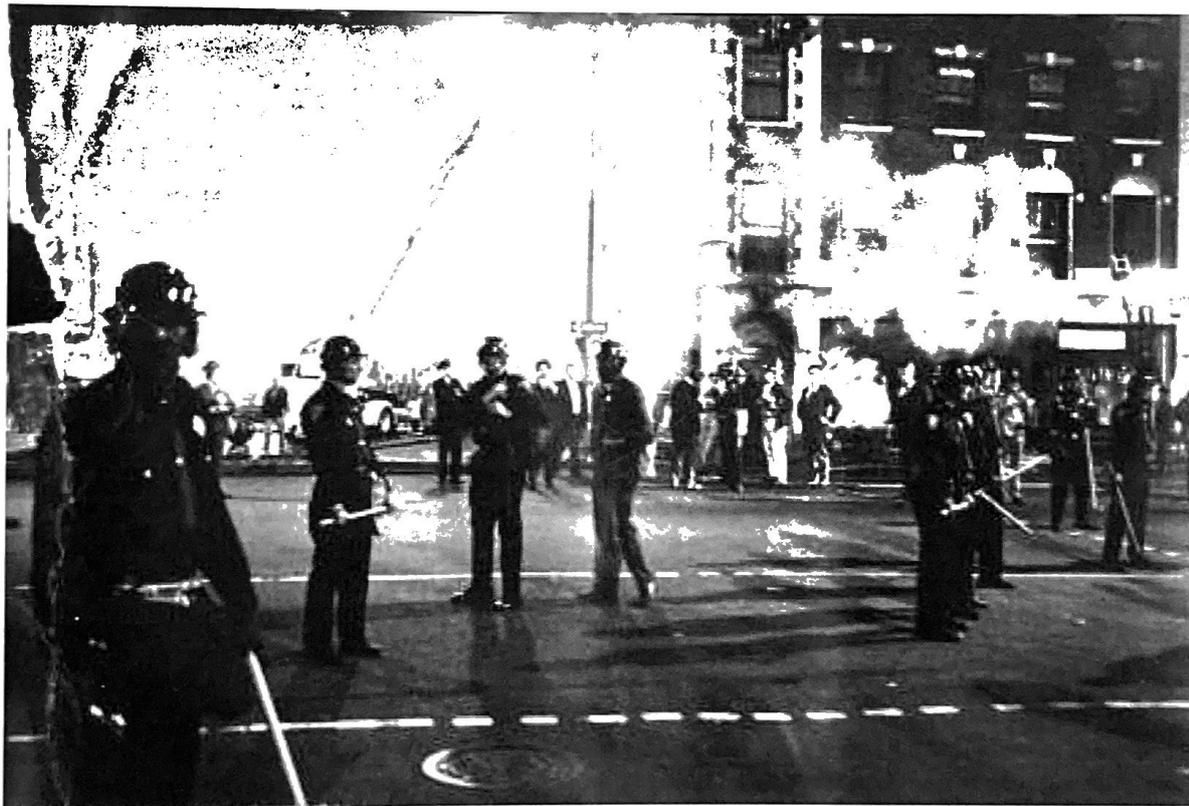


# The Black Panther Party of Connecticut



Jamie J. Wilson

Published by

The Amistad Committee, New Haven, Connecticut

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**Jamie J. Wilson**

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Cover illustration: May 2, 1970, Fire at 195 Church Street, across the street from the New Haven Green. Confrontations occurred between police and protestors after the May Day rally (courtesy of the *Hartford Courant*, photo by Al Ferreira).

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## Foreword

The Amistad Committee concerns itself with the African American freedom struggle and recognizes that black people have struggled for freedom and equality since the first days that enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas. Hundreds of years of slavery and racism corrupted the economy, politics, and sensibilities of the country so much so that the famous dictum that “white workers will never be free when black workers are in chains” was a truism difficult to grasp well into the late twentieth century.

Anticolonial movements throughout the Third World and socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the post-World War II era influenced the Black Panthers. Their emergence, as Wilson notes, came from the realization that voting rights and federal government efforts had not solved problems plaguing black communities. Whether or not one agrees with the Panthers’ tactics or strategies, one must certainly recognize the stark reality of their demands. That the FBI and state authorities worked to obstruct and destroy this organization should shock every reader. The conditions against which the Black Panthers rebelled still haunt African American communities along with millions of whites, Latinos, and Native Americans. Thus, the struggle against institutional racism and structural inequality continues.

The Amistad Committee has published this document to recognize the Black Panther Party as an important organization in the long struggle to rid our country of the cancer of racism. While it deals with the Black Panther Party of Connecticut, it is, undoubtedly, with different names and locations, a page in the national struggle for equality in our country.

Alfred L. Marder  
President, Amistad Committee, Inc.

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The photographs are provided by the *The Haven Register*, *Hartford Courant*, and the Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library

Thank you to my dear wife, Staci, who, along with reading drafts of this work, put up with my general disorderliness when researching and writing. She is my rock and my love.

Finally, thank you to all my ancestors, known and unknown, who allowed me this opportunity.

About the author

Jamie Wilson is Associate Professor of History at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts and author of *Building a Healthy Black Harlem* (2009) and *Civil Rights Movement* (2013).

## **A Brief History of the Black Panther Party**

### **The Early Years**

Originally called the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Black Panther Party (BPP) was a radical African American political organization established in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey P. Newton (1942-1989), Minister of Self-Defense, and Bobby Seale (1936-), Chairman. Although the group's organizational beginnings can be traced to October 1966 with the creation of the "Black Panther Party Platform and Program," a manifesto outlining the group's ideological and political perspectives and goals with respect to housing issues, educational and economic opportunities, police violence, and African American disenfranchisement, the BPP is a continuation of black freedom struggles that began with the first rebellions against slavery and captivity in the barracoons, holding cells for enslave Africans, centuries ago. Black Panther Party members perceived themselves as a vanguard party who mobilized the black lumpenproletariat, those unemployed members of the black working classes without political consciousness, and gave voice to the needs and desires of poor, segregated, urban communities that had not benefited from the legal victories of the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout their sixteen year existence, from 1966-1982, the Party's political perspective and activity was marked by ideological flexibility, adaptability, and hybridization—a fusion of ideas from post-World War II black liberation struggles in the United States and anti-colonial struggles throughout the

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third world. Their most ostensible influences were Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, Mao Zedong, Robert F. Williams, Kwame Nkrumah, Fidel Castro, V.I. Lenin, and Karl Marx.

Violent police brutality, hallmarks of many black, urban communities of the late 1960s, determined the Party's initial black nationalist perspective and their political activity. Newton, as the Party's theoretician, saw black urban neighborhoods as colonies occupied by the police force whose brutal surveillance were geared toward maintaining black exploitation. This approach led the small group of activists to focus on armed community patrols of the police. Equipped with pistols, shotguns, and law books, Newton, Seale, and Bobby Hutton, the first member and treasurer of the organization, traversed the streets of Oakland to ensure that police officers did not violate residents' rights. During patrols, Panthers, with weapons in plain sight, observed police officers carrying out their duty and questioned the detained resident to see if abuse had taken place. If the suspect was arrested, the patrol would pursue the arresting vehicle to the precinct station and post bail for the individual. Newton observed that patrols had a threefold effect: they taught the community how to protect themselves from the police, decreased the incidents of police brutality, and increased the membership of the BPP. As the membership increased so did police patrols of other black neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay area including Berkeley, Richmond, and San Francisco.

In 1967, the Party gained recognition among San Francisco Bay Area communities after it investigated and publicized the fatal police shooting of Denzil Dowell, a Richmond, California resident. During the same year, after providing protection for Betty Shabazz, the widow of the slain leader Malcolm X, the Party attracted new members. Perhaps the most prominent person to join that year was Eldridge Cleaver, the renowned ex-convict and writer for the leftist magazine *Ramparts*, who became the organization's Minister of Information. His writing ability and

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connections with leftist activists were instrumental in attracting new members and helping the Party create the Black Community News Service and *The Black Panther*, a weekly newspaper. The paper was indicative of the BPP's political dexterity in their attempts to empower black communities. *The Black Panther* provided a medium through which Party leadership and members could connect to the communities they served and raise reader consciousness. By 1970 the paper had a weekly circulation of over 100,000.

In the spring of 1967, the BPP gained national attention. On May 2, 1967, Bobby Seale and a contingent of thirty armed Black Panthers orchestrated a political demonstration when they delivered a public announcement called "Executive Mandate Number One" on the stairs of Capitol Building in Sacramento, California. "Executive Mandate Number One" was a written response to the Mulford Gun Bill, legislation that would make carrying weapons illegal. As a result of their political demonstration, Bobby Seale and several other Panthers were arrested and accused of conspiracy. Despite its portrayal of the BPP as a black supremacist group and motley crew of thugs, the mainstream media coverage unknowingly acted as a recruiting mechanism for the organization. After the Sacramento incident, requests poured in from across the country for assistance in creating local chapters of the Black Panther Party. By the end of the decade, the BPP had grown to be a national organization with 40 chapters, more than 5,000 members, and tens of thousands of supporters. By 1969, the Black Panther Party comprised individual chapters unified under one central committee.

### **The Party Goes National**

By 1968, the BPP grew to be larger than its founders had imagined. To connect the work being done in the southern states by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) with

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BPP work in western and northern urban areas, the two organizations attempted a merger. SNCC's Stokely Carmichael was named BPP prime minister; James Forman, minister of foreign affairs; and H. Rap Brown, minister of justice. The merger was short lived and the appointments were largely symbolic as the union was destroyed by organizational mistrust, exacerbated by well-placed counter-intelligence by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and differing leadership styles. With Huey Newton as the BPP leader, authority was centralized. SNCC was best known for its decentralized structure and a belief in the leadership ability of all its members. Further, SNCC was moving closer to a black nationalist perspective and was unwilling to work with white groups. The BPP was moving away from its previous black nationalist perspective toward socialism and was willing to work with any organization that held the best interest of black communities to heart, especially the Peace and Freedom Party.

With the merger between the BPP and SNCC undermined, the BPP Central Committee set out to maintain a cohesive national unit. This proved difficult for the young revolutionaries. From 1967 to 1970, Huey P. Newton was imprisoned for allegedly shooting Patrolman John Frey, assaulting Patrolman Herbert Heanes, and kidnapping Dell Ross, a black motorist. Concurrently, Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale were trying to gain popular support to "Free Huey" and were involved in their own court cases. But all chapters, from the most popular in Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles to the more obscure in Wilmington, Delaware, Omaha, and Denver, were unified around the survival programs, a willingness to re-envision the party platform and revolutionary activity, and government repression.

Survival programs were instituted with the primary objective of transforming social and economic relations within the United States. The Party's survival programs indicate not a "deradicalization" of the BPP or the substitution of a radical approach for a reformist one, but

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rather a willingness to supplement ostensibly radical political activities (mainly armed protection of black communities, rallying for self-determination, running political candidates, building interracial coalitions, and critiquing the intersection of racism and capitalism) with radical work that ensured the survival of black communities nationwide. From 1967 to 1974, BPP chapters throughout the country instituted survival programs addressing the multifaceted needs of urban communities. Some of the most popular include the Free Breakfast for School Children, Free Busing to Prisons Program, Sickle Cell Anemia Research Program, Seniors Against Fearful Environment, Free School Program, Free Pest Control Program, Free Food Program, Free Ambulance Program, Free Plumbing and Maintenance Program, and Liberation Schools. The survival programs were also indicative of the ways BPP members were willing to consistently expand the boundaries of their work and the limits of their perspective.

The 16-year life span of the BPP, especially the first five years, was marked by ideological expansion for the central committee as well as the chapters. From 1966 to 1968, the party line was one of black nationalism, in which the primary vehicle for black liberation was understood to be black community control of community resources and institutions. In time, black nationalism as an ideology was too limiting as it did not consider class issues and was replaced by revolutionary socialism from 1969 to 1970. From this perspective, capitalism did not provide adequate opportunities for the practice of self-determination, even with black community control. Only socialism provided the political and economic spaces for black self-determination and the potential for eradicating racism. By 1970, the Party began to understand its freedom struggle as part of a larger global movement against imperialism and exploitation. With internationalism, the ascendant philosophy from 1970-1971, as Judson Jeffries purports in *Huey P. Newton: The Radical Theorist* (2002), “the Panthers saw their struggle in the United

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States as not only necessary for the liberation of blacks and other oppressed people in America but as a struggle whose success was critical for the liberation of nations worldwide (74).” Intercommunalism developed from Internationalism and was the BPP dominant line from 1971 until the Party’s demise in 1982 and posits the notion that the growth of transnational corporations and economic globalization erased national borders creating scattered communities loosely connected through commodity exchanges. The intellectual progression from black nationalism to intercommunalism represents the Black Panther Party’s attempts to understand and explain forms of subordination and manipulation situated in political and economic realms. In fact, the BPP was one of the first organizations to openly criticize homophobic and sexist tendencies within black political movements.

### **The Repression and Decline of the Black Panther Party**

The Black Panther Party’s zenith was short lived. As early as August 1967, it was targeted by the FBI’s Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) for neutralization. The BPP may have posed a political threat to the established mainstream arena by acting as a nucleus around which many New Left organizations could ally themselves, but it did not pose an offensive physical threat to the country. Despite this, in September 1969, J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), declared that the BPP was a major threat to the domestic security of the United States. The FBI’s repression of BPP chapters was nationwide in scope and utilized a variety of tactics including, but not limited to, manipulating media coverage of the BPP, interrupting the circulation of the *Black Panther*, disrupting survival programs (especially the Free Breakfast for School Children program), obstructing the creation of political alliances, harassing BPP supporters, creating and intensifying internal BPP conflicts, exacerbating tensions

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with other political groups, infiltrating chapters, raiding chapter headquarters, preventing due process in the judicial system, and assassinating Party members. Moreover, of the 295 counterintelligence operations in 1969, 233 were directed toward crippling the Black Panther Party.

