The Black Panther Party
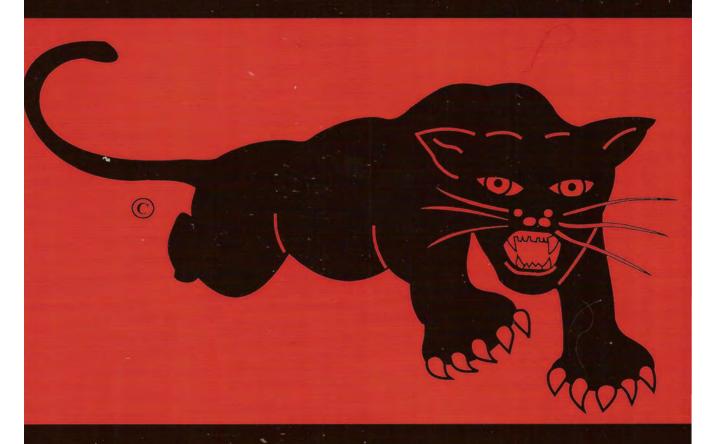
SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE PROGRAMS

The Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation

EDITED BY **David Hilliard**   FOREWORD BY **Cornel West**

The Black Panther Party

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Edited and with an Afterword by David Hilliard

Foreword by Cornel West

We had seen Watts rise up the previous year. We had seen how the police attacked the Watts community after causing the trouble in the first place. We had seen Martin Luther King come to Watts in an effort to calm the people, and we had seen his philosophy of nonviolence rejected. Black people had been taught nonviolence; it was deep in us. What good, however, was nonviolence when the police were determined to rule by force? We had seen the Oakland police and the California Highway Patrol begin to carry their shotguns in full view as another way of striking fear into the community. We had seen all this, and we recognized that the rising consciousness of Black people was almost at the point of explosion. One must relate to the history of one's community and to its future. Everything we had seen convinced us that our time had come . . .

Huey P. Newton, "The Founding of the Black Panther Party,"
taken from his autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*

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Foreword

The emergence of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, in 1966 was one of the great moments in the history of the struggle for Black freedom and deep democracy in the United States of America. This courageous and visionary group of young Black people decided to highlight the fundamental pillar of white supremacy and antidemocratic practice against Black people—namely, the vicious and unaccountable repressive actions of white police power over Black folk. Like Ida B. Wells-Barnett's heroic stance against the red terror of lynching and Jim Crow over a century ago, the Black Panther Party tried to exert democratic control over the arbitrary public violence of the U.S. nation-state that maimed and murdered Black citizens. Such organized efforts are rare in American history because they always result in Black leaders and activists paying the ultimate price of death and destruction. The Black Panther Party—led by Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, David Hilliard, and others—took up this gallant challenge in the midst of the great awakening in the 1960s.

The founding of the precious experiment of democracy in the United States was based, in large part, on the niggerization of African peoples. This centuries-long process of niggerization was not simply the enslavement and exploitation of Black people. It also aimed to keep Black people scared, intimidated, disrespectful, and distrustful of each other and doomed to helplessness and hopelessness. The basic goals of niggerization were to promote white greed and hatred; its primary strategies to secure these goals were racist ideology that degrades and devalues Black people and racist violence that terrorizes Black people. The threat to American apartheid led by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X in the '60s initiated a great democratic awakening, especially among young Black people. This awakening was the deniggerization of Black

people—the process of turning scared, intimidated, helpless folk into bold, brave, hopeful people willing to live and die for Black freedom.

The Black Panther Party was the most advanced organized effort to exemplify this awakening. In other words, it was the highest form of deniggerization in niggerized America. The Black Panther Party was the greatest threat to American apartheid because it was indigenous in composition, interracial in strategies and tactics, and international in vision and analysis. It was indigenous in that it spoke to the needs and hopes of the local community, as can be seen in the historic Survival Program of the party. It combined bread-and-butter issues of everyday people with deep democratic empowerment in the face of an oppressive status quo. It was interracial in that it remained open to strategic alliances and tactical coalitions with progressive brown, red, yellow, and white activists. And it was international in that it understood American apartheid in light of anti-imperial struggles around the world, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The revolutionary politics of the Black Panther Party linked the catastrophic conditions of local Black communities (with the disgraceful school systems, unavailable health and child care, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, escalating rates of imprisonment, and pervasive forms of self-hatred and self-destruction) to economic inequality in America and colonial or neocolonial realities in the capitalist world-system. Needless to say, this great awakening was too much for the American establishment. The FBI-led war against the Black Panther Party led to Black death and destruction.

