

# THE BLACK PANTHERS



**GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING  
FOR FREEDOM AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

# **HIGH SCHOOL U.S HISTORY**

## **THE BLACK PANTHERS: GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING FOR FREEDOM AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

### **THEME 9: Civil Rights and People Power Movements**

#### **Anchor Standard: History 16. Cause and Consequence**

- **9-12. US. 105. Analyze the origin, goals, and outcomes of civil rights groups in the 1950's and 1960's and their Influence on contemporary civil rights movements.**

#### **Anchor Standard: History 18. Critical Consciousness And Perspectives**

- **9-12. US. 107. Evaluate how the events of the civil rights movement impacted people from diverse groups.**

# **SAMPLE LESSON PLAN**

## **The Black Panthers: GrassRoots Organizing for Freedom and Civil Rights**

### **High School U.S History**

#### **Theme 9: Civil Rights and Power People Movements**



**Angela Davis**

- Introduce the lesson to the class about The Black Panthers Political Party formed in 1966. The Black Panthers were part of the larger Black Power movement, which emphasized Black pride, community control and unification for civil rights.
- Students watch the documentary, The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution [available on DVD or PBS]
- Students read about the history of the Black Panthers.
- Students discuss, reflect and share ideas about the role of the Black Panther Party in the Civil Rights Movement past and present.
- Allow 3+ class periods.

## **RESOURCES**

- The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution Documentary [2016]
- Black Panther: Marvel Studios [2018]
- Aaron Dixon - My People are Rising: Memoir of a Black Panther Party Member Captain [2012]
- Sample readings and activities such as the CIVIL RIGHTS poster activity. Students create a protest sign for a Civil Rights group they might have supported during the 1960's and 1970's such as The Black Panthers.

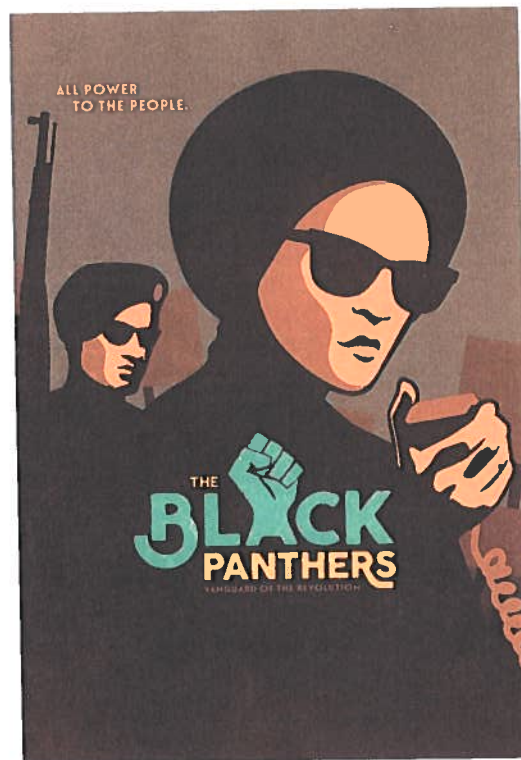
# **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution**

**Directed By Stanley Nelson**

**Premiere February 2016**

**NAACP IMAGE AWARDS: OUTSTANDING DOCUMENTARY**

**A documentary film telling the story of a movement vital once more.**



## **BLACK PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM AND PROGRAM** (October 1966)

### **What We Want What We Believe**

***1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.***

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

***2. We want full employment for our people.***

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income.

We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living. [...]



**BOBBY SEALE (LEFT) AND HUEY NEWTON FOUNDED THE  
BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE IN 1966**

***3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.***

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

***4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.***

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

***5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society.***

*We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.*

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

**6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.**

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

**7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.**

We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense. [...]

