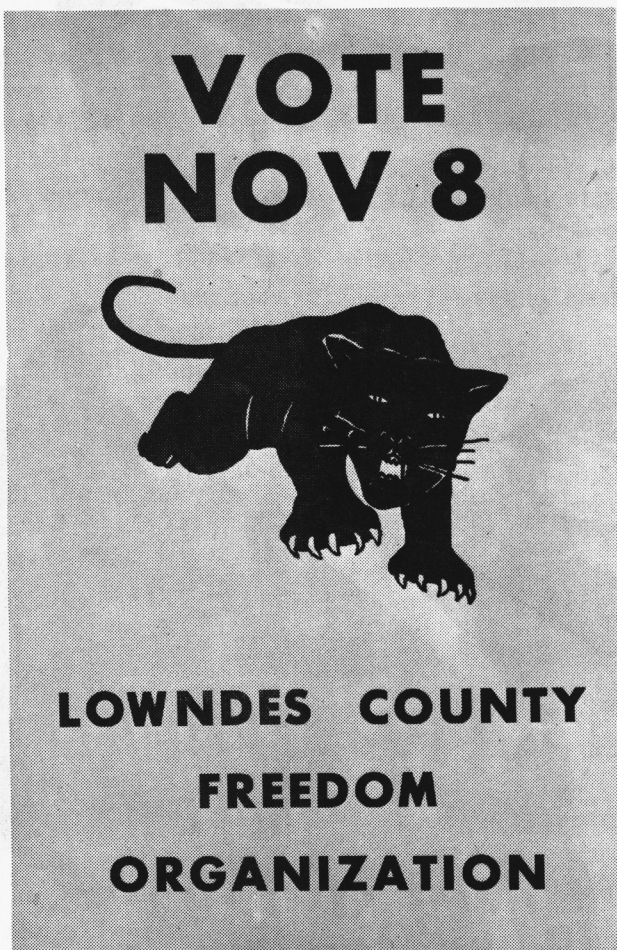
The story of the black citizens of Lowndes County, the words of Frantz Fanon in Algeria, the speeches of Malcolm X in the ghettos of America, all came together in Huey's mind, joining with his own thoughts and dreams to form the idea of an armed political party for the black people of Oakland.

He discussed this idea with a friend of his, Bobby Seale, another student at Mer-

ritt College in Oakland where Huey was enrolled. That was the beginning of their organization, first called the "Black Panther Party for Self Defense." When people asked them why they picked the panther for the name, they answered,

"The nature of the panther is that he never attacks. But if anyone attacks him or backs him into a corner, the panther comes up to wipe that attacker out, absolutely, thoroughly and completely."

Before they went into the street to recruit members, Newton and Seale wrote down on paper exactly what the Black Panther Party believes in, wants and stands for. This is their Ten Point Program.



1966
Lowndes County
Election Poster

III

“WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE”— THE 10-POINT PROGRAM

One afternoon in October, 1966, Huey told Bobby Seale, “We need a program. We have to have a program for the people. A program that people can understand. A program that the people can read and see, and which expresses their desires and needs at the same time.”

That night they sat down in the North Oakland Poverty Center, where they were working, and wrote out the 10-point program which is still the basis for all Panther actions:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our black community.

Black people in this country form a colony. In most ways they have the same *legal* rights as white Americans, but in their economic and political lives they are colonized. As Eldridge Cleaver has written, “Black people are a stolen people held in a colonial status on stolen land.”

Blacks did not ask to come to America. They were stolen from their native land and brought here by force to produce wealth for America, wealth they have never shared. Like the Indians, who did not ask to be invaded and conquered by Europeans, the blacks were forced to live in certain areas, take whatever jobs were allowed them, and suffer under the political control of their European conquerers.

They never have and never will be poured into the “melting pot” that American history books brag about. The “melting pot” has melted white Europeans into

one general category (even with them it doesn’t make everybody happy: watch the Italians and the Irish fight it out for City Hall positions in most cities), but it has excluded Latins, Blacks, Asians, and Indians.

So when Huey Newton talks about freedom, he means “national liberation,” the struggle of a people to be free to determine their own destiny. Free from the decisions of Washington politicians, Army generals, and big businessmen.

“The Black Panther Party is the people’s party,” says Huey, “and we are primarily interested in freeing man—freeing all people from slavery. We can only do this by having collective ownership, and then the people will decide what they are going to produce for their own use—not for specific classes or for profit.”

In their struggle to satisfy their hunger for independence and freedom, black people are questioning everything about America—its foreign policy, its capitalist economic structure, its laws, its prisons, its morals—everything. That’s what self-determination means: a mass of people deciding themselves what is best for themselves.

2. We want full employment for our people.

The black colony feels unemployment as a constant crisis. The unemployment rate is twice that of the white community. A white high school *dropout* has a better chance of getting a job than a black high school *graduate*.