Yet forty years later, the phoenix now rises from the ashes. We will never forget the vision, courage, and sacrifice of the Black Panther Party's gallant effort to view the people's needs as holy, people's power as democratic, and people's hopes as precious. Indeed, so holy, democratic, and precious that we now struggle for a new great awakening that shatters the sleepwalking in our own time. And the Black Panther Party remains the enabling and ennobling wind at our backs!

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Cornel West
Princeton University

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Introduction

Emerging from the tumultuous first half of the 1960s, the founding of the Black Panther Party by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in October 1966 marked the beginning of a new era for a tired, troubled, and confused America. One phrase, simultaneously both a flat statement of resistance to impoverished conditions of life and a stirring cry to action to change those conditions, best characterizes and sums up this new epoch. It was a phrase initiated by the Black Panther Party in its early days in Oakland, California, which spread like wildfire across this land—north, east, south, and west—calling forth the emergence of hitherto unknown numbers of Black, poor, and dispossessed people into conscious political activity, in their own name and in their own interests. Five simple words seized America's soul in an attempt to make it whole: "All Power to the People!"

From its founding, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (the phrase "for Self-Defense" was later dropped) has been assailed and vilified in the mass media, its leaders hounded and harassed by local and federal law enforcement agencies, and its membership and supporters threatened and intimidated at every turn. Through it all, the Black Panther Party has survived.

The reasons for this phenomenal resiliency in the face of tremendous obstacles and odds lies, in the final analysis, with the people—the communities served by the Black Panther Party programs and who, in turn, sustain the Black Panther Party through their heartfelt contributions of time and energy, devotion and love. In short, People's Power: that boundless and bold enthusiasm carefully and cautiously granted to those who serve the people's interest.

Contrary to misleading stories and scandalous misrepresentations, the Black Panther Party did not originate simply as an armed and violent response to police brutality and murder. The Black Panther Party is not, and never has

been, a group of angry young Black "militants" full of hatred and fury toward the White Establishment.

Rather, from the outset in 1966, when Huey P. Newton and other early party members began their historic patrols of the Oakland Police Department armed with law books to explain to members of the community their basic constitutional rights, the Black Panther Party has attempted to provide an example to the community of what is possible and to raise the people's political consciousness so that we can all step forward with dignity and courage.

Programs and Achievements

Let us turn to the programs and achievements of the Black Panther Party and try to assess them for what they really are. Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren, the most well-known Black Panther Party program, is actually only one of nearly two dozen ongoing community-based activities and programs that the Black Panther Party sponsors. We have also included in this volume poetry, songs, and artwork that together make up the basis for a new, progressive People's Culture, one that roots itself in the notions of friendship and cooperation between all people. Last, in a section of book excerpts, we present the theoretical analysis that underlies the Black Panther Party and its programs.

Although this does not present the whole story, we, the editors of the fall *CoEvolution Quarterly*, feel confident knowing that task is not ours. The final chapter, yet unwritten, belongs to the people—all humankind—as they forge through their own efforts and lives a world free of the troubles that plague us today. All we can do is record their magnificent achievements.

All Power to the People

Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program

I.

The Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program was the first survival program to be implemented by the Black Panther Party. Initiated in Oakland, California, the breakfast program provided a free, hot, and nutritionally balanced breakfast for any child who attended the program. By 1969, there were hundreds of breakfast programs throughout the country. A top government official was forced to admit, "The Panthers are feeding more kids than we are."