**8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.**

We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

**9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.**

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

**10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.**

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. *That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.* Prudence, indeed, will dictate that

governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. *But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariable the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.*

### **QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

- 1. *What new services would the Black Panthers like to see the federal government provide?***
- 2. *Why did the Black Panthers encourage African Americans to carry guns?***
- 3. *What famous document do the Black Panthers paraphrase in point #10? Why do you think this was done?***
- 4. *Would it be fair to call the Black Panther Party a socialist organization? Explain your answer.***
- 5. *Do you think that African Americans could be rightfully considered a nation? Why or why not?***

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## **QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

- 1. What new services would the Black Panthers like to see the federal government provide?** The Black Panthers want the federal government to create full employment by providing jobs to anyone who wants one, to improve education, and to eliminate the draft for Black people. In short, they want “land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.”
- 2. Why did the Black Panthers encourage African Americans to carry guns?** In order to protect themselves from police brutality. Plus, since the police are not protecting them properly, African Americans should exercise their constitutional rights and arm themselves.
- 3. What famous document do the Black Panthers paraphrase in point #10? Why do you think this was done?** The paraphrased document is the Declaration of Independence. This was probably done for several reasons. 1) to compare the tyrannical nature of the current American government with the tyrannical government of Britain during the American Revolution. 2) To declare, in essence, independence from that tyrannical, government in an effort to consider the creation of their own nation,
- 4. Would it be fair to call the Black Panther Party a socialist organization? Explain your answer.** Student answers will vary. Some evidence from the document that might give the impression of socialism is the following: “obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income... the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people... into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
- 5. Do you think that African Americans could be rightfully considered a nation? Why or why not?** Student answers will vary.



## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS**



### **Black Panther Party Activism**

**After watching the Black Panther documentary film and reading about the history of the Black Panther Political Party, please reflect upon these ideas. Answer the following questions. Be ready to share with the class.**

- 1. What are social activism and political activism?**
- 2. What disputes raged over racial inequality and civil rights that led to the formation of the political party, The Black Panthers?**
- 3. What was The Black Panther Party Platform? Highlight two or three of their Ten Point Platform that interests you.**
- 4. Discuss one of the leaders of the the Black Panther Party as well their leadership style and successes [such as Bobby Seale or Angela Davis].**
- 5. Give an example of a popular community program organized and run by the Black Panthers. What led to its popularity and how did it help the community [such as their free breakfast programs for school children].**
- 6. Compare and contrast police brutality during the 1960's and today.**
- 7. Do any of theTen Black Panther Party Platform Points relate to the struggles of today? Explain.**

# RESOURCES

# **Black Panther**

## **Marvel Studios**

### **Premiere February 2018**

**PG-132018 · Action · 2h 14m**

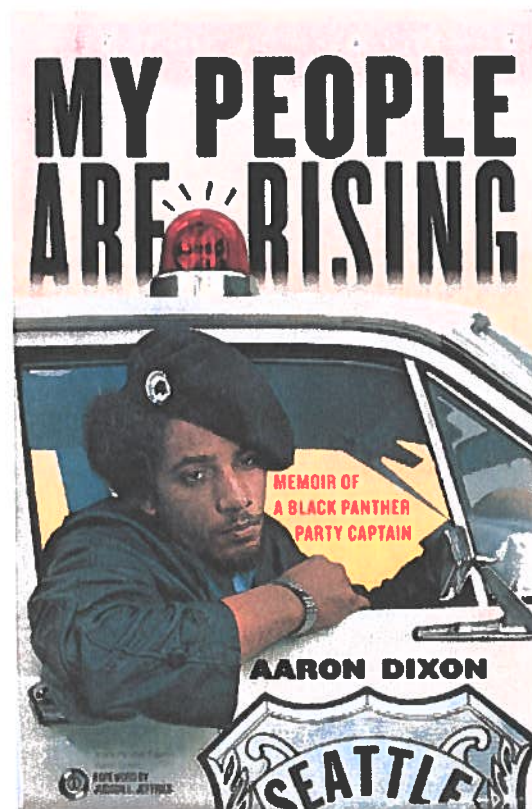


# **MY PEOPLE ARE RISING: A MEMOIR OF A BLACK PANTHER PARTY CAPTAIN**

**Haymarket Books**

**October 2012**

**Author Aaron Dixon**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

# Civil Rights Poster

**Overview:** If you were alive during the 60s & 70s. Which of the Civil Rights movements would you have supported? Now is your opportunity to let your opinion be seen. Use the space provided below to create a political button that reflects an image and tone that is symbolic of the sentiments of the movement you would have supported.