The counterintelligence operations affected chapters throughout the country. In 1969 in San Francisco, California, the FBI office gave fraudulent articles to local Jewish organizations declaring David Hilliard, the National Committee chief of staff, an anti-Semite causing the organizations to cancel his lecture. On December 4, 1969, using a floor plan created by William O'Neal, an FBI infiltrator and informant, the Chicago police raided Black Panther leader Fred Hampton's home. Although Hampton was unarmed, police killed him with two close range shots to the head. Throughout the country, FBI operatives convinced grocery stores and supermarkets to stop supporting the Panther's breakfast program, informing managers and owners that the Party used the program to disseminate antipolice propaganda to children. Additionally, parents were told that the Party's breakfast food was contaminated and infected with diseases. Further, to create dissension among the chapters, the FBI office in Philadelphia sent a letter to Huey Newton, allegedly from the Philadelphia BPP chapter, questioning his leadership ability. In his published doctoral dissertation, *War Against the Panthers* (1996), Huey P. Newton noted that COINTELPRO programs "anonymously advised the national headquarters that food, clothing, and drugs collected for BPP community programs were being stolen by [Philadelphia] BPP members (58)." Consequently, the national office transferred and expelled members and considered closing the Philadelphia office.

Besides government-sponsored repression, the Party's centralized leadership may have contributed to its demise. After his release from prison in 1970, Huey Newton became the sole

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authority in Party matters from 1970 to 1974. Manipulated by government misinformation, Newton publicly censured and dismissed individuals key to the Party's history and political activity including Eldridge Cleaver and the International Section of the Party, members of the Los Angeles Chapter, and the entire New York Chapter. In 1973, at the behest of Huey Newton, the Black Panther Party moved into the political arena with its attempt to get Bobby Seale elected as mayor of Oakland. To ensure his victory, Newton proposed that all state offices close and move to Oakland. With members refusing to submit to his decision, chapters across the country closed in protest and individuals resigned from the Party. Some, however, moved to Oakland in 1972 and 1973 to assist in Seale's campaign. When Seale lost the election, many of the transplants lost hope and resigned. With state chapters closed and failed political election, the Party's membership fell to 500. In the summer of 1974 after a vehement disagreement with Huey Newton, Bobby Seale resigned followed by other key members of the deteriorating organization including Audrea Jones.

From 1974 to 1977 with Huey Newton in exile, Elaine Brown assumed the Party's leadership, decentralized power, appointed more women to leadership positions, obtained government funding to operate a school—the Oakland Community School—and ran for public office. Upon Newton's return in 1977 with less than 200 members, Newton, again, took the mantle of leadership until the Party's demise in 1982. With his behaviors becoming more erratic, perhaps due to substance abuse, survival programs were discontinued, funds were mismanaged, and the Party's relationship with the community deteriorated. In 1980, *The Black Panther* was discontinued and in 1982 the school was closed marking the end of the exciting and often turbulent organization.

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That the Black Panther Party existed demonstrates that the immediate post-Civil Rights era was fraught with problems. Despite the passage of civil rights legislation and face-saving rhetoric of politicians, urban black neighborhoods in the late 1960s and early 1970s were facing the conundrum of being politically and economically ignored by policy makers. As young, black revolutionaries, Party members and leaders organized to bring about change and provide services refused by city and state governments. Their militancy provided vivid examples for other communities of color and oppressed groups in the United States and throughout the world. From 1968 to 1987, groups inspired by the names, militancy, and program of the BPP were formed. In 1968 the Black Panther Movement was organized in England. One year later, black Bermudans formed the Black Beret Cadre. The White Panther Party was organized in England in 1970, the Black Panther Party of Israel in 1971, the Black Panther Party of Australia in 1972, and the Dalit Panthers of India in 1987.

In the late 1990s, there was also an emergence of militant stylized-Panther groups in the United States. The opening decade of the 21st century finds several former Panthers in exile or imprisoned for the political beliefs. A host of biographies of former Panthers have appeared and historical research has been published about the Panthers, more needs to be done. By studying the Black Panther Party and other New Left militant organizations, not only does one recover dimensions of working class, radical, and African American history that has been elided from historical texts, but one may also ascertain lessons to more effectively organize the growing impoverished masses who inhabit urban communities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This summary of the Black Panther Party is taken from Jamie Wilson, "The Black Panther Party," *The Encyclopedia of African American History*, Leslie Alexander and Walter Rucker, eds., © 2010 by ABC-CLIO, LLC (No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review, without prior permission in writing from the publisher). All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission of ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara, CA.

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**Table 1. Ideologies of National Black Panther Party, Oakland, California**

Public Ideology	Major influences	Key Concepts/Slogans	How "Us" is defined	Definition of the Enemy	Conception of Era/Task
Left-Wing Nationalism October 1966 to early 1969	Malcom X Frantz Fanon Foco Theory Mao Tse Tung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Militant self-defense with understanding of oppressive nature of the United States Government and Society</li> <li>Community Control</li> <li>Decolonization process</li> <li>Vanguard Party to be copied as "an example to the masses"</li> <li>"Serve the People"</li> <li>Organizing principles</li> </ul>	Black Community and oppressed people of color	Point number 3 of the Black Panther Party Ten Point Platform: "We want an end to the robbery by the White man of our Black Community."	Community Control—October 1966 to June 1968  National Liberation—June 1968 to April 1969
Anti-Colonial Marxism April 1970 to January 1971	Mao Tse Tung Vladimir Lenin Frantz Fanon Che Guevara Fidel Castro Kim Il Sung Karl Marx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liberation movements as revolutionary motive force</li> <li>Anti-imperialism</li> <li>Vanguard Party</li> <li>"We're so proletarian revolutionary intoxicated, we cannot be astronomically intimidated." —Fred Hampton, widely used internal slogan</li> <li>Decolonization process</li> <li>Vanguard Party to be copied as "an example to the masses"</li> <li>"Juche"—Self reliance</li> <li>Class struggle</li> <li>Dialectical materialism</li> </ul>	Black and other oppressed peoples	The capitalist: "We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalist of our Black Community."	Proletarian Revolution—April 1969 to June 1970  Lumpenproletariat-led Revolution—June 1970-June 1982
Intercommunalism February 1971 to June 1982	Huey Newton Karl Marx Mao Tse Tung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lumpenproletariat numbers increasing</li> <li>As the majority, the lumpenproletariat will make socialist revolution</li> <li>Class struggle</li> <li>Dialectical materialism</li> <li>"Serve the People"</li> <li>Organizing Principles</li> </ul>	Intercommunal Communities	The Capitalist: "We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Intercommunal Community"	Now: Reactionary Intercommunalism Future: Revolutionary Intercommunalism

Source: Michael L. Clemmons and Charles E. Jones, "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena," in Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds. *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Ideologies of the Black Panther Party created by Charles "Cappy" Pinderhughes, presented at the Association of Black Sociologists, Atlanta, Georgia, August 14, 2003; printed with permission.

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**Table 2. Black Population in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven, 1950-1970**

City	Black Population, 1950	Percent of Population, 1950	Black Population, 1960	Percent of Population, 1960	Black Population, 1970	Percent of Population, 1970
Bridgeport	6,748	4.2	15,332	9.7	25,546	16.3
Hartford	12,654	7.1	24,855	15.3	44,091	11.8
New Haven	9,705	5.9	22,113	14.5	36,158	26.3

Source: Ralph Pearson, "Interracial Conflict in Twentieth Century Connecticut Cities: The Demographic Factors," *Connecticut History* 17 (January 1976), 1-14.

**Table 3. Black Population in the State of Connecticut, 1950-1970**

Year	Total Population in State	Black Population in State	Percent of Black Population in State
1950	2,007,280	53,472	2.66
1960	2,535,234	107,449	4.23
1970	3,031,709	181,179	5.97

Source: Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and State* (Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, 2002).

## **The Black Panther Party of Connecticut**

### **The Party's Beginnings**

With a life span of four years, from 1969 to 1973, the Black Panther Party's activism and history in the state of Connecticut is as dramatic as it is brief. It has been suggested that chapters existed throughout many municipalities in the state including Bridgeport, Hartford, Middletown, Norwalk, Stamford, and Waterbury. However, the national headquarters of the Black Panther Party only sanctioned the chapter in New Haven. The affiliates in Bridgeport and Hartford were first recognized as Community Information Centers and later as National Chapters to Confront Fascism after the Party's reorganization in 1969. When the New Haven Chapter of the Black Panther Party was organized in the winter and spring of 1969, the organization's headquarters in Oakland, California, was in the process of purging membership rolls throughout the nation. Like African Americans across the country, the Party's ideas and image were appealing to segments of Connecticut's black population and there is no doubt that some individuals may have contacted Panther headquarters in California to start a chapter as early as 1968. Such requests, however, went unanswered.

Activists like Gene Lang donned the style and rhetoric of the Panthers, but were never recognized by the state or national leadership. Lang was one of a handful of black undergraduate students at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. When not dealing with the quotidian realities of emerging adulthood or the vagaries of college life, many of the black students, including Lang, had to reconcile their privileged standing vis-à-vis the black working class and black poor. Lang was probably angry about the state of black America, his position in

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it, the state of the post-Civil Rights Movement era and the plight of blacks in Connecticut, and he was searching for answers. For the teenaged Lang and his black friends, posturing a position of radical militancy associated with the Black Panther Party was a way to reconcile their privileged status and attendance at a predominantly white, New England university with the reality of the black, less privileged lumpenproletariat and “brothers from the block” that the Party spoke to. There is no doubt that their study of Panther ideology may have produced a sea change in their own consciousness, but besides several poorly produced bulletins, newsletters, and diatribes, the black Wesleyan students never produced programmatic initiatives for the few black families living in Middletown and were never recognized by the national headquarters as being a legitimate branch or affiliate of the Party. Despite this J. Edgar Hoover was alarmed and fearing the Party had inundated the state sent a memo to the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of New Haven informing him that “[t]he BPP is active in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Middletown, Connecticut,” and that the agent should forward “counterintelligence maneuvers” on how to neutralize the party.<sup>2</sup>

There was an unorganized Panther presence in the state as early as January 1969. In early 1969 two organizers, José René Gonzalvez and Ericka Huggins, both in their early twenties, were important in creating a structure for interested people. Not much is known about Gonzalvez. He is reported to have been a native of Cuba, fluent in Spanish, and moved to the United States with his parents as an adolescent. In Bridgeport he used his bilingual skills to reach out to the growing Puerto Rican population. There is conflicting evidence about his whereabouts before he arrived in Bridgeport. In December 1968 he sent a letter to Oakland asking to start a chapter in Bridgeport. He informed them that “[w]e are the original Panthers of

<sup>2</sup> Director, FBI, to Special Agent in Charge, New Haven, March 28, 1969, John R. Williams Papers, Box I, Folder I, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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Dover, New Jersey, but due to some problems with the Dover City Police Dept. we were forced to go underground.”<sup>3</sup> Publicly, Gonzalvez informed people that before moving to Bridgeport he resided in the Bay Area of California where he met the Black Panther Party and was trained at Party headquarters in Oakland. Gonzalvez told William Perez of the *Hartford Courant* that “there have been some people trying to organize what they claim to be Black Panther groups in the state before, but he and his associates were “the only ones to have been authorized by national headquarters” to work “underground” to “help the people help themselves.”<sup>4</sup> As such he was in communication with individuals in Hartford, New Haven, Stratford, and Stamford who had expressed interest in being members of the Party.

Ericka Huggins was born into a black working class family and raised in Washington, D.C. After high school she attended Cheyney State College but transferred to Lincoln University, both historically black institutions in Pennsylvania. At Lincoln she met and married John Huggins a Vietnam War veteran. In 1967 the two left Pennsylvania for Los Angeles to be more active participants in the black freedom struggle. Upon enrolling at the University of California, Los Angeles, Ericka and John joined the Black Panther Party. In southern California, the local chapter of the Party was rivaled by the US Organization (“us” as opposed to them), a black nationalist cultural organization whose leader, Ron Karenga, wanted to transform the politics of black America through African and African inspired culture and practices.<sup>5</sup> During a January 1969 feud over the leadership of UCLA’s Black Student Union, John was killed by US

<sup>3</sup> Airtel, FBI to Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to FBI, Director, December 12, 1968, John R. Williams Papers, Box I, Folder I, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>4</sup> William Perez, “Black Panthers Organizing in State,” *Hartford Courant*, February 9, 1969, 1A.

<sup>5</sup> Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

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members. Devastated but determined, the young widow took her newborn and husband's body and moved to New Haven, Connecticut.

Ericka Huggins and Jose Gonzalvez met in February 1969. The two, with the assistance of Elaine Brown, a Panther from Los Angeles who would later become the only woman chairperson of the Party, attempted to organize the East End section of Bridgeport, a multiracial and multiethnic neighborhood. In an interview with William Perez, Gonzalvez maintained that people of color had been "brutalized by the establishment" and that the Panthers would fight "that part of society [that] thrives on racism . . . and lives off the black community."<sup>6</sup>

Building credibility and gaining acceptance and support from the black community in Connecticut was challenging in early 1969. Attacks on other Panther chapters throughout the country, Huey Newton's legal troubles, and the negative press coverage that resulted meant that many black Connecticut residents were reluctant to join or affiliate with the young group. Gonzalvez had only been in the state for several weeks when Edward J. Callum of the Connecticut Citizens Anti-Communist Committee besmirched the nascent organization calling them "revolutionary peddlers of hate" and a "Black Mafia." He used the communist bugaboo to stir fears in whites and blacks across the state by claiming that the creation of the organization in the state was part of a "40 year Communist attempt to agitate Negroes in America."<sup>7</sup> Callum's fears were echoed in the memos and files sent between the Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New Haven Office and J. Edgar Hoover. Although an official Connecticut Chapter was not recognized by national Panther headquarters until March 1969, J.

<sup>6</sup> William Perez, "Black Panthers Organizing in State," *Hartford Courant*, February 9, 1969, 1A.

