



FRED HAMPTON, 1948-1969



IX

THE GOVERNMENT DECLARES WAR ON THE PANTHERS

Shot down, killed, beaten, jailed and exiled—that's been the fate of many who bravely joined the Panther's fight for liberation. But the bravest people of all are those who join a fight knowing clearly what will happen to them. Black people continue to join, identify with and support the Black Panther Party despite the shadow of murder the government tries to place over it. They must. Not to fight for liberation is to face a surer death.

In August, 1968, three young Panthers, Tommy Lewis, Robert Lawrence and Dee Bartholomew, were pulled over in their car by the Los Angeles police and shot to death.

September, 1968—one hundred and fifty off-duty police attacked and beat twelve Panthers in a Brooklyn courtroom.

Two months later after receiving one hundred thousand votes in the Presidential election, Eldridge Cleaver was ordered back to San Quentin prison for "violating parole" by being shot at in the April attack that murdered Bobby Hutton. He went underground rather than face certain death in San Quentin. He now lives in Algeria.

January, 1969 . . . Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins were murdered on the UCLA campus in Los Angeles by gunmen from a black organization funded by the federal government.

On the same day in New York Panther Joan Bird was arrested in a parked car near the scene of an alleged sniper attack. She later testified: "Patrolman McKenzie

then with a short black club beat me across my face and head . . . Then they began to kick me and walk on my back and legs. Then McKenzie put a gun to my head and stated, 'I ought to kill you, you motherfucker,' then proceeded to take my right hand fingers and bend them back and said, 'you better talk or I'll break your fingers.' I screamed."

Joan Bird was charged with conspiracy to murder, attempted murder, and felonious assault and held on \$50,000 bail.

In April, twenty-one Panthers were arrested in New York, accused of a plot to blow up Macy's, Korvette's and Bloomingdale's Department Stores and the New York Botanical Gardens. Just the fact that the explosions would have killed many innocent black people is enough to show how absurd the "plot" is. Thirteen of the Panthers were held at \$100,000 bail. When their lawyers appealed the huge bail, they were sent to the *same* judge who set the bail in the first place, for the appeal! One of the 21 defendants is Joan Bird.

One month later fourteen Panthers in New Haven were arrested for the murder of Panther member Alex Rackley. Bobby Seale was later arrested on the same charge along with seven more Party members. The next day a Panther member in San Diego, John Savage was shot to death by a gunman.

After the New Haven arrests, police raided Panther offices in Washington, D.C., Salt Lake City, Denver and Chicago,

Erica Huggins was one of those arrested in New Haven on the Rackley frame-up. In January, 1969 she lost her husband John, assassinated on the UCLA campus. She moved to New Haven after that and worked in the Panther chapter there. That May she was arrested, separated from her three month old daughter Mai. She is still in jail,

Erica Huggins wrote a letter from the jail:

"We cannot allow our children, be they Black, Mexican, Indian, Japanese, Chinese or White to be miseducated and degraded in America's degenerate school system. We cannot allow any more lynching, bombing and racial ignorance down South or up South.

"We cannot allow unions, any longer, to drive the working class—the working class must drive the unions. Our fight must be endless to organize the workers of this country, to overhaul and change every assembly line in every factory. . . .

"We cannot allow the reformists to clean up the surface while the inner structure rots. We need a revolution!"

It was to Erica that Eldridge Cleaver sent his first message from exile. "We must not rest until this sister is liberated," Cleaver wrote. "We must recognize that a woman can be just as revolutionary as a man and that she has equal stature, along with men, and that we cannot prejudice her in any manner, that we cannot relegate her to an inferior position."

Free Erica Huggins!



supposedly "looking for fugitives." They found none.

The next month the FBI raided the Chicago Panther office at 5:30 a.m., looting it of files, signed copies of a petition, and \$3000 that had been donated to the Panther free health clinic.

On June 5, twenty-five Detroit police entered the Panther headquarters, and arrested three members, releasing them a little later without any charges.

On October 4 at 2:00 a.m. over forty cops shot at the Chicago Panther office for twenty minutes. After they charged in, firing, they arrested six unarmed men and beat them with shotgun butts and baseball bats. One was hospitalized in critical condition. They were charged with attempted murder and resisting arrest.

Six days later, Panther Chairman O'Neal in Kansas City was shot and wounded as he got out of his parked car. Another Kansas City member was wounded as he walked out of the new Panther health clinic.

A few days after Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were murdered, three hundred and fifty Los Angeles police surrounded the LA Panther office and opened fire.