## PROTEST MOVEMENTS

-Non Violent African American CRM

**-Black Panthers**

- Women's Lib Movement

- United Farm Workers

-Chicano Youth Movement

- American Indian Movement

- Asian American Movement

- Disabled Rights Movement

- Gay Liberation Movement

**Directions:** Using your knowledge of the movement to create a political flyer that reflects their goals. Be original, inspired and influential. Use bright colors and symbolic images so that your voice can be heard and your stance understood. **FULL COLOR- NO WHITE**

**Write up:** Describe why you would have supported this movement. **MUST FILL ENTIRE SPACE**

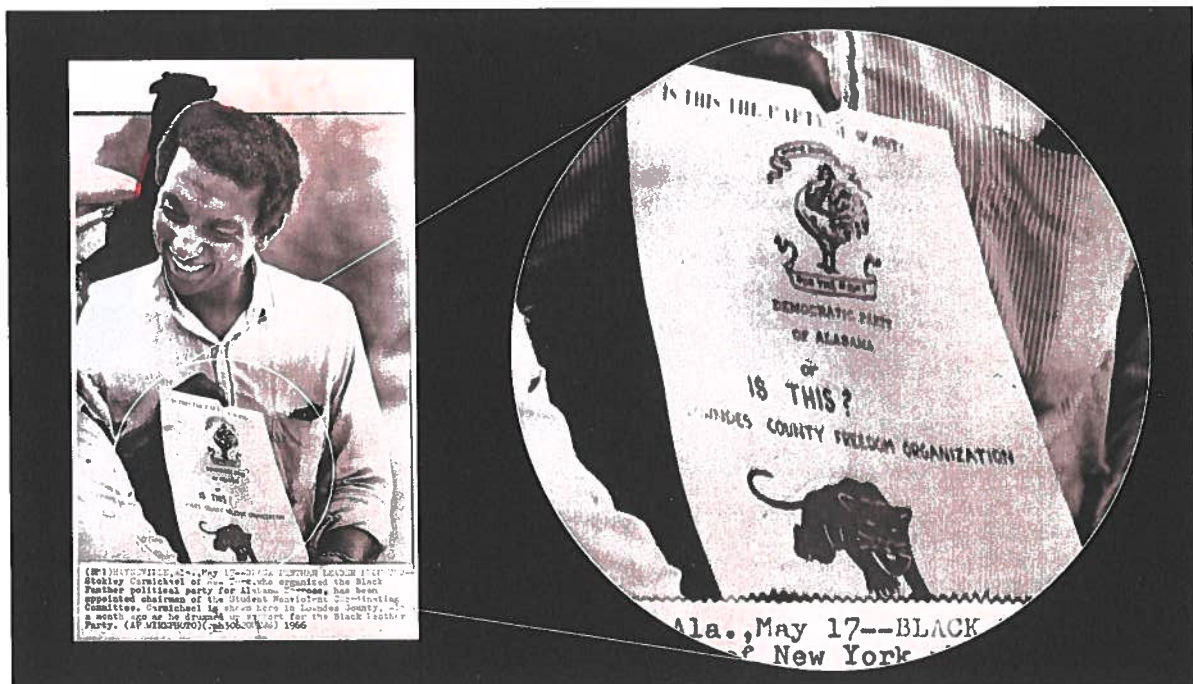
This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Three important Women in the Black Panther Party  
were  
Kathleen Cleaver, Elaine Brown, and Angela Davis.