As was the purpose of the program, many groups, individuals, and organizations have taken the example and initiated programs of their own. Many Panther breakfast programs have been completely taken over by such groups and are functioning on their own. Guidelines for setting up a program in your home or community follow:

Sample Menu for One Week

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
Scrambled eggs	Eggs	Eggs
Grits	Home fries	Grits
Bacon	Ham	Bacon
Toast and jelly	Toast and jam	Toast and jam
Juice or milk	Milk or juice	Milk or juice

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Hot cakes	French toast
Sausage	Bacon
Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit
Hot chocolate	Hot chocolate

Charles Bursey, Black Panther Party member, serves food for the Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program, Oakland, California, ca. 1970. This program inspired and laid the groundwork for the school breakfast programs that exist today. Other name unknown. Photo by Ruth-Marion Baruch.

II.

The minimum requirements for facilities and equipment include a building capable of holding at least fifty people such as a recreation center, church, or office building, and each facility must be equipped with kitchen equipment. Kitchen equipment includes a stove with at least four burners and an oven, and an adequate amount of large restaurant-size pots, pans, and serving utensils. For the purpose of serving a large number of children on a rotating basis with speed and efficiency, there must be an adequate amount of paper and plastic eating utensils such as paper cups, plates, and napkins; plastic knives, forks, and spoons. A minimum of 1,600 of each unit should be on hand to start a free breakfast program in any large poverty-stricken area.

The facility must be equipped with tables and chairs to seat fifty children at one time, and also there must be some room for seating children who may have to wait for a short while before eating.

There should be ample space to hang or place the children's cloaks, coat hangers, and so forth.

Party volunteers prepare food for the Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program, Oakland, California, ca. 1970. Names unknown. Photo by Ruth-Marion Baruch.

There must be ample waste disposal units on the premises. Usually two or three thirty-gallon garbage pails will be sufficient for each day's operation. Ample refrigeration and/or freezer space must be available for storing perishable foods.

There must also be a reception table set up with a sign-in book in which accurate records may be kept of names, addresses, and ages of the children who participate in the program.

III.

There should be a minimum of ten persons working on a breakfast program. Their duties should be defined as follows:

    2 persons on traffic control helping the children across the streets
    1 person doing the sign-in book operation (i.e., receptionist)
    1 person taking wraps (coats, hats)
    4 servers and table attendants
    2 cooks

Participant in the
Black Panther Party's
Free Breakfast for
Schoolchildren
Program, Oakland,
California, ca. 1970.
Name unknown.
Photo by Pirkle Jones.

IV.

Funds for operating a free breakfast program can come from a variety of sources, such as local merchants in a surrounding community, private donors, foundations, churches, and other venues.

Having the program operate out of a church has the advantage of the tax-free status of a nonprofit organization. With the church receiving the donations on behalf of the free breakfast program, letters soliciting funds and goods may be mailed out. People working with the program may openly solicit donations from businesses in the community, giving those who donate a receipt so they can legally claim their donation as a tax exemption.

V.

The best way to involve community members in the program is to let them know about the program and what its needs are. This may be done by contacting the parents of the children who come to the breakfast program. These parents may

be asked to volunteer one day per week to work in the program or perhaps go out and help solicit funds or food for the program. There should also be community meetings held to explain the program and to recruit volunteers.

VI.

The program will raise consciousness in the form of people participating in a program that they put together themselves to serve themselves and their children.

People will come to understand a concept of getting businesspeople in the community to give something back to the community and do so in a way that the businesspeople can understand.

The consciousness of the children will be raised in that they will see someone outside the structure of their own family working in their interest and motivated by love and concern.

Free Food Program

The Black Panther Party's Free Food Program provides free food to Black and other oppressed people. The current spiraling of food prices makes it increasingly difficult for Black and other poor people to buy good quality, nutritious food for their families. The long-range effect of high food prices can be devastating for children who need nourishing food in order to develop strong, mentally alert adult bodies.

Huey P. Newton, leader and chief theoretician of the Black Panther Party, says in explaining the party's survival programs:

> We recognized that in order to bring the people to the level of consciousness where they would seize the time, it would be necessary to serve their interests in survival by developing programs that would help them to meet their daily needs . . . All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation . . .

The intent of the Free Food Program is to supplement the groceries of Black and poor people until economic conditions allow them to purchase good food at reasonable prices.