The eleven Panthers inside had no choice but to defend themselves and held the cops off for five hours. The pigs tried to blow up the building with dynamite, but succeeded only in blowing off the roof. Finally some outside people (not the police) negotiated to have the Panthers surrender in the presence of the press. Otherwise they would certainly have been shot down.

From San Francisco, the Panther's chief lawyer, Charles Garry, said "I have satisfied myself that there is a national scheme by the various agencies of government to destroy and commit genocide upon members of the Black Panther Party." Genocide is the attempt to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, religious or political group.

Most government officials won't admit that there's a war on against the Panthers. But Seattle's Mayor Wes Uhlman blew the whistle on one attempt. He revealed that the Internal Revenue Department had asked him to help them raid the Seattle Panther chapter. Mayor Uhlman refused. "We are not going to have any 1932 Gestapo-like raids against anyone," he said.

The Panthers have never invaded or shot up white communities. The black community does not want the government to "protect" it from the Panthers. After Fred Hampton was murdered, not one black Chicagoan thanked the police.

Still the politicians and the rich are terrified of the Panthers and want them destroyed.

Not just because the Panthers feed school children. So do some schools.

Not just because they have a free medical clinic. So does Cesar Chavez' Farmworkers Union.

Not just because they believe in self-defense. So do most people.

Not just because they don't like cops. Neither do most young people.

Not just because they are socialists. Many Americans believe in Marxism, socialism and communism. Their speeches and writings and conversations are supposedly protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution.

It is for *all* these reasons and more together that the cold-blooded old men who run this country have decided to eliminate the Black Panther Party. The American Empire is beginning to fall apart. Its armies are being defeated by peasants in Asia. A few strikes by working people can tie up an entire city.

And we, the poor and working Americans, are getting restless. The Empire never did us any real good. It gave us slightly higher wages and a lot more gadgets than working people in the rest of the world, and then with the other hand it takes them all away with payments and mortgages and taxes and prices and fines and fees and interest.

We end up surrounded with a whirlpool of lies on TV, mindkilling work, pompous rich fools yapping for our votes, senile judges sending our friends to jail, and always, cops on the prowl. We have questions we want to ask, but the only answer we get back is "Do what we tell you," and some fifth grade stuff about obedience.

And all the time the rulers are watching us from the White House and the Pentagon, scared to death, seeing all their excuses vanish and their lies come home to roost. They're afraid we're going to kick them out.

In the middle of all this doubt, confusion, bureaucracy and terror, Huey Newton stood up, carrying a shotgun in one hand and a law book in the other, and said very clearly,

"The value of man, the purpose of man is to be free and engage in productive creativity. This is the freedom we are talking about; this is the freedom that makes life worth living."

We do not have that freedom in America, but we can get it, said Huey Newton, if we fight for it. When our bosses look out at us from the windows of the Pentagon or U.S. Steel, they do not see people, they see objects to be used to oppress the people of the world. All our sorrows come from them, the rich, who use the schools, the Army, industrial "discipline," and the family to turn us into billyclubs to beat other people (like the Vietnamese) over the head. And what's worse, they try to make us like it.

The Panthers said "No. This is where it stops."

That is why there is a war between the U.S. government and the Black Panther Party. This war is nothing new; it's gone on without truce for a thousand years and more. It is the struggle between the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor, the owner and the worker, the colonizer and the colonized.