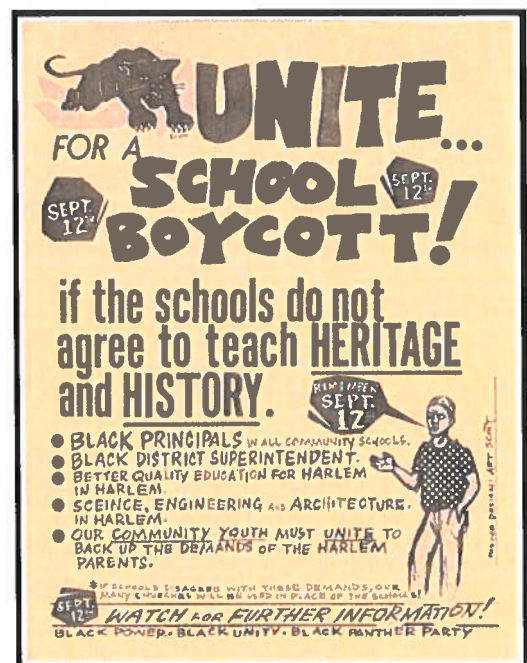
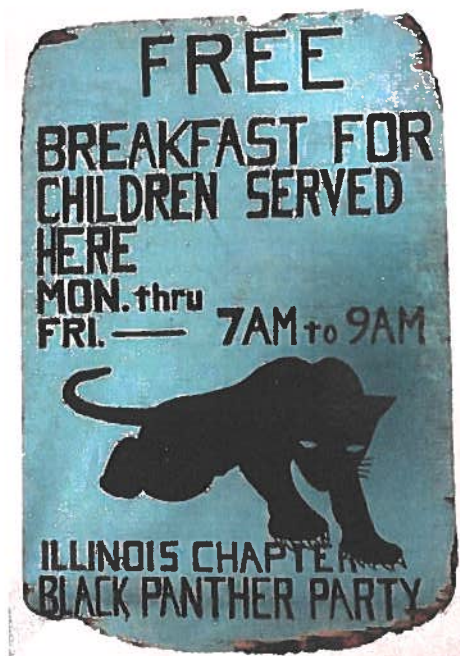
One of the first contributions women made: the Black Panther logo.

Back in 1966, a racist White group in Lowndes County, Alabama, had a white rooster as a symbol. Some Black activists thought the best way to fight a white rooster was with a black cat!





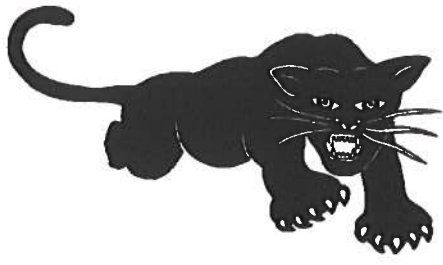
This logo was used for many Black Panther Party events and programs.





70% of the Black Panther Party members were women. Women led and participated in everything the Party did.





The Black Panther Party logo, the art of Emory Douglas, and the #SayHerName Women of the Black Panther Party mural all remind us of the contributions of brave, strong, and proud Black women to the fight for Black empowerment.



# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

Huey Newton | Bobby Seale

## The Trial of Huey P. Newton

Founder member of the Black Panthers, Huey P. Newton was arrested in October 1967 after killing a police officer, John Frey, at a traffic stop. He was wounded in the incident and was convicted of manslaughter, but the conviction was later overturned.

A vigorous campaign to prove Newton's innocence was launched and even though he was incarcerated for three years, the campaign dramatically increased the Panthers profile across America.

In 1974 Newton was also accused of the murder of a prostitute and he fled with his wife to Cuba to avoid prosecution. He returned to America in 1977 to stand trial for the murder and another assault, but witnesses declined to testify against him.

Newton was murdered in 1989 by a member of a street gang who Newton had become involved with. Throughout his life, revolutionary politics was compromised by organised crime and violence.