<sup>7</sup> William Perez, "Anti-Communist Group Eyes Black Panthers," *Hartford Courant*, February 11, 1969, 20.

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Edgar Hoover instructed the New Haven's SAC to "initiate a counterintelligence program against the BPP" and "disrupt" its work as early as January of that year.<sup>8</sup>

Slowly, however, the young organizers' work paid off and their approach and energy attracted young people in their teens and early twenties. Two of the first to join the group were Peggy (Margaret) and Frances Carter. At a political education class attended by at least thirty people, Frances Carter recalled that Brown, Huggins, and other Panthers (most likely Gonzalvez) were dressed in army fatigues and "spoke about racism, capitalism, [and] the conspiracy on the part of the white power structure to destroy the black family."<sup>9</sup> With Ericka Huggins as the education director and Gonzalvez filling the position of state captain, the two met with a variety of community groups and spoke to anyone interested in the Party's message. On Sunday evening, March 30, 1969, the two addressed a meeting of eighty-five people at the Coalition of Concerned Citizens at Bethesda Lutheran Church in New Haven to offer reactions to the negative publicity targeting the Connecticut Panthers.<sup>10</sup> The number of topics discussed at the meeting offers a glimpse into how the Connecticut Panthers attempted to embrace the national Party's ideas while trying to find and express their own voices. The Panthers' Ten Point Program were delineated, the aims of the Connecticut Panthers were announced, and Huggins and Gonzalvez declared that rather than being a band of gangsters and hoodlums, the Party was a

<sup>8</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, March 28, 1969. John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>9</sup> David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993), 241.

<sup>10</sup> n.a., "Black Panther to Speak Sunday," *Hartford Courant*, March 27, 1969, 16; Richard Kaukas, "Black Panthers Discuss Organization's Goals at Concerned Citizen's Meeting," *Hartford Courant*, March 31, 1969, 4.

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disciplined, political organization whose primary aim was “organizing and telling people what the problem is” and “dealing with the needs of the black community.”<sup>11</sup>

In March 1969, the Connecticut BPP headquarters relocated to the Hill District, a predominantly black section of New Haven. Some of the Bridgeport members relocated to New Haven. Others made the short ride to New Haven to continue their activism and some left the party. It was thought that New Haven would provide a more conducive space to organize. New Haven’s black population had a rich history of organizing and activism in the 1960s. One of the most militant and fiercely independent black political organizations during that era was the Hill Parents Association (HPA). The HPA was organized by black parents concerned about the quality of public school education for their children. As the 1960s progressed, their political activism expanded to include issues of alleviating poverty, employment opportunities, affordable housing options, youth recreation, and electoral politics. By 1968, the HPA’s political influence was on the decline and the shifting political terrain in New Haven, which had allowed for its creation and growth, now allowed the BPP to enter the community and work for change.<sup>12</sup> The Connecticut BPP made modest gains in membership throughout the state in March and April 1969 with close to two dozen members in the Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven who attempted to put the Ten Point Program into action.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most active new recruits was Warren Kimbro. On paper Warren Kimbro was an unlikely recruit. At age thirty-five he was the head of a household of four: himself, his wife Sylvia, and their two children Germano and Veronica. He was also more than ten years older

<sup>11</sup> Kaukas, “Black Panthers Discuss Organization’s Goals at Concerned Citizen’s Meeting,” in *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics, White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 100.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

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than the other local Panthers, and worked as an organizer for Community Progress Inc., a citywide antipoverty program, in the Dwight neighborhood of New Haven.<sup>14</sup> But Kimbro was raised on the streets of New Haven and had seen the slow pace of change for blacks throughout the city. For him the Black Panther Party was a vehicle for change, his experiences, street credibility, and hopes for change made him an important part of New Haven BPP. His townhouse on Orchard Street in the Dwight neighborhood became Connecticut headquarters of the Connecticut Chapter of the Party. Shortly after joining the BPP, he accompanied Gonzalez and Huggins around town and around the state explaining the Party's platform and pointing out injustices meted out to black people in New Haven.

New Haven Panthers joined with local residents of the Hill and Dwight neighborhoods to oppose the construction of Route 34, a Connecticut state highway. In the late 1960s the state of Connecticut acquired large tracts of land to build the highway to connect New Haven to the outlying suburbs. In the process, hundreds of families and scores of businesses were displaced. The young activists understood the construction project through the lens of racism and capitalism. "If we allow Rt. 34 to be built," they declared, "then we are condoning capitalism and racism. By this we mean America can build roads while people have no homes. America can build garages when people have no food."<sup>15</sup> Community opposition forced the Connecticut Department of Transportation to abandon the project in the early 1970s. The New Haven BPP was one group in a larger opposition, but their participation demonstrated to the budding activists that community partnerships and mobilization could bring desired results.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Bass and Douglas W. Rae, *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 51.

<sup>15</sup> Black Panther Party, New Haven Branch, "Stop Rt. 34," John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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In spring 1969 Panthers throughout the state were also making plans to start Breakfast for Children programs and liberation schools for children. Ericka Huggins offered classes in Marxism and BPP ideology and tried to recruit people to help her with the a health clinic she was planning to create in New Haven's black community.<sup>16</sup> Along with Panthers and sympathizers throughout the country, Connecticut members organized a solidarity demonstration in New Haven and in front of the Federal Building in Hartford on May 1, 1969, to bring attention to Huey Newton's imprisonment at the San Luis Obispo Men's Colony in California.<sup>17</sup> Carrying placards featuring images of Newton and "Free Huey" signs, the demonstration was used to bring attention to racism in the criminal justice system through points eight and nine of the organization's Platform.<sup>18</sup>

Despite these successes, mistrust and FBI counter-intelligence activities began to take their toll on the chapter. The FBI had the chapter under close surveillance and initiated several activities to create tensions between the local Party and the black community. Local police departments used "lawful harassment and successful prosecution" to disgrace BPP leadership.<sup>19</sup> The Party's phones were wiretapped and the organization was infiltrated by at least one informant who provided weekly, if not daily, reports about the chapter to New Haven's SAC.<sup>20</sup> No one knows the full extent of the deception and skullduggery of the FBI, but memos between

<sup>16</sup> Bass and Rae, 85.

<sup>17</sup> Owen McNally, "Blacks Picket Federal Building," *Hartford Courant*, May 2, 1969, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Jose Gonzalvez, Speech in Stamford, Connecticut, n.d., John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>19</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, April 10, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>

<sup>20</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 12, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>; Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 249.

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J. Edgar Hoover and the New Haven Bureau's Special Agent in Charge offer some indication of the extent to which the federal government went to undermine the Panther's cause. In response to Hoover's request for counterintelligence measures, New Haven's Special Agent in Charge crafted a letter supposedly written by the Connecticut Panthers to be sent to African American businesses throughout the state. The letter read:

Black BUSINESSMAN!!!!!!!!!!

We have come here to stop the Racist Actions that the oppressors (Black and White) have taken upon our people. We are the Vanguard Party, and we intend to provide leadership for the people and Revolutionary groups across the country.

We're a party of Production. We're here to produce for the people, the poor oppress people of our Nation. We're a Black people's army to fight the battle that the racist Pig Cop has organized to protect the avaricious businessman.

LOOK YOU BIG FAT SLOPPY HUNG OF MEAT, YOU LOWER YOUR PRICES  
ORE GET THE FUCK OUT OF OUR COMMUNITY OR IF NOT, THEN YOU ARE  
GOING TO HAVE TO FACE THE BLACK PEOPLE!!!!

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE  
BLACK POWER TO THE BLACK PEOPLE  
PANTHER POWER TO THE VANGUARD<sup>21</sup>

In sending the letter, the Agent hoped to accomplish several goals. The first was to preemptively destroy any relationship that might develop between businessmen statewide and the BPP. The second was to encourage these businessmen to join anti-BPP factions it hoped to develop throughout the state. The third, and most compelling, was to create and heighten distrust within the state membership. "By sending the letter unsigned," the SAC predicted, "it would be difficult to attribute the composition to any one individual, since the statements therein are from several BPP public statements. If the BPP hold [sic] true to form, it should initiate its own investigation to attempt to determine which one or group of its members has embarked on this

<sup>21</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, April 28, 1969, <http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

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campaign without proper authority.”<sup>22</sup> After considering the action, however, Hoover did not grant permission to send the letter citing that it was too harsh in language and contained an obscenity that falls outside of FBI protocol.<sup>23</sup> The failure to send the forged letter does not detract from other clandestine FBI programs and networks of informants the FBI used to manipulate a culture of mistrust within the Party nationwide and to sow seeds of suspicion in Connecticut and break the local chapter.

The SAC’s concern of “if the BPP hold true to form” is interesting and problematic. Throughout the nation in late 1969, chapters, branches, and individuals were under heightened scrutiny by headquarters and members that, in some cases, bordered on paranoia. It was not as obvious then as it is now that the FBI infiltrated the organization, but there were rumors and suspicions about paid informants. The FBI had infiltrated many black organizations by the late 1960s and the BPP was no different. Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association swarmed with informants in the 1920s. The Nation of Islam was a victim of counterintelligence program informers from the 1950s to the 1960s. The telephone calls of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference were wiretapped by the FBI. For the Black Panthers, the disruption caused by the FBI’s infiltration was only compounded by the astronomical growth of the Party.

In 1969 the organization had grown to such an extent that it was unclear who was a member of the Party and who was not. Many a young black male donned a beret, wore a black leather jacket, said radical sounding phrases, and called himself a Panther, but not everyone who claimed to be a Panther was a Panther and some who were Panthers worked for the FBI. One

<sup>22</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, April 28, 1969, <http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

<sup>23</sup> Memo, Director, FBI to Special Agent in Charge, New Haven, May 15, 1969, <http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

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need only look at the murder of Fred Hampton for an example. Hampton was a charismatic twenty-one year old organizer and chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party who was killed in his sleep by members of the Chicago Police Department and the FBI on December 4, 1969. William O'Neal, a paid informant who had ingratiated himself with the Party in late 1968, gave blueprints of the Hampton's apartment.<sup>24</sup>

In an attempt to deal with informants, real or imagined, the Central Committee stopped the induction of members partially "[to] get rid of agents and provocateurs."<sup>25</sup> Throughout the country members were purged. In February 1969, the Southern California chapters removed a number of individuals for being "provocateur agents, kooks, and avaricious fools."<sup>26</sup> The Party leadership's uncertainty of the trustworthiness of the local memberships filtered down to the grassroots. In March 1969 alone, sixty people were expelled from the East Oakland and Vallejo, California chapters for being reactionaries, counterrevolutionary, and traitors to the Panther cause.<sup>27</sup> Jean and Larry Powell of New York were expelled in June 1969 for being "tools in the hands of fascists" after they testified in the United States Senate Investigation Committee.<sup>28</sup> Over the next year, hundreds of other members across the country were removed from Party membership for a variety of infractions.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010); Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Bobby Seale quoted in "Panthers Deny Party in Berkeley Slaying," *San Francisco Examiner*, January 13, 1969, 16; Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, 344.

<sup>26</sup> n.a., "Last Statement by John Huggins," *Black Panther*, February 17, 1969, 8.

<sup>27</sup> n.a., "Reactionaries from East Oakland Chapter," *Black Panther*, March 23, 1969, 4; n.a., "Vallejo Chapter Expels Reactionaries," *Black Panther*, March 31, 1969, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Bert, "The Powells: Tools in the Hands of the Fascists," *Black Panther Party*, June 28, 1969, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Bloom and Martin, 346.

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The Connecticut BPP did not escape this pattern of suspicion. The members developed an underlying mistrust of the state's leaders.<sup>30</sup> During a trip to Party headquarters in April 1969 Jose Gonzalvez and Lonnie McLucas were embroiled in a conflict. Jewelry and money were taken from a Panther's home in Oakland and Gonzalvez and McLucas accused each other of the crime. Simultaneously, Ericka Huggins and Warren Kimbro were critical of Gonzalvez's work in the Party. Kimbro may have resented that the Party's national leaders sent Gonzalvez, a Cuban immigrant, to organize black Americans in Connecticut.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Gonzalvez was more strident in his use of Party rhetoric than necessary and, at times, it bordered on the irresponsible. In one instance he vowed to kill drug dealers in black communities throughout the state. In another he threatened elected officials with "pistols, rifles, shotguns, machine guns, and grenades."<sup>32</sup> He went to Charlotte, North Carolina, to organize a chapter there without permission from Headquarters in early May 1969 and was reprimanded.<sup>33</sup> He was stripped of his rank as State Captain of the Connecticut chapter after Ericka Huggins wrote a letter to national headquarters informing them that among other things Gonsalvez had "misrepresented the party," "rejected the party's discipline," "failed to provide adequate leadership," and did not study politics.<sup>34</sup> Gonsalvez left the Party and resurfaced in Greensboro, North Carolina, later that year.

<sup>30</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 12, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

<sup>31</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 12, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

<sup>32</sup> Bass and Rae, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, Charlotte to Director, FBI, October 10, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

<sup>34</sup> Bass and Rae, 87; Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, Charlotte to Director, FBI, October 10, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>; "Pig Conspiracy against Conn. Panthers, *Black Panther*, May 31, 1969, 45.

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Gonzalvez's expulsion did not end intra-party conflict in New Haven or the FBI's counterintelligence. On May 12, 1969, New Haven's SAC hatched another plan to "make an anonymous telephone call from New Haven to the national BPP headquarters."<sup>35</sup> During the call the unidentified caller would accuse local party leaders of abusing power and misusing party funds. The hope was that leaders of the National Office would investigate such claims and increase friction among local members and between the local chapter and Headquarters. Permission was never granted because such a call was not necessary. The wheels of disruption were already in motion and the New Haven BPP was on the road to self-destruction.

### **The Murder of Alex Rackley**

From the time that New Haven's FBI Bureau made their initial request for permission to make an anonymous phone call from New Haven to California Headquarters, on May 12 and Hoover's review of and response to the request on May 28, not only was Jose Gonsalvez expelled, but the Connecticut BPP was involved in the murder of Alex Rackley, a young Panther from New York City.