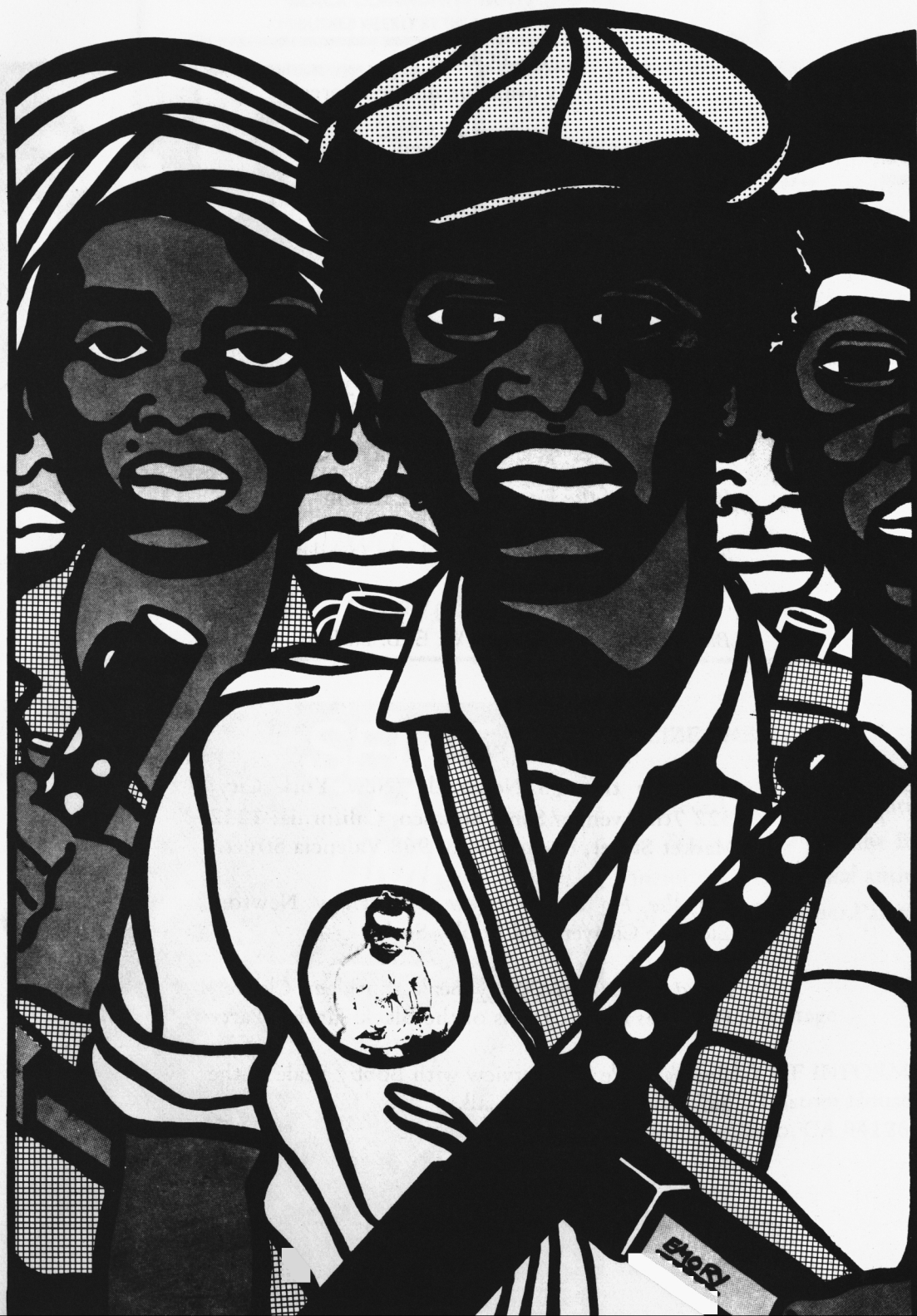
All over the world the barricades are going up. One thing is sure about a barricade: you have to be on one side or the other. The people who want freedom are all on one side of the barricades. The cops of the world are on the other.

When you look carefully on our side of the struggle you find Huey P. Newton right up there in the front, standing off the cops, with his fist in the air.

He's yelling "Power to the People!" and he means *all* of us.

The genie of black revolutionary violence is here, and it says that the oppressor has no rights which the oppressed are bound to respect. The genie also has a question for white Americans: which side do you choose? Do you side with the oppressor or with the oppressed? The time for decision is upon you.

Eldridge Cleaver



FURTHER READING

BOOKS

(generally available in bookstores)

Soul on Ice by Eldridge Cleaver

Post-Prison Writings by Eldridge Cleaver

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Seize the Time by Bobby Seale

Ideology of the Black Panther Party by Eldridge Cleaver (available through the Black Panther Party)

Wretched of the Earth by Franz Fanon

The Genius of Huey P. Newton (available from the Black Panther Party)

Black Reconstruction by W. E. B. DuBois

FILMS

Available through Newsreel: (New York City: 322 7th Avenue/San Francisco, California: 1232 Market Street, Room 104 or 968 Valencia Street.)

Off the Pig an interview with Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale

Mayday features Bobby Seale, Kathleen Cleaver. Discusses the programs of the Black Panther Party

Bobby Seale an interview with Bobby Seale in the San Francisco County jail.

THE BLACK PANTHER

**BLACK COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE
PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY**



July 1967--Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton (right) and Chairman, Bobby Seale (left), reading an early edition of B.P.P. Newspaper at the home of Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information B.P.P.

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Huey would say, "a newspaper is the voice of a party, the voice of the Panther must be heard throughout the land."



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