The Free Food Program provides two basic services to the community:

Community members receiving bags of food from the Black Panther Party's Free Food Program, ca. 1972. Location, names, and photographer unknown.

1) An ongoing supply of food to meet their daily needs
2) Periodic mass distributions of food to reach a larger segment of the community than can be serviced from the ongoing supply

The community is provided with bags of fresh food containing items such as eggs, canned fruits and vegetables, chickens, milk, potatoes, rice, bread, cereal, and so forth. A minimum of a week's supply of food is included in each bag.

The Free Food Program requires a number of facilities and equipment. A building or warehouse or other facility is required from which to distribute the food on an ongoing basis. For the periodic mass distributions, trucks or large vans are needed. Depending on the number of people to be serviced, one or more buildings will be needed for storing the food. Refrigerators are required to prevent spoiling of meat and other perishable items. At least two cars or other vehicles must be available to transport those persons responsible for the procurement of the food. Finally, an office or communications center must be set up from which information about the program may be disseminated and questions about its services may be answered.

Community Workers' Day celebration, Arroyo Viejo Park, Oakland, California, July 22, 1972. Names unknown. Photo by Hank Lebo.

A minimum of six people is required to coordinate the Free Food Program. In order to cover as wide an area as possible, two people are responsible for the procurement of the food. The program depends almost entirely on donations of grocery store owners and wholesale food dealers. Once a collective decision is made as to how many people the program will service on an ongoing basis and how many will be serviced in the periodic mass distributions, procurement personnel will determine what food items must be purchased and in what quantity. They will need to visit as many grocery store managers or owners as possible, explain the purpose of the Free Food Program, and show the managers how their contributions will benefit the overall survival of the community. Procurement personnel may wish to concentrate on getting one specific food item from an individual manager or they may choose to get many items in the greatest number possible.

Two people must coordinate the transport and storage of the food until it is distributed. They will have to rely on community help in securing trucks and other vans in which to transport the food, and warehouses or other buildings in

which to store the food. Churches are often very willing to make space available for food storage and also for distribution of the food. Personnel working in this area of the program must visit a number of people in the community in order to secure the needed facilities and equipment for transportation and storage.

Publicity is key to the success of the program, both in its ongoing aspect and for the mass intensive publicity campaign. Flyers must be distributed in large numbers throughout the community in a variety of places such as churches, schools and colleges, grocery stores, at sports events, and so forth. Posters should be placed in areas where a maximum number of people will see them. Radio advertising time, especially on Black-oriented stations, must be purchased. It may be possible to obtain this time free of charge by having such information advertised as part of the station's public service announcements. Newspapers should be contacted about doing one or more articles on the program. Publicity personnel may wish to speak at various community meetings or at church services in order to explain the program.

Even though most of the food may be secured free of charge, it will still be necessary to raise funds for printing of posters, flyers, radio advertisements, and any rental of facilities necessary. At least one person must coordinate fund-raising and assume the primary responsibility for determining how much money will be needed for operating expenses and then allocating the money.

A secretary must be available in the office to handle all requests for food and to answer the community's questions concerning the program. The secretary must keep an accurate record of requests made so that the procurement personnel will have a clear idea of how much food is needed by the particular community being serviced.

Funds are secured from grocery store owners or managers and other businessmen; churches; social clubs such as fraternities or sororities; college or high school student organizations; and from on-the-street donation drives. The persons responsible for procurement of money must develop close contacts with all such organizations, with particular emphasis on community leaders who will hopefully be able to convince the community at large of the importance of the program. Once organizations decide that they wish to make financial contributions to the program, they may develop a variety of ways to raise the money such as a church bake sale or a student union dance. The persons handling fund-raising should also make suggestions to the organizations on how they could raise money.

Community personnel become involved in the program through the

organizing efforts of the Free Food Program's staff. The staff succeeds in getting the community to really run the Free Food Program by requesting community persons to donate the use of their cars or other vehicles for transportation; asking them to work as drivers of these vehicles; seeking ideas for fund-raising from them and working with them on a consistent basis to raise the funds; getting them to distribute flyers and other publicity materials; and most important, securing their help in the actual distribution of the food. At first, people may doubt that it is possible for them to receive free food, but once they see the seriousness of the program, they will want to participate in order for the program to be successful.