Originally from Florida, Rackley was nineteen years old and functionally illiterate. In early 1969 he traveled to New York City and began hanging around the Panther offices where he became a martial instructor at the Harlem chapter. To all that knew him, Rackley was eager to be accepted into the Party. On May 17, he joined "Crazy George" Sams and other Panthers on a trip to New Haven to help prepare for Bobby Seale's talk at Yale University, and help organize the New Haven chapter.<sup>36</sup> Sams had been a member of the Party for a couple of years and had

<sup>35</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 12, 1969.  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>.

<sup>36</sup> Bass and Rae, 87.

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even been Stokely Carmichael's body guard during Carmichael's short tenure as the organization's prime minister. In fact, after Sams had been suspended from the Party, Carmichael encouraged Party leadership to reinstate him. Sams was known to be undisciplined and abusive and carried several guns in his overcoat, but lack of continuity in local and national Party leadership, the infiltration of informants, the subsequent fear and almost paranoia of informant infiltration, New Haven members' fear of Sams, and Sams' ability to intimidate the younger New Haven comrades allowed him to arrive in New Haven and take over the fledgling chapter's offices.<sup>37</sup>

On May 18, Sams declared that Rackley was a police informant and collaborated with New Haven members to bind, torture, and interrogate Rackley in Warren Kimbro's basement. The interrogation was recorded and Warren Kimbro, Ericka Huggins, and George Sams' voices can be heard on the tape grilling Rackley in hopes of receiving credible intelligence about the extent of police and FBI infiltration in the group.<sup>38</sup> On May 20, the New Haven Panthers contacted Kelly Moye and asked to borrow his car to deliver a package. Moye, who was a paid informant working for the New Haven Police Department, called the police and informed them of the development, then lent his car to the Panthers. Ironically, the Panthers depended on an actual informant to transport Rackley, a suspected informant, who would later be declared by National Party Headquarters to be in good standing with the Party.<sup>39</sup> George Sams, Warren Kimbro, and Lonnie McLucas put Rackley in Moye's car and drove to Middlefield, Connecticut. Rackley was taken to the banks of the Coginchaug River. Sams gave Kimbro a .45 automatic

<sup>37</sup> Bloom and Martin, 248.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rackley\\_trial\\_tape\\_surfaces/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rackley_trial_tape_surfaces/) Accessed, September 30, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Bass and Rae, 4-5; Yohuru Williams, in *Ibid*, 141.

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pistol and told him to shoot Rackley. Kimbro followed orders and shot Rackley in the head. Sams then gave the gun to McLucas. McLucas followed orders and shot Rackley in the chest.<sup>40</sup> His scalded, bloody corpse was found the next day by a fisherman.

On May 21, the New Haven Police along with undercover FBI agents raided Connecticut Party Headquarters and arrested Warren Kimbro, Ericka Huggins, Jeannie Wilson, Rose Smith, George Edwards, Maude Francis, Francis Carter, and Margaret Hudgins and charged them with murder and conspiracy to commit murder. *The New Haven Register* featured mugshots of all eight suspects on the front page of the late edition on May 22.<sup>41</sup> One week later Loretta Luckes was arrested and charged with murder, conspiracy to commit murder, kidnapping, conspiracy to commit kidnapping and binding with criminal intent.<sup>42</sup> Both Landon Williams, a field marshal from Party headquarters, and Rory Hithe, a young Panther from Oakland, were present during Rackley's interrogation, and fled to Denver, Colorado, where they were eventually extradited to stand trial. Lonnie McLucas fled to Salt Lake City, Utah, and was also extradited to New Haven.<sup>43</sup> George Sams eluded police in several cities, but was eventually captured in Toronto, Canada, and returned to New Haven in August, 1969 where he turned state's evidence.<sup>44</sup> He maintained that Bobby Seale gave the order to kill Rackley. State prosecutors believed him and had Seale extradited to Connecticut to stand trial for murder related charges.

The Panther outcry against the New Haven arrests was vociferous and always maintained that Rackley's murder was orchestrated by forces bent on undermining the Panthers. Ted

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Hines, "8 Panthers Held in Murder Plot: Body Found in River at Middlefield," May 22, 1969, 1.

<sup>42</sup> n.a, "Ninth Suspect Arrested in Black Panther Slaying," *Hartford Courant*, May 29, 1969, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Bass and Rae, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Donald Freed, *Agony in New Haven: The Trial of Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, & the Black Panther Party* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 1973), 25.

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Spurlock, Warren Kimbro's brother in law and New Haven Black Panther Party Coordinator, one of the few Panthers left in the city, declared that "Panther members are not guilty or have had no involvement in this fantastic lie."<sup>45</sup> In their initial response, BPP headquarters suggested that Rackley's murder was a conspiracy cooked up by federal, state, and or local authorities. "It is clear if there was really someone who has been killed," *The Black Panther* published, "then it's got to be the CIA, FBI and local pigs who killed this person, or it's just someone killed that the pigs want to blame on the Black Panther Party as a means to charge the Connecticut Panther leadership with a capital crime."<sup>46</sup> One month later *The Black Panther* printed that "Rackley was an excellent organizer who was "murdered by the pigs." The eight Panthers who were imprisoned "have been framed on trumped-up charges."<sup>47</sup> Cornell Wright, a Panther from Hartford hypothesized that police framed those arrested in order "to kill a rising political force."<sup>48</sup>

With time the BPP official position on Rackley's death tempered, especially after George Sams, Warren Kimbro, and Lonnie McLucas confessed to having killed Alex Rackley. In "The Black Panther Party Position on the Murder of Alex Rackley," the Party remained insistent that the state and federal authorities were involved in Rackley's death. However, Sams orchestrated Rackley's torture and gave the order for him to be shot. New Haven Panthers, were "young," "immature," and "impressionable" and, therefore, could not "be blamed for what George Sams

<sup>45</sup> William Perez, "Note Links Victim to Panthers: 8 Held," *Hartford Courant*, May 23, 1969, 1A.

<sup>46</sup> n.a., "Pig Conspiracy Against Conn. Panthers," *The Black Panther*, May 31, 1969, 3.

<sup>47</sup> n.a., "Fascist Forces Nationwide To Destroy The Black Panther Party," *The Black Panther*, June 21, 1969, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, July 16, 1969, John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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did or made them do under the threat of death.” Headquarters also assumed some of the blame for the incident by allowing “a maniac such as George Sams to come into our party.”<sup>49</sup>

With Party members in jail or awaiting trial, the New Haven Chapter fell apart. Loretta Luckes pleaded guilty to “conspiracy to kidnap resulting in death” in December 1969. George Sams and Warren Kimbro pleaded guilty to second degree murder.<sup>50</sup> Lonnie McLucas proclaimed his innocence and went to trial. Represented by the progressive attorney Theodore Koskoff, he was convicted of conspiracy to murder and sentenced to a maximum jail time of fifteen years in August 1970. He would spend several years in prison and was subsequently released in 1973. George Edwards, Rose Marie Smith, and Margaret Hudgins pleaded guilty in September 1970 and received suspended sentences. All three served over a year in prison and were released in October 1970.<sup>51</sup> Frances Carter spent over a year in prison, but he was released on a lesser charge because of insufficient evidence.<sup>52</sup> Landon Williams and Rory Hithe fought hard to prevent extradition to Connecticut, but eventually lost their fight. The two served twenty-months in the state penitentiary before pleading guilty to conspiracy to murder. Their sentences were suspended and they left the state in 1971.<sup>53</sup> As we will see below, Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale’s trials received the most attention. Thousands of people—students, progressives, and Panthers—came together in support their case which culminated in the May Day Rally on the New Haven Green on May 1, 1971.

<sup>49</sup>“The Black Panther Party Position on the Murder of Alex Rackley,” John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 67, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>50</sup> n.a., “A Panther Admits He Killed Another,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1970, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, October 19, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 8, Folder 55, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>52</sup> “The Pretrial Motions Are Just the Beginning of the Fascist Conspiracy Against Bobby and Ericka,” *The Black Panther Party*, November 7, 1970, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Bass and Rae, 211.

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Rackley's murder had far-reaching effects. Nationally FBI and police raided Party offices under the pretense of looking for George Sams, Rory Hithe, and Landon Williams. Locally, from late May 1969 to early fall 1969, the New Haven BPP was virtually defunct. Members who were not charged in the Rackley murder left the Party and sympathizers distanced themselves from the organization. Statewide, it left branches in Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, without a state chapter and, therefore, relative independence from headquarters.

### **Bridgeport, National Committee to Combat Fascism**

In early 1969 when it was decided that Ericka Huggins and Jose Gonsalvez should move the center of Party organizing from Bridgeport to New Haven, a cadre of Panthers remained in Bridgeport to organize the community there. Several members also started a small branch in Hartford. Larry Townsend, a veteran of the United States Army, was the leader of the Bridgeport group which had approximately fifteen members including his wife, Joyce Townsend, James Murphy, and Craig Kelly. After the United Front Against Fascism Conference in Oakland, California, in July 1969, Bridgeport and Hartford Panthers were officially recognized by national headquarters as part of the National Committee to Combat Fascism or NCCF.<sup>54</sup> Their tenure as a NCCF group was short, however, and only lasted for about a year as these groups were suspended from the Party in late 1970 because of police harassment, legal troubles, and intra-Party conflict.<sup>55</sup> During their short time however, both NCCF branches organized a Panther presence in their respective cities, organized a free breakfast program,

<sup>54</sup> Bloom and Martin, 300.

<sup>55</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, August 11, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 7, Folder 48; Memo, Special Agent in Charge New Haven to Director, FBI, January 21, 1971, John R. Williams Papers, Box 8, Folder 58; Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 69, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University; Craig Gauthier. Interview with author. Phone interview. Malden, MA, July 8, 2013.

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mobilized support for the Panther cause, and organized rallies in support of the New Haven Panthers on trial.

One former Bridgeport Panther recalls that after the death of Alex Rackley many black communities throughout Connecticut mistrusted the Party or were afraid of them. To broker trust and ease anxieties about the Party, Bridgeport Panthers set out to inform people of the goals of the Party. They did this by selling *The Black Panther* and organizing rallies and talks. On June 14, 1969, for example, members organized a rally in Newfield Park that brought together over three hundred BPP supporters and other community members to discuss the state of racism, police violence, and the mounting case against their comrades in New Haven.<sup>56</sup> Six months later, in January 1970, at the University of Bridgeport, Larry Townsend spoke to an audience of white and black supporter to explain the BPP platform and encourage students to organize white working class and white middle class political groups to help the Party achieve socialist revolution in the United States.<sup>57</sup> Bridgeport Panthers also supported students at the University of Bridgeport in May 1970 in their efforts to call attention to the escalation of the Vietnam War after President Richard Nixon decided to send soldiers into Cambodia. They used their time at the school to call attention to the limited opportunities for black students at the school and called for an open admission process to increase the black student population.<sup>58</sup>

The Father Panik Village housing project, a community on the east side of the city, was the site for Bridgeport NCCF's free breakfast program. The housing project was opened in 1941 and was home to over five thousand people who resided in forty- six three story buildings spread

<sup>56</sup> Dennis Wry, "Quiet Rally is Stage by Panthers," *Hartford Courant*, June 15, 1969, 47A.

<sup>57</sup> n.a., "The Aim of the Black Panthers," *The Bridgeport Telegram*, January 7, 1970, 14.

<sup>58</sup> n.a., "Campus Seethes," *The Bridgeport Telegram*, May 6, 1970, 1

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across forty acres of land, one of the largest public housing projects in the United States.<sup>59</sup> By the late 1960s, city services were in decline and police brutality in the projects was on the rise presenting a unique service opportunity for the Panthers. Joyce Townsend was the free breakfast program director. She persuaded both the East Side Housing Project Association and the Father Panik Village Tenant Association to allow the Panthers to operate a breakfast program in their housing project gymnasiums in November 1969. Each school day beginning at 6:30 a. m. Panthers and their supporters served hot breakfast platters using food donated by local merchants. Two weeks after they started the program, Panthers were already feeding thirty school age children.<sup>60</sup>

Feeding children in their breakfast program, gaining supporters from black and white residents, and trying to bring about socialism proved difficult for Bridgeport Panthers because of sabotage and confrontations with the police. On more than one occasion, the free breakfast program was sabotaged. Former Panther Craig Kelly remembers arriving in Father Panik Village early one day to prepare for the arrival of school children only to find the carton of eggs crushed, cereal boxes ripped open, and cold breakfast cereal strewn over the floor.<sup>61</sup> On March 9, 1970, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the Shiloh Baptist Church, an African American church with deep roots in the community. The police suggested that the bombing was the work of the Panthers because they resented the competition with their own breakfast program. Luckily, no one was hurt in the incident and only minor damage resulted. But, like the attack on the Panther breakfast program, the perpetrators were never found and the police's hint that the

<sup>59</sup> "Father Panik Village Now a Criminal's Paradise," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1994, [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-01-09/news/mn-10073\\_1\\_father-panik](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-01-09/news/mn-10073_1_father-panik). Accessed October 17, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> "Tenants Back Black Panthers," *The Bridgeport Telegram*, November 20, 1969, 70.

<sup>61</sup> Craig Kelly. Interview with author. Phone Interview. Malden, MA. September 24, 2013.