## Armed resistance in Oakland, California.

In the early 1960s, the region of America that saw the most dramatic changes was the south, as Martin Luther King successfully challenged segregation and voter suppression. However, in other parts of America, such as the northern states and California where Jim Crow laws had never applied, very little changed. Racism in these states was not codified into the law, but was experienced by black Americans in different ways. Poverty, poor housing, ghettos and hidden discrimination in the workplace were constant features of life for black Americans outside the south, in addition to police harassment and violence. In 1966, the year when black power became a new way of thinking across the civil rights movement, a political party, the Black Panther Party for Self Defence was established in Oakland, California. The party initially was a self defence force that patrolled black neighbourhoods and monitored police activity. Its founders, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, both believed that the police were the most dangerous threat to the black community and that black people should protect themselves





## Survival Programs

The Black Panther Party was more than just an organisation for self defence. It was method of community organisation. The party organised a free breakfast for children programme for poor black families. It ensured that black children were fed by their community before going to school.

It enabled the party to educate black children and parents in political ideas and black history. Distributing free clothes, hosting meetings about politics and economics, free medical clinics, self defence classes and legal help for black Americans who faced racist police harassment were other services the party provided.

Families whose loved ones were in prison were offered free transportation to visit them and black prisoners who had no visitors were assigned volunteers to connect with them. Growing problems of drug and alcohol addiction in black ghettos were also treated by the party who helped addicts find rehabilitation and recovery. All these activities were designed to strengthen the community and bring about social and political empowerment.

using their rights to bear arms under the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution. They viewed the Oakland Police (which was 97.5 percent white) as an army of occupation in black neighbourhoods. Non violent methods of struggle became less popular by 1966 among a younger generation of activists and both Seale and Newton had been part of previous civil rights organisations. They believed that most civil rights organisations had sought to accommodate or find compromise with white racism and not resist it. Both men were inspired by writings from anti imperial revolutionaries across the third world, from Africa to Asia and South America where struggles against European colonialism were ongoing. They saw police violence and their own impoverished, crime blighted communities as two parts of the same oppression of black Americans and saw their new party as a 'community survival organisation'. Huey Newton believed that the anger of black Americans in the ghettos that erupted in the mid 1960s as riots against police brutality could be used as a political force. This was a philosophy that in 1966 was unique among the various black power organisations. The Black Panther Party was formed when Newton and Seale heard the black power activist Stokely Carmichael speak at Berkeley University and they used borrowed the black panther symbol, already used by the



Lowndes County Freedom Organisation, a black power group from Alabama. They organised armed patrols of men with shotguns in uniforms. Panthers wore blue shirts, black leather jackets and berets and carried guns with live ammunition. They tailed police cars in black neighbourhoods and when confronted were able to recite the law to show they had done nothing wrong. They threatened to prosecute officers who abused their power and they challenged the right of Oakland's police to rule the streets of black neighbourhoods, often acting as if they were above the law. The party's newspaper 'Black Panther' published the party's ten point manifesto.

- 1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*
- 2. We want full employment for our people.*
- 3. We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.*
- 4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.*
- 5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.*
- 6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.*
- 7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.*
- 8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.*
- 9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.*
- 10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.*

### *The secret war against the Panthers*

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover became obsessed with the Black Panther Party. He was convinced that they were communists and the greatest threat to the USA during the 1960s. These views were wild exaggerations and were motivated by Hoover's own racism and obsessive anti communism. An operation called COINTELPRO was established by the FBI to destroy the movement. The operation wanted to

- \* Stop black power groups from organising together.
- \* Discredit black leaders from Martin Luther King to Stokely Carmichael to the Black Panther leadership
- \* Stir up rivalry and violence between the Black Panthers and black street gangs.
- \* Conduct armed raids on Black Panther members homes. Illinois Black Panther chairman Fred Hampton was shot dead in his own bed under a hail of 80 FBI and police bullets in 1969.