Point Three of the Ten-Point Program of the Black Panther Party states: "We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities." This robbery is clearly pronounced in the ridiculously high prices that we must pay for food, which is necessary for our daily sustenance. That is why everyone in the community, particularly those who are the poorest and most oppressed, can have their consciousness raised through the Free Food Program. The community begins to organize in protest against food stores that exploit them and in fact may even boycott these stores until their prices conform to what the community can afford to pay. Those who own and manage the stores will seek to lower their prices in order to maintain their business in the community and as a result will become unified with the people in the fight against economic exploitation.

I Know Who You Are

I know who you are
I've seen what you do
Your smile has a way
Of soothing a wound
The face of the man
Who'd make all men free
Is the face of the man
Who says he loves me

You're the free man
That is, the man
Who can make us free
You're THE man
And, you're my man
Forever . . .

I know who you are
I know of your pain
You've seen all your people
In shackles and chains
But you know what to do
Yes, I swear that you do
Yes, I swear that you do
You will make them be free
Just as you've made me

You're the free man
That is, the man
Who can make us free
You're THE man
And, you're my man
Forever . . .

I know who you are
I know where you've been
So you'll go where you must
Fight to the end
But do what you do
I know you have to
And I'll be along
'Cause you've made me strong

You're the free man
That is, the man
Who can make us free
You're THE man
And, you're my man
Forever . . .

Afterword

How Did You Guys Start
All Those Programs?

The original vision of the Black Panther Party was structured by the practical needs of the people, not by rhetoric and ideology. The failure of city and federal administrators to address the basic needs of the community was the reason we created our survival programs. This book serves as a model for social change movements and so-called "progressive" political leaders to shift the focus from feel-good speeches, entertainment, and publicity to concrete action and the implementation of sorely needed service programs for the people.

We formed the Black Panther Party because we wanted to liberate our community. While we were very young and inexperienced, we overcame many obstacles on the path to building our organization. Party members implemented the survival programs, and our "Service to the People" model became a tool by which we educated the masses. Huey Newton, leader of our party, said that the survival programs were "not revolutionary nor reformist but a tactic and strategy by which we organized the people." We understood that in order to transform society it was first necessary to survive economic and social oppression.

Our experiences in the Black Panther Party offer many important lessons for our communities. Many of the issues facing the economically disadvantaged today are the same as they were in the '60s and '70s. Billions of dollars are spent

on the war in Iraq while our schools are underfunded, millions of American citizens are denied basic health care, many lack jobs paying decent wages, and crime is rampant in our communities. This book makes the case for the Black Panther Survival Programs as a model to address some of these basic social injustices and economic problems. It is a practical guide for all the students and activists who continually ask, "How did you guys start all those programs?"

David Hilliard

The Black Panther Party represents Party members' coordinated responses to the failure of city, state, and federal bureaucrats to address the basic needs of their respective communities. The Black Panther Party pioneered free social service programs that are now in the mainstream of American life.

The Black Panther Party's Sickle-Cell Anemia Research Foundation, operated with Oakland's Children's Hospital, was among the nation's first such testing programs. Its Free Breakfast Program served as a model for national programs. Other initiatives included free clinics, grocery giveaways, school and education programs, senior programs, and legal aid programs.

Published here for the first time in book form, *The Black Panther Party* makes the case that these methods are viable models for addressing the persistent, basic social injustices and economic problems of today's American cities and suburbs.

The Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation was created in Oakland, California, to honor the legacy and the original vision of the Black Panther Party and founder Huey P. Newton.

David Hilliard is a founding member of the Black Panther Party and a cofounder of the Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation. He is author, co-author, or editor of eight additional books, including *Huey, Spirit of the Panther, The Huey P. Newton Reader,* and *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service 1967–1980.* He is currently working with former Black Panther Party leader Elaine Brown on an eight-hour miniseries to be produced by HBO on the history of the Black Panther Party.

Cornel West is professor of religion and African American studies at Princeton University. Among his most recent books are *Democracy Matters, The African-American Century, The War Against Parents, The Future of American Progressivism,* and *Race Matters.*

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