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church bombing was the work of the Panthers was another attempt to discredit the organization.<sup>62</sup>

Attempts to sabotage the free breakfast program were combined with constant surveillance and harassment by the Bridgeport Police Department's Intelligence Unit. In 1969 and 1970 Bridgeport's total black population numbered around 25,000. Core members of National Conference to Combat Fascism in Bridgeport numbered around ten. Despite their relatively small number in the black population, NCCF members had constant negative interactions with the police. On Monday, January 26, 1970, Lawrence Townsend was arrested, charged with driving with a suspended driver's license, and released on \$300 bond. That same day several hours later three Panthers were arrested during what should have been a routine traffic stop. Vernon Miller was pulled over for allegedly running a stop sign. Words were exchanged and when Miller, Earl Jones, and Robert Jackson exited the car, a brawl erupted between them and the police. Patrolman Richard Godwin and other police on the scene used mace on the Panthers and arrested them. Miller and Jones were both charged with breach of the peace, interfering with a policeman, and assault on a policeman. Additionally, Miller was charged with failure to brake at a stop sign. Jackson was charged with resisting arrest and interfering with a policeman. Each was held on a \$1,000 bond.<sup>63</sup>

In early April, Joyce Townsend was arrested and sentenced to a twenty-five day jail term for contempt of court during Bobby Seale's pretrial hearing. On June 10, five Panthers including Joyce and Lawrence Townsend were arrested on breach of peace charges for yelling obscenities while driving and pointing a shot gun out of the car window. In an attempt to question

<sup>62</sup> n.a., "Bomb Hits Church in Bridgeport," *Hartford Courant*, March 11, 1970, 4.

<sup>63</sup> n.a., "4 Panthers Face Charges in East Side Incidents," *The Bridgeport Post*, January 27, 1970, 1.

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Townsend about the June 10 incident, on June 25, Bridgeport Police arrived at the Townsends' home to arrest him and search his home. Refusing to submit to what he saw as an unreasonable arrest, search, and seizure, Townsend did not submit to officers and held them at bay with his shotgun for over thirty minutes.<sup>64</sup> In doing so, Townsend understood his actions to be in line with Huey Newtown's Executive Mandate No. 3, a mandate that Panthers throughout the country took seriously.<sup>65</sup> The mandate declared that "all members must acquire the technical equipment to defend their homes and their dependents and shall do so. Any member of the Party having such technical equipment who fails to defend his threshold shall be expelled from the Party for Life."<sup>66</sup>

Townsend was not arrested for the incident. The stand-off ended when Townsend agreed to relinquish his firearms and turn himself in to law enforcement in the presence of his attorney, Michael Koskoff. However, Police and Panther confrontations continued. One day later on Friday, June 26 Joyce Townsend was arrested for illegal gun possession.<sup>67</sup> On July 31, Lawrence Townsend, James Murphy, and Craig Kelly were arrested and charged with conspiracy to possess explosives when police found them with gasoline and firecrackers.<sup>68</sup> Townsend and Murphy were released from jail when Sidney and Beatrice Milwe posted a \$15,000 bond for their release, but Kelly spent close to eight months in jail. Despite being indicted by a grand

<sup>64</sup> n.a., "Police Confronted by Armed Panther," *Hartford Courant*, June 26, 1970, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Bloom and Martin, 433, note 27.

<sup>66</sup> Huey Newton, "Executive Mandate No. 3," *The Black Panther*, March 16, 1968, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas D. Williams, "Wife of Panther Arrested; Gun Case Probe Continues," *Hartford Courant*, June 27, 1970, 26.

<sup>68</sup> n.a., "4 Panthers Face Charges in East Side Incidents," *Bridgeport Post*, January 27, 1970, 1; n.a., "Police Confronted by Armed Panther," *Hartford Courant*, June 26, 1970, 1; Thomas Williams, "Wife of Panther Arrested: Gun Case Probe Continues," *Hartford Courant*, June 27, 1970, 26; n.a., "Black Panthers Nabbed at Project on Bomb Charge," *Hartford Courant*, August 1, 1970, 7.

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jury, he was never convicted for the explosives charge. In January 1971, Murphy was found guilty and served a year in state prison for possession of an explosive.

Police harassment and endless entanglements with the courts finally took their toll on the Bridgeport NCCF. Leadership in New Haven was in flux with Panthers transitioning in and out of the city. As the young activists tried to rally support behind the upcoming trial of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins, they and the national leadership felt that all energies should be spent rallying to free them, not on the Bridgeport Panthers high profile arrests and confrontations with the police. In an August 8, 1970 communication, Elbert "Big Man" Howard, a coordinator from national headquarters, told Evon Carter, the financial secretary of the New Haven chapter, that Lawrence Townsend was unmanageable and "did not relate to party discipline."<sup>69</sup> In less than two months, the Bridgeport NCCF was suspended from the Black Panther Party.<sup>70</sup>

### **Hartford, National Committee to Combat Fascism**

The Hartford National Committee to Combat Fascism was not known for its confrontation with police; instead, it was known for its serve the people programs and armed patrol of the Hartford Police Department. Several members of the Hartford NCCF were Vietnam War veterans who were taught armed confrontation by the American military. Charles Edward "Butch" Lewis was a member of the U.S. Army from 1964 to 1967. Reginald Wright, the Hartford lieutenant of finance, was a member of the United States Air Force from 1966 to 1968. Like so many black soldiers before them from World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, Lewis and Wright

<sup>69</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, August 11, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 7, folder 48, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>70</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, August 11, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 7, Folder 48, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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returned to their country expecting government promises to be fulfilled on racial equality and poverty issues. When such issues went unaddressed, they became active participants to transform America.

By the late 1960s, as a *New York Times* article noted, "Hartford became an island of poor minorities, with blacks clinging to power they seized in the voting drives of the late 1960's, Hispanics largely disenfranchised and whites warily looking on from the wealthy suburbs."<sup>71</sup> Hartford Panthers and their families had experienced this destitution and helped organize public demonstrations to call attention to poverty and public safety hazards in predominantly black residential areas. After several children had been injured on the banks of Park River near the Charter Oak Terrace Housing Project in Hartford in early May 1969, they joined with members of the Association of Concerned Parents of Charter Oak Terrace. Butch Lewis, the captain of the Hartford branch, and William Bailey, the officer of the day, helped twenty black women block traffic on Flatbush Avenue, a major thoroughfare in the city to call attention to their demands. As a result of the demonstration, Barbara Henderson, president of the Association of Concerned Parents of Charter Oak Terrace, met with Governor John Dempsey on May 16 who promised to construct more adequate barriers to the river to prevent children from falling in.<sup>72</sup>

The murder of Alex Rackley led many in black and white communities throughout the state to believe that the BPP was a street gang bent on mayhem and violence. His death meant that Panthers had to rebuild the image of the Party by reaching out to blacks in urban areas. In spring 1969, Chucky Perry organized a Rally for Unity and Understanding to dispel myths and

<sup>71</sup> Paul Zielbauer, "Poverty in the Land of Plenty: Can Hartford Ever Recover?" August 26, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/26/nyregion/poverty-in-a-land-of-plenty-can-hartford-ever-recover.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, Accessed December 5, 2013.

<sup>72</sup>Teletype, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 15 1969; Teletype, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, May 16, 1969. <http://vault.fbi.gov/BlackPantherParty>

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clarify the Party's platform for black residents of Hartford's North End. Several African American leaders from across Hartford joined the rally including Henry Harding of the Ebony Businessmen's League and Reverend Charles Frank, a local black minister. Together the speakers encouraged black Hartford residents to vote and seek political representation in local politics.

Hartford Panthers also reached out to white Hartford residents. In April 1970, Hartford members discussed the Party's approach and activities in a public forum at the Unitarian Meeting House.<sup>73</sup> At the meeting, field lieutenant Thomas Corn informed the audience that the NCCF and the BPP are "out to build up, not tear down." He further explained that the group would "only use violence if [they were] backed into a corner."<sup>74</sup> Speaking to the middle class white audience at the Meeting House clearly demonstrated that the Party was willing to work with all sectors of society interested in improving African Americans' quality of life. Corn used the meeting to bring all segments of Hartford into the black freedom struggle and oppose any attempt to paint the BPP as a black racist organization.

The Panthers' positive contribution to the Hartford community was noted by the *Hartford Times* and the FBI. A May 29, 1969, article offers important insights into how the Hartford Panthers understood and undertook community activism. In its article "Panther Breakfasts Mobbed," the *Hartford Times* not only presents the importance of the BPP breakfast program, but also implicitly shows how the city of Hartford failed black students. The article notes that:

The Black Panther Party fed a virtual array of children today for the third morning in a row.

The party has opened two "breakfast centers" for school children at Roman Catholic churches Monday at the Bellevue Square Center.

<sup>73</sup> n.a., "Panther Will Discuss Objectives, Platform," *Hartford Courant*, April 18, 1970, 19.

<sup>74</sup> David Edgerly, "Local Panthers Spell Out Aims," *Hartford Courant*, April 20, 1970, 2.

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The project is financed by donations from black and white businessmen, and is run by members of the Black Panthers and volunteers.

It is part of a nationwide movement by Black Panthers to provide free breakfast for school children.

To 'feed the people' is also part of the doctrine of Moa Tse Tung, whose revolutionary principles the Panthers follow, one member of the breakfast team explained, pulling a red bound copy of the Marxist's sayings from his back pocket.

The program also had a more personal meaning for this Panther, who asked not to be identified in line, he said, with the party philosophy of avoiding "leaders." The youth, a tall 22-year-old who had served in Vietnam, looked up from the Mao sayings, and said.

'I was brought up in this neighborhood. A lot of times I went to school hungry. I know what it's like.

The program has been growing by leaps and bounds since it began Monday with 15 children in St. Michael's Church on Clark Street. Although there was some publicity through the usual channels, most of it has been done word of mouth, passed on by the children themselves.

Wednesday, there were an estimated 30 children at one time at the San Juan Catholic Center on Ely Street, and at least 60 at St. Michael's between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., when a reporter from *The Times* was there.

The menu was sausage, bacon, waffles, milks, and juice today, while yesterday there were eggs, grits, toast, and fried franks.

The cooks are youths themselves from junior high school age to the early 20s. They arrive at the breakfast centers at 6 a.m. and work until they have to catch the bus for school or work.

The older ones police the younger ones about being on time for school. As one youth told one of the younger boys, "We don't want trouble with your school—we don't want anyone to be able to say we're the reason you're late.

Second and third helpings are common, and one youth reported a boy at San Juan's took on seven helpings this morning. "You wouldn't have believed it—you should have seen this kid's belly.

The Panthers give everyone what they ask for. The only discipline is that they sit at the table and wait to be served and be relatively quiet—but not quite as still as one would have to be in school.

Although many were—and newcomers still are—shy about coming in for breakfast at first, they soon start placing orders.<sup>75</sup>

On July 29, 1970, Hartford erupted in violence. The racial disturbance, lasting six days, stripped the veneer from white, paternal liberalism which had painted Hartford as one free from

<sup>75</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, n.d. John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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racism and inequality. Endemic social, political, and economic inequality caused the city-wide uprising, but the Hartford Panthers quickly became victims of the city's police department's suspicions. City officials' tolerance of a Panther presence was at its end. Several days after the violence began, shortly before midnight on August 2, 1970, police surrounded the NCCF headquarters at 135 Barbour Street in Hartford. When the signal was given, police inundated the apartment with tear gas and entered the premises arresting NCCF members and confiscating property. To the police, the NCCF was dangerous because someone allegedly fired shots from the building during the city-wide melee. In all, seven NCCF members were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit murder, possession of marijuana, and conspiracy to violate Connecticut drug laws. Among the arrested were Thomas Corn, Arthur Holliday, Lottie McGriff, Bruce Ryles, Allen Smith, and Cornell Wright, leaders of the Connecticut NCCF. The arrests were unwarranted according to members who claimed that the police "tore up the apartment and destroyed clothing for the NCCF's free clothing program."<sup>76</sup> According to the Panthers, the raid was aimed at intimidating them to stop their work with poor people.<sup>77</sup> Evidence suggests that the raid was planned before the alleged shot as the FBI obtained a floor plan of the NCCF headquarters at 135 Barbour Street from local law enforcement who had obtained it from an informant several days before the raid.<sup>78</sup>

Several days after the arrest of NCCF members, Panthers held a six hour rally in Keney Park to oppose the raid on their local headquarters, counteract police claims, and to urge black

<sup>76</sup> Dick Behn, "Arrest of Panther Group Bring Terrorism Claim, *Hartford Courant*, August 3, 1970, 8; NCCF, Hartford, Connecticut, "Raid On the Hartford National Committee to Combat Fascism, 135 Barbour Street, *The Black Panther*, August 8, 1970, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Letter, Director, FBI to Special Agent in Charge, New Haven, August 31, 1970. John R. Williams Papers, Box 7, Folder 38, John R. Williams Papers, Box 8, Folder 52, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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Hartford residents to defend themselves in the face of state harassment, search, and seizure.<sup>79</sup>

Time showed the Panthers were correct in their opposition to the state's arrests. Not only were they cleared of the conspiracy to commit murder charges, but they were also cleared of the drug charges. In October 1970, Assistant Prosecutor Allen Smith declared that he had insufficient evidence that the Panthers were connected to any drug offenses. Once again, the police raid showed that the Panthers were victims of police harassment.

By late August 1970, the New Haven chapter of the Black Panther Party and national headquarters in California considered the upcoming trial of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins as critically important to the Party's existence. Consequently, the Hartford NCCF problems with the law made them expendable. In early August 1970, Robert Webb, a California Panther who had moved to Connecticut, informed the New Haven chapter that Hartford was in need of strong leadership and direction. He requested that someone from New Haven be sent north to Hartford. Elbert "Big Man" Howard responded that "there weren't even enough competent people to run the New Haven chapter [to be sent to Hartford]." By late August, the Hartford National Committee to Combat Fascism was in precipitous decline and, like the Bridgeport NCCF, was suspended in early fall 1970. The group disbanded and its members either ceased political activity or joined other political organizations.<sup>80</sup>

### **Rebuilding New Haven**

Without leadership and structure, the New Haven Chapter was virtually defunct from June to September 1969. Members left the organization, Panther supporters and sympathizers were

<sup>79</sup> Joel Lang, "Speakers Advocate Gun Use to Get Rights," *Hartford Courant*, August 9, 1970, 38A.

<sup>80</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, August 11, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 7, Folder 48, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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alienated, and Alex Rackley's murder had tarnished the group's image. National BPB leadership was not prepared to give up on New Haven, however, especially with Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins incarcerated and awaiting trial. To rebuild the Party, organizers from Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were sent to New Haven to repair relationships with the black community, create survival programs for city residents, and rally support for Seale and Huggins. The constant arrival of organizers from other cities in fall 1969 bolstered membership so that there were between fifteen and twenty full time Panthers in New Haven by January 1970.<sup>81</sup>

The transplanted Panthers were experienced and enthusiastic organizers. Robert Webb, from California, gave stability to the group and clarity of focus. Jacob Bethea, a Panther from New York City, told a reporter from the *Hartford Courant* that the primary objective of the new arrivals was to create free breakfast programs, health centers, and liberation schools. Roscoe Lee, an organizer from Harlem, New York, echoed Bethea and declared that the Panthers "are teaching the people to help themselves to free their minds." Charles Pinderhughes, a community worker from Boston, arrived in New Haven in October 1969 and remembered that the Panthers were "in a very tight situation." When he arrived in New Haven, he noted that "the people in the projects were afraid of the Panthers." Doug Miranda, one of the Party's most charismatic organizers who relocated to New Haven from Boston and became the Connecticut State Captain, recalls that New Haven was a "hard nut to crack in terms of organizing." Within nine months

<sup>81</sup> Charles Pinderhughes. Interview with author. Phone Interview. Malden, MA. June 24, 2013. Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, September 3, 1969; Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director September 17, 1969; Teletype, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, September 25, 1969, John R. Williams Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



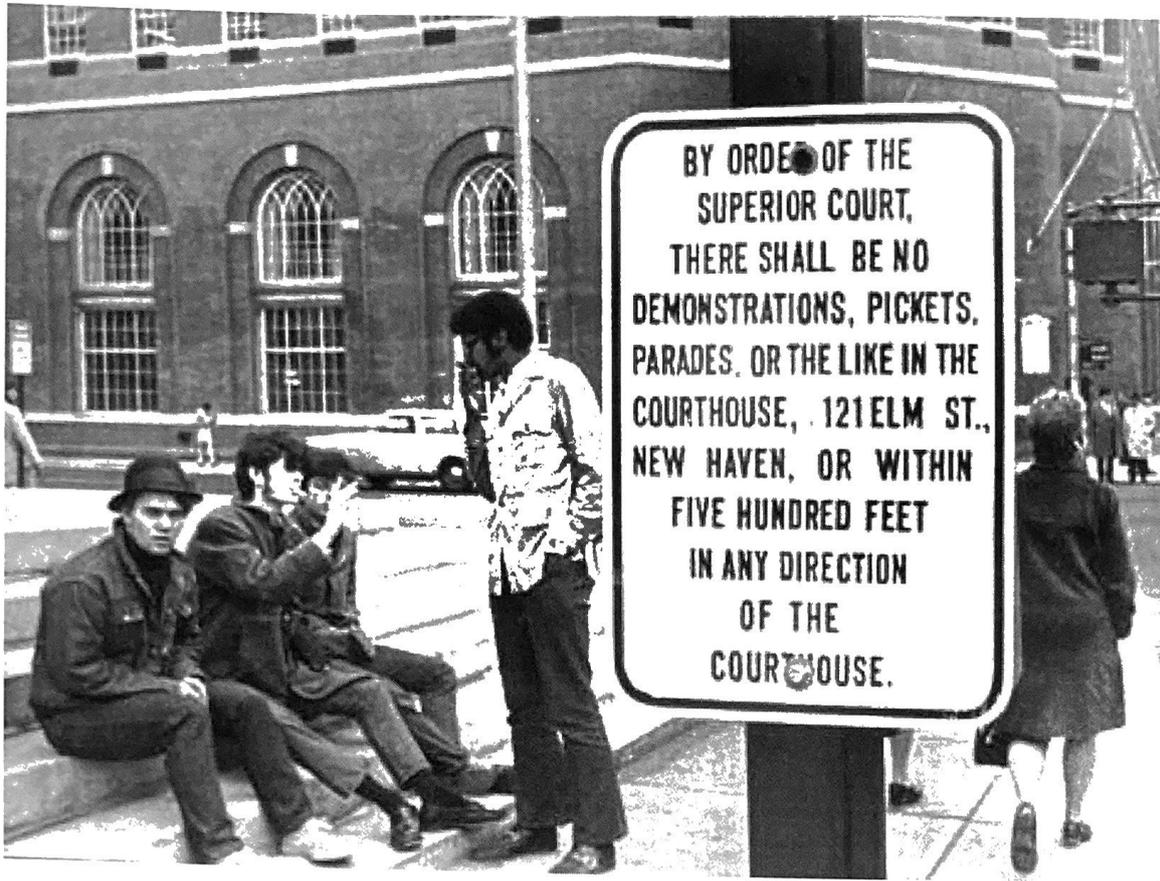
Photograph 1. May 1, 1969. Free Huey Newton protest in front of United States Courthouse, Hartford, Connecticut (courtesy of the Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library (photo by Ellery G. Kington).



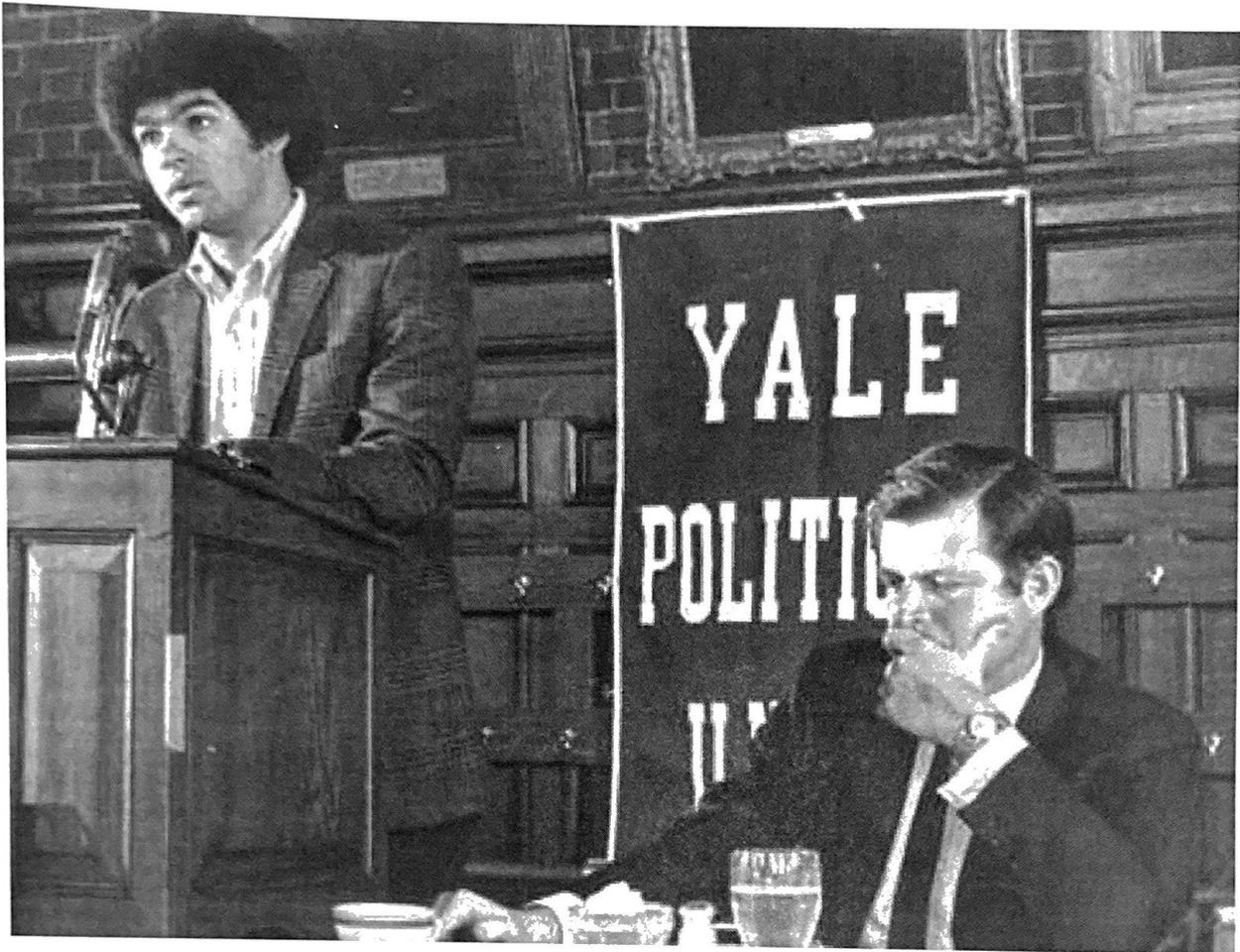
Photograph 2. June 1969. Demonstrators in front of New Haven City Hall protesting the arrest of the New Haven Eight (courtesy of the *New Haven Register*).



Photograph 3. Black Panther rally on the steps of the New Haven County Courthouse, Elm Street (courtesy of the *New Haven Register*).



Photograph 4. April 21, 1970. Rally at Courthouse. Speaker addresses crowd of about 150 to 200 black youths gathered across the street from Superior Court in New Haven to await the arrival of Black Panthers' Chairman Bobby Seale for preliminary hearing on charges against him in connection with a slaying last May. The crowd, many of them high school students absent from school with permission, gathers in front of the courthouse on Elm Street. Signs banning demonstrations near the building were prominently displayed. (courtesy of the *Hartford Courant*, photo by Harry Batz).



Photograph 5. April 22, 1970. U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy listens as Yale student Ron Taylor announces a campus strike in opposition to the New Haven trial of Black Panther Bobby G. Seale. Taylor and other protesting students used the Yale Political Union podium before Kennedy's speech to object to the trial and voice other protests. The senator departed from much of his prepared talk on the environment to comment on the protests and caution against violence (courtesy of *Hartford Courant*, photo by Robert B. Flicks).



Photograph 6. April 30, 1970. Black Panther conference, from left, Carol Smith, the sister of Margaret Hudgins and Frances Carter, two of the defendants in the murder conspiracy trial; Elbert "Big Man" Howard, and David Hilliard, national chief of staff of the Black Panther Party. (courtesy of the *New Haven Register*, photo by Art Dietle).



Photograph 7. A demonstration on New Haven green in support of Black Panthers, May 1, 1970 (courtesy of the *Hartford Courant*, photo by Harry Batz).



Photograph 8. May 1970. These protesters are in front of the entrance to Yale's Sheffield-Sterling-Strathcona Hall at 1 Prospect Street (courtesy of the *New Haven Register*).





Photograph 9. August 22, 1970. Hartford police lead some of the nine men they arrested in the afternoon to a waiting van. The arrests followed an altercation between a policeman and four young men selling the Black Panther newspaper in front of a Main Street department store. Charges against the nine ranged from loitering to carrying a dangerous weapon and resisting arrest (courtesy of *Hartford Courant*, photo by Harry Batz).



Photograph 10. Summer 1970. Black Panthers and their supporters demonstrate in support of Lonnie McClucas in front of the New Haven County Courthouse at the corner of Elm and Church streets (courtesy of the *New Haven Register*).

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through tireless community outreach, however, black people's fears and negative opinions dissipated making the Panthers a viable political player in New Haven's black community.<sup>82</sup>

The *People's News Service* and the survival programs the Party started were critical to Panther community tactical outreach. The *Service*, which ran from October 1969 to June 1970 and was edited by Pinderhughes, was an eight to twelve page handout that included articles on local and national news and offered the Panthers the opportunity to inform the community of their perspective and work. In its January 25, 1970, issue of the *People's News Service*, for example, the paper discussed African Americans' lack of job and housing opportunities in New Haven, school inequality, and the need for socialism in America.<sup>83</sup> The paper also carefully highlighted the organization's approach and goals.

In an article simply titled "Black Panther Party," the reinvigorated chapter spelled out its approaches, goals, and how they understood their local struggle as part of a larger international movement.

B—is for all Black people united under one party  
L—is for Love and respect for Black people  
A—is for Alliance with All oppressed people around the world  
C—is for Community Control of the police  
K—is for change in AmeriKKKa

P—is for the People's News Service that we put out to tell the truth  
A—is for the part All people play  
N—is for basic Needs of Black people which the party is here to serve  
T—is To feed and clothe the people  
H—is for the Hungry children that are fed at the Free Breakfast Program  
E—is for the Enemy of the State and Champion of the People  
R—is for Revolution which must come

<sup>82</sup> Charles Pinderhughes. Interview with author. Phone interview. Malden, MA. June 24, 2013; Doug Miranda. Interview with author. Phone interview. Malden, MA. August 8, 2013; William Perez, "Panthers Reinforce New Haven Ranks," *Hartford Courant*, September 14, 1A.

<sup>83</sup> *People's News Service, Bulletin No. 8*, January 25, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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P—is for the Political Prisoners who must be freed from jail  
A—is for All Power to the People  
R—is for the Racism that we must destroy  
T—is for Trial of all Black People by a jury of their peer group  
Y—is for the Youth who make the Revolution

With the paper in hand, Panthers combed through black neighborhoods, circulated it, and discussed the Party's platform, approach, and programs with anyone who would listen. Because the articles were written in an intriguing fashion and was easily understood by New Haven's black residents, it offered numerous opportunities to build support for the Party. In addition to the *People's News Service*, the New Haven BPP also restarted and expanded the Free Breakfast for Children Program, and initiated other programs including a legal first aid program, political education classes, a free clothing program, a free library program, and community discussion groups.

The Breakfast for Children Program was one of the first survival programs the Panthers organized in Oakland, California. Its usefulness was observed by Panthers across the nation and became a hallmark for almost every chapter and NCCF. The program was set up in New Haven in the early spring 1969, but was quickly dismantled after Rackley's murder. When students began classes in the fall of 1969, however, Panthers were there with hot meals. Joel Brown, a Panther transplant from Boston, was one of the primary organizers of the program. He and other members successfully lobbied the United Newhallville Organizations (UNO) to allow the BPP to use the Newhallville Teen Lounge at 179 Shelton Avenue for its John Huggins Memorial Free Breakfast for Children Program. During the 1969 fall term, breakfast was served from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. with food and equipment donated from local merchants. Transportation was provided by the Panthers free of charge to the lounge and then to school for children who required it. Its advertising flier circulated around the community and its *People's News Service* informed

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community members that the program was a “socialistic [one] designed to help all people not just a ‘chosen few.’”<sup>84</sup>

Nationally, the Free Breakfast for Children Program had a threefold purpose. The first, and most obvious, purpose was to feed hungry children and support families. Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society programs, anti-poverty programs, and Model Cities programs did not have the desired effects for poor families of all colors nationwide. Hunger was a problem, especially in black communities, and the Panthers knew it. Many members had experienced it. They knew personally that going to school with an empty stomach made it difficult for students to concentrate on their studies. The second purpose was to elevate poverty and hunger as issues requiring the attention of local communities and national leaders. In this way, the Panthers were similar to Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. who believed “that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies.”<sup>85</sup> The third purpose of the Breakfast for Children Program, according to Doug Miranda, was to take Marxist theory and put it into practice, to move beyond academic chatter, and bring “together the mind and the body” to improve the basic quality of life for all Americans, especially black people.<sup>86</sup>

The Legal First Aid Program was one of the New Haven BPP’s most far reaching programs. One of the mainstays of white liberalism was that the police department treated citizens equally and did not harass and exploit black New Haven residents. The Legal First Aid

<sup>84</sup> n.d., “John Huggins Memorial Free Breakfast for Children Program,” John R. Williams Papers, Box 2, Folder 16, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>85</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1964” in Washington, James N., ed., *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992).

<sup>86</sup> Speech Delivered by Doug Miranda delivered at the University of Connecticut, October 22, 1969, John R. Williams Papers, Box 3, Folder 17, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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flier which was included in the *People's News Service* and was expounded upon in the Panthers' legal clinic, provided basic legal advice for New Haven's African Americans about how to handle an encounter with the police. The flier informed them to memorize and assert twelve of their most basic rights and react in appropriate ways during confrontation with local police.

Points one, three, and nine, provided some of the most practical information:

Point one: If you are stopped and/or arrested by the police, you may remain silent, you do not have to answer any questions about alleged crimes; you should provide your name and address only if requested (although it is not absolutely clear that you must do so). But then do so, and at all times remember the fifth amendment.

Point Three: Police have no right to search your car or your home unless they have a search warrant, probable cause or your consent. They may conduct no exploratory search, that is, one for evidence of a crime unconnected with the one you are being questioned about. (Thus, a stop for an auto violation does not give the right to search the auto). You are required to consent to a search; therefore, you should not consent. . . If you do not consent, the police will have the burden in court of showing probable cause. Arrest may be corrected later.

Point Nine: You do not have to give any statement to the police, nor do you have to sign any statement you might give them; and, therefore, you should not sign anything. Take the fifth and fourth amendments, because you cannot be forced to testify against yourself.<sup>87</sup>

Political education classes offered opportunities to recruit members from the community and discuss the Party's platform, its perspective on police-community relations, black voter registration, Alex Rackley's murder, and the government crackdown on the Panthers. Through their political education classes, the Panthers placed local and national racial matters within a larger international context. The classes also offered opportunities for the Panthers to counteract popular misinformation disseminated about them by individuals, popular media, and the

<sup>87</sup> Black Panther Party of Connecticut, Legal Aid Flier, John R. Williams Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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government officials. Rather than being a band of thugs and gangsters, the Panthers showed through their political organizing that they were trying to transform Connecticut, the United States, and African Americans' position in the nation. In late 1969 and 1970, classes took place on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday in homes throughout the city and at 35 Sylvan Avenue, the New Haven BPP headquarters.<sup>88</sup>

In the spring of 1970, the BPP national headquarters directed chapters throughout the country to create health centers, People's Free Medical Clinics (PFMC), in black communities.<sup>89</sup> Frances Carter, Carolyn Jones, and Rosemary Mealey were the moving force behind the creation of the John Huggins Free Health and Research Center located at 27 Dixwell Avenue, an abandoned storefront, which opened in January 1971.<sup>90</sup> Gussie Pheanious, the center coordinator in early 1971, maintained that the BPP health clinic was part of the revolutionary spirit of the Party. Like the free breakfast program, the clinic offered the New Haven BPP an opportunity to put their theory into revolutionary practice. "People will make the revolution," Pheanious told a reporter, "with the help of a healthy body, adequate housing and full stomach [sic]. The mind can't function if the body doesn't function."<sup>91</sup> As with their breakfast program, Panthers received assistance from the communities they served via local merchants and surrounding schools including the University of New Haven whose student government donated \$1,000.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Black Panther Party of Connecticut, Community Discussion Groups Flier, John R. Williams Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>89</sup> Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 77.

<sup>90</sup> Edward Woodyard, "The Panthers and Huggins Health Center," *The New Haven Register*, March 26, 1972, 3B; Nelson, 96.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Yohuru Williams, 161.

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The modest clinic was equipped with a waiting room, clerical space, two examination rooms, and a laboratory and was staffed by physicians from the Medical Committee for Human Rights, several Yale University medical students, a nurse, lab technician, and community members. The Health and Research Center, like other PFMCs throughout the country, provided a range of services. It provided preventative care and first aid, gynecological services, dental referrals, pediatric care for children, sickle cell anemia testing, as well as diabetes care management and awareness. All services were provided free of charge and the clinic reportedly treated close to four hundred patients during the winter of 1971. Most importantly, the center empowered individuals with knowledge to improve their health and make informed health decisions, two critical issues that biomedical facilities in the 1970s failed to provide to black people.

### **Free Bobby, Free Ericka!**

Bobby Seale, who had been in New Haven for a speaking engagement when Rackley was tortured and killed in May 1969, was accused by State's Attorney Arnold Markle of ordering Rackley's death and was charged with kidnapping, conspiracy to commit kidnapping, murder in the first degree, and conspiracy to commit murder. Huggins was present during the torture, but did not participate in and did not see Kimbro or McLucas shoot Rackley. She was charged with kidnapping, conspiracy to commit kidnapping, murder in the first degree, conspiracy to commit murder, and binding with intent to commit crime.<sup>93</sup> Their trial began on November 17, 1970, and was, along with the rallies surrounding the trial, among the most dramatic events in the history of the BPP in Connecticut.

<sup>93</sup> Freed, 25-35.

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The Panthers continued to oppose the arrests, detention, and trials of their New Haven members as an attack on the leftist groups in general and the Black Panther Party in particular. Bobby Seale saw himself as a political prisoner being tried “because we are dedicated in this very same revolutionary way of serving the people with these cooperative, socialistic community programs.”<sup>94</sup> *The Black Panther* declared that “[the] attempt to murder Chairman Bobby Seale cold-bloodedly in the Electric Chair is an open provocation and the ultimate aggression against Black people. It is a calculated step taken by fascist pigs in the unfolding of their vicious blueprint of genocide against Black people.”<sup>95</sup> The group agreed with members of the Students for a Democratic Society who argued that “charges against the New Haven Panthers, which have been trumped up by the government and police, are intended to intensify race hatred by playing upon the lies and myths instilled in white people by the educational system and the mass media.”<sup>96</sup>

Doug Miranda notes that when he arrived in New Haven from Boston “one of our primary objectives was organizing around the trial [of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins].”<sup>97</sup> Organizing around Seale’s and Huggins’ trial meant informing the public of Seale’s and Huggins’ case, lecturing to students at colleges and university, connecting with local community organizations, rallying support from progressive political groups, and gaining the support of as wide a political base as possible.

<sup>94</sup> “Press Statement from Chairman Bobby Seale,” *The Black Panther*, December 14, 1970, 8.

<sup>95</sup> n.a. “The Beginning of the Trial of Chairman Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins in New Haven, Connecticut Marks What The Pigs on a Local and National Level, Have Pre-Arranged and Over-Conspired To be Their Greatest Victory For Fascism,” *The Black Panther*, November 21, 1970, 11.

<sup>96</sup> “Fascist Forces Move Nationwide to Destroy Black Panther Party,” *The Black Panther*, June 21, 1969, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Doug Miranda. Interview with author. Phone Interview. Malden, MA. August 8, 2013.

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In September and early October 1969, Panthers worked with community groups and Yale University students to form the Coalition for Defense of the Black Panthers. The Coalition was comprised of white and black professionals and fifteen organizations, including the American Independent Movement (AIM), The Architect's Resistance, Black Law Students Association at Yale, Citizens for Justice, Order and Equality (JOE), Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Dixwell Legal Rights Association (DLRA), Freedom Now, Hill Parents Association (HPA), New Haven Black Coalition, New Haven Students for a Democratic Society, Organization of Afro-American Students at Southern Connecticut State College, Science Action Group of New Haven, Yale Divinity School Association, the Yale Student Health Organization of Yale Medical Center, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In its October press conference, the organization issued a statement detailing that their primary objectives were to inform New Haven residents of the BPP's survival programs and constitutional rights, respond to the negative media reports about the Panthers, and fundraise to support the Panthers in their legal battles.<sup>98</sup> Each organization provided statements about their participation and were all united in their critique of what they saw as a public persecution of the Panthers. They also stated their concerns about the possibility of any Black Panther receiving a fair trial in Connecticut. None of the organizations or individuals argued that the Panthers should not stand trial. They believed in the validity of the criminal justice system. Their sentiments were best articulated by the Dixwell Legal Rights Association whose press statement maintained that "it is essential to demand and work constructively for a legal system which protects the constitutional rights of all defendants, regardless of their political or social beliefs. Furthermore, every citizen and all community

<sup>98</sup> n.a., "New Haven Defense Pact Established, *The Black Panther*, October 18, 1969, 4; People to Free the Panthers, "Defense of the New Haven 14," John R. Williams Papers, Box 2, Folder 6; Coalition to Defend the Panthers, "Statement," John R. Williams Papers, Box, 10, Folder 67, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University; Russ Havourd, "Release of Panthers Demanded," *Hartford Courant*, November 8, 1969, 13.

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groups must bear this responsibility by actively seeking a fair trial for the arrested members of the Black Panther Party.”<sup>99</sup>

With Robert Abramovitz, a local physician, as chair of the Coalition, members saw their work as educational in nature and involved the following activities: to issue public statements, act as a clearinghouse for accurate and pertinent information about civil liberties, and arrange for informed speakers who used every forum available to discuss the Panthers’ situation. Members spoke at Parent Teacher Association meetings, neighborhood groups, and club meetings. Yale Divinity School students were tasked with speaking at local houses of worship. Myrna Fichtenbaum, a founding member of the Coalition, noted that the most important issue for groups and individuals was to remember to stay on message: “try to convince people in the city to speak out about a fair trial.”<sup>100</sup>

The Panthers welcomed the Coalition’s help, but did not depend on it. Panthers were also in the community and on university campuses trying to gain support. On October 22, 1969, Doug Miranda delivered an address at the University of Connecticut to a mostly white audience to “clear a lot of mistaken ideas. . . young college students have about the Black Panther Party.” The speech was recorded and transcribed by the FBI. In it, Miranda provided a historical overview of the Black Panther Party and noted the ideological contributions of Malcolm X. He proceeded to enumerate and discuss the Black Panther Party Ten Point Program, the Panther’s survival programs, and connect the Panthers’ political struggle to anti-colonial and anti-racist programs around the world.<sup>101</sup> One month later in November, the Panthers co-sponsored a

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Myrna Fichtenbaum. Interview with author. Phone interview. Malden, MA. November 7, 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Doug Miranda Speech at the University of Connecticut, October 22, 1969, John R. Williams Papers, Box 3, Folder 17, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University e University.

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People's Rally with People to Free the Panthers on the New Haven Green in an attempt to bring more attention to the arrests and trials of their comrades. Twenty-one buses shuttled people to the Green and over two thousand people participated of whom many were University of Connecticut students who had heard the Panther's story and were politically energized by Miranda one month before.<sup>102</sup>

Widespread support for the Panther cause was elusive in 1969. Perhaps it was because the New Haven BPP was focused on creating and sustaining survival programs. Maybe it was because blacks and whites had not overcome the shock of a murder of a Black Panther in the Elm City. Nonetheless, the limited support did not discourage the Panthers and in 1970, a wellspring of support emerged. One of the most important people in this support was Jean Genet, a white French political activist and writer.

Genet had been interested in African American culture and politics for some time and was in his early sixties when he came out in support of the Panther cause. His play, *The Blacks*, (1958), "a grotesque, allegorical spectacle of racial hatred and resentment featuring exaggerated characters and a destabilizing rapport between the audience and actors," was first performed in New York City in 1961 and featured some of the most important African American theatrical and literary figures including Maya Angelou, Louis Gossett Jr., Cicely Tyson, and James Earl Jones.<sup>103</sup> During the 1960s Genet became increasingly concerned with issues of racial discrimination around the world and saw the Panthers' arrest, detention, and trial as a battle in the class war between the capitalist class and the proletariat.<sup>104</sup> On March 18, 1970, Genet

<sup>102</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, December 5, 1969, John R. Williams, Box 5, Folder 33, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>103</sup> Kate Bredeson, "The Blacks," in *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*, Volume 1, eds. Gabrielle Cody and Evert Sprinchorn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 164-165.

<sup>104</sup> n.a., "Panthers Get Support of Author," *Hartford Courant*, March 10, 1970, 35.

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joined David Hilliard, the Chief of Staff of the BPP, and Doug Miranda at a rally at the Albert N. Jorgenson Auditorium at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. He addressed the crowd in French using an interpreter. “Bobby Seale’s trial,” he noted, “is a political trial of the Black Panther Party and on a more general basis a race trial held against all of American blacks.” In garnering support for the Panthers he beseeched the predominantly white audience of 2,000 to mobilize around the trial because “your intellect and physical ability, your moral imperatives are capable of making you act faster than I and with greater efficiency.”<sup>105</sup> Throughout 1970 he traveled around Connecticut and the country to speak on behalf of the Panthers.

Another support system came from the New Haven Panther Defense Committee (NHPDC) in 1970. The NHPDC originated in the fall of 1969 and was responsible for the November 22, 1969, rally on the New Haven Green. The organization was comprised of white working class Marxists from the Students for a Democratic Society, the American Independent Movement, the Patriot Party, and members of the Black Panther Party. They supported the political program of the Panthers and saw their work as not only freeing their imprisoned Black Panther colleagues, but also advancing the work of leftist organizations. Their local newsletter, *Right On*, was used to leaflet white working class neighborhoods and schools. They also screened films and held rallies in support of the Panthers.<sup>106</sup> One of the most important rallies was a teach-in at Yale Law School Auditorium on September 25, 1970. At the teach-in the NHPDC stressed the need for whites to join in the struggle to free the Panthers and fight for a social, political, and economic justice and articulated the interconnected nature of war, racism,

<sup>105</sup> Rally at University of Connecticut, Storrs, March 18, 1970, John R. Williams Papers, Box 5, Folder 34, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>106</sup> New Haven Panther Defense Committee, Statement, n.d, John R. Williams Papers, Box 2, Folder 16, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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and capitalism in the lives of black Americans.<sup>107</sup> The Vietnam War, they argued, resulted in more black soldiers dying than whites; racism presented a “special oppression” for black people as “an entire people;” and capitalism “breeds racism.”<sup>108</sup> Seeing racism from a structural level helped privileged white students see that racism was more than white personal prejudices and moved the discussion of race and racism from the personal to the institutional level.

A large number of Yale University students offered their support in April and May 1970, especially at the May Day Rally, on May 1, on the New Haven Green. Whether or not Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins could receive a fair trial was an important question openly discussed on the Yale campus among students, faculty, and administrators in the spring of 1970 primarily because the Panthers and their white allies blanketed the campus with pamphlets, talked with students individually, spoke to students groups, and held rallies on campus and kept the question about the availability of justice for Seale and Huggins on the minds and lips of the campus community. Miranda’s and his allies’ activism was so important that eventually, the president of the university, Kingman Brewster, openly questioned the legal system at an April 23 faculty meeting when he said that he was “skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States.”<sup>109</sup> The mostly white faculty, administration, and student body at Yale had little interest in the plight of African Americans locally or nationally, but Yale was the center of New Haven. To ignore its economic and political influence in the city of New Haven and the state of Connecticut was not an option. If it was true that “so goes Yale, so goes New Haven,” as Doug Miranda has suggested, obtaining the support of the student body,

<sup>107</sup> New Haven Students for a Democratic Society, People’s Committee to Defend the Panthers, and the Black Panthers Party, “Free the Panthers and Chairman Bobby Seale,” n.d. John R. Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Bass and Rae, 140.

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albeit tepid or temporary, in the form of attending a weekend rally would bring more attention to Seale's and Huggins' trials.<sup>110</sup>

Doug Miranda, Tom Doustou, John Froines, and others announced the plans for a May Day Rally on April 15 which almost sent the Yale campus into a political frenzy.<sup>111</sup> On April 16, segments of the Yale University student body started a moratorium which encouraged students to "turn the discussion in each class to the issue of the Panther trial or to boycott classes entirely."<sup>112</sup> Initially, the moratorium was called for several days, but as momentum built throughout the campus, it was extended to the remainder of the semester. The faculty and administration even gave tacit approval for the students' moratorium to avoid accusations of apathy and to stem any campus revolt by students. So instead of attending classes in late April, thousands of students attended teach-ins around campus. At one teach-in on April 21, David Hilliard addressed a crowd of 4,500 students declaring that it was "necessary to close down [Yale] and occupy the streets, because the streets belong to the people."<sup>113</sup> The teach-ins were as important for the Panthers as they were for the student participants. Miranda, the primary Panther organizer and teach-in leader on the Yale campus, saw educating Yale students as part of the fight for black survival. For white and black Yale students alike, the teach-ins raised their political consciousness and made them, some for the first time, think about the oftentimes desperate political situation of the state's and the nation's black population.

The May Day rally was a two day event that included press conferences, music, and speeches from progressive activists. Arguably, the most important and informative portion of

<sup>110</sup> Doug Miranda. Interview with author. Phone interview. Malden. MA. August 8, 2018.

<sup>111</sup> John Taft, *May Day at Yale: A Case Study in Student Radicalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976), 25; Ted Coltman, "Panthers Expect 35,000 For New Haven Rallies," *Hartford Courant*, April 25, 1970, 1.

<sup>112</sup> John Taft, *May Day at Yale: A Case Study in Student Radicalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976), 24.

<sup>113</sup> n. a., "Panthers Will 'Off Some Pigs' Chief of Staff Tells Rally," *Hartford Courant*, April 23, 1970, 61E.

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the rally was the Main Rally which took place on Friday, May 1 from 4p.m. to 7p.m. Headlining the lineup of speakers for the Main Rally were Abbie Hoffman and David Dellinger. By the time he was arrested in 1968, Dellinger was a seasoned activist and anarchist pacifist who had participated in small and large political and anti-war movements during the Cold War. Hoffman was one of the primary personalities behind the Youth International Party, or the Yippies. The organization was tangentially Marxist in theoretical and political orientation and was opposed to the excesses and militarism of popular American culture. Hoffman also authored *Steal This Book* (1971), a countercultural discourse which challenged corporate power and unfettered capitalism. Both Hoffman and Dellinger were part of the Chicago Seven, a group of individuals who were arrested and eventually indicted by a federal grand jury for disrupting the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, in August 1968. They linked the trials of Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale with other leftist and antiwar movements nationwide to place the BPP alongside other contemporary movements for justice, peace, and equality.

Despite the heavy police presence and hundreds of national guardsmen patrolling the streets, over 15,000 spectators from all across the nation attended the rally. A few spectators tussled with the police, but overall the rally was as peaceful as the planners intended. It is true that Anti-Vietnam War activists, animal rights activists, women's liberationists, and others with a host of political causes were present at the May Day rally and made "the demonstrations a forum for other protests."<sup>114</sup> Some, perhaps thousands, had no real interest in the Panthers or black people at all. However, the fact that Yale University opened its campus to activists and non-activists and that thousands of people arrived to be part of a political atmosphere made the

<sup>114</sup> Yohuru Williams, 153.

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May Day rally a resounding success and demonstrates the Panthers' willingness to build coalitions with a diverse membership base.<sup>115</sup>

Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins' trial began six months after the May Day rally in November 1970. Huggins had been imprisoned and refused bail since her arrest in May 1969.<sup>116</sup> Seale was extradited from California in March 1970 and refused bail. Arnold Markle was the prosecuting attorney for the state and Superior Court Judge Harold M. Mulvey presided over the case. Charles Garry and David Rosen, Seale's attorneys, and Catherine Roraback, Huggins' attorney, tried to get all charges dismissed using legal arguments and several motions. One defense pretrial motion argued that the police did not have probable cause—sufficient reason—to raid the Connecticut Panther headquarters and make arrests on May 22, 1969, shortly after Rackley's body was found. Judge Mulvey ruled that the police had probable cause and thus, the arrests were warranted given the testimony of two police informants who had infiltrated the Panthers and corroborating statements from Francis Carter who had been arrested and questioned by the police on May 21.<sup>117</sup> In March 1970 Judge Mulvey rejected a motion by the defense which argued that Seale's, Huggins', and other Panthers' cases should be dismissed because their sixth amendment rights were violated when the state did not allow the accused to confront state material witnesses, Maude Francis and Aletta Wilson, two juvenile Panthers who testified against those jailed during bail hearings.<sup>118</sup> Defense attorneys tried again to have the charges dismissed in October 1970 when they argued that pretrial publicity in the state of Connecticut

<sup>115</sup> Taft, 26.

<sup>116</sup> Stan Simon, "Last Pre-Trial Motion Argued for Panthers," *Hartford Courant*, May 6, 1970, 8; Stan Simon, "Mulvey Rules on Panther Motions," *Hartford Courant*, October 7, 1970, 8.

<sup>117</sup> Stan Simon, "Panther Warned After Outbursts," *Hartford Courant*, January 23, 1970, 6; Stan Simon, "Raid on Panthers Rule Legal," March 27, 1970, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Stan Simon, "Black Panther Bid Rejected By Judge," *Hartford Courant*, March 10, 1970, 23.

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would make it impossible for their clients to receive a fair trial. They cited newspaper stories and New Haven Police Department press releases and called as witnesses representatives from newspapers, radio, and television to discuss the extent of their coverage of the Rackley murder.<sup>119</sup> Again, Mulvey was not convinced of their arguments and dismissed the motions. With all legal means exhausted, Seale and Huggins were scheduled to be tried.

Because the twelve member jury was to be comprised of residents in New Haven and its environs, one of the most important strategies available to defense attorneys was to make sure the jury was as fair and impartial jury as possible. The attorneys had to be sure that jurors were not unduly influenced by the media coverage, police press conferences and statements, or endemic racism. All things being equal, given the black population of New Haven and its suburbs in the early 1970s (see Table 2), for blacks to be properly represented on the jury, three of the twelve jurors would have to be African American. For seventeen weeks the prosecution and defense team questioned potential jurors to determine their suitability for jury duty. In all, 1,034 individuals were interviewed to fill the twelve person jury. When jury selection concluded twelve standing jurors were selected, five black and seven whites, with two alternates, one black and one white. The alternates listened to all evidence but could not take part in deliberations unless one or two of the standing jurors became ill. The trial against Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins lasted a little over two months, but the prosecution, despite putting George Sams on the stand, was unable to prove its case beyond a shadow of a doubt and the twelve person jury could not reach a unanimous decision. On May 25, 1971, Judge Harold Mulvey declared a mistrial and Seale and Huggins were released from state custody.

<sup>119</sup> Stan Simon, "Mulvey Rules on Panther Motions," *Hartford Courant*, October 7, 1970, 8; Stan Simon, "Panther Hearings to Resume Tuesday," *Hartford Courant*, October 11, 1970, 14B.

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### Conclusion

Seale and Huggins left Connecticut almost immediately. When they did, the prime of the New Haven Chapter of the Black Panther Party was over. Seale was remanded to Chicago where he stood trial for disrupting the Democratic National Convention where a jury, again, failed to convict him. Huggins left for the San Francisco Bay area in California and immediately became the poster child for the Party and its efforts to combat oppression. When the fanfare and hullabaloo of the trial dissipated, popular support for the New Haven Panthers and their struggle for equality and socialism disappeared. The New Haven Committee to Defend the Panthers disbanded in May 1971.<sup>120</sup> White and black Yale University students proceeded to finish their Ivy League education. Those who graduated left Yale and started establishing a life and career for themselves. When the state of Connecticut refused to put Seale and Huggins on trial again, the media lost interest and dropped their coverage of the Panthers.

For a while after the verdict the Panthers continued their survival programs and instituted new ones. In December 1971 they opened a day care center and implemented the Free Busing to Prison Program which departed from 259 Dixwell Avenue on weekends.<sup>121</sup> By April 1972, the lack of popular support and limited income led the New Haven chapter to discontinue political education classes, the liberation school, the day care, and the legal aid classes. When Huey Newton called for chapters throughout the country to consolidate in Oakland, California, to support Bobby Seale's mayoral campaign in July 1972, core members of New Haven relocated to California including James Young, the acting captain; Tim Thompson, security officer; Billy Overton, publication dissemination; Gussie Pheanious, communications secretary and health

<sup>120</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, June 18, 1971, John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 66, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>121</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, March 6, 1972, John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 69, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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center coordinator; Frances Carter, day care center coordinator; and Steven Long, officer of the day. The New Haven chapter did not have enough activists to sustain its work. The breakfast program discontinued for the summer of 1972, reopened during the fall later that year, but ceased operation in February 1973.<sup>122</sup> The clinic operated sporadically into early months of 1973 until it and all other survival programs closed in August 1973.<sup>123</sup> By the end of 1973 George Edwards, the financial secretary, was the sole local leader of the New Haven Chapter of the Black Panther Party.

For all of their successes and problems the BPP served a critical purpose in Connecticut and throughout the nation by forcing white and black Americans as well as federal, state, and local authorities to confront issues of racism, police brutality, and poverty. Additionally, their radical politics and oftentimes dramatic demonstrations rearranged the black political continuum. The Party's political activities in working class and working poor black communities, their political platform, and their calls for self-defense, made contemporary political activity and approaches by other organizations and people of color with their calls for school integration, enforcement of voting rights, and investments in urban black communities seem more appealing and palatable. The Panthers' position on the far left of the black political spectrum repositioned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, and the Congress of Racial Equality making them the center of the black political spectrum. In the end, the Black Panther Party of Connecticut demonstrated that black people's struggle for equality and human rights did not end with the civil rights movement and that young people could be at the forefront of political change.

<sup>122</sup> Airtel, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, July 6, 1972, John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 70, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>123</sup> Memo, Special Agent in Charge, New Haven to Director, FBI, August 23, 1973, John R. Williams Papers, Box 10, Folder 70, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

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## Appendix 1: Weekly Schedule of Classes and Party Political Work, 1970

Monday:	General Meeting at 10 in the morning Section Work from 12 noon to 8 in the evening Dinner from 8 to 9 (all food must be ready by 8)
Tuesday	Section work from 10 morning to 5 evening Dinner from 5 to 6 (all food must be ready by 5) Welfare Moms from 7:30 on (MA, Pat, Elise)
Wednesday	Section work from 10 morning to 5 evening Dinner from 5 to 6 (all food must be ready by 5) Lead Poisoning Meeting at 8 evening (Doug, Diane)
Thursday	P.E. Class from 10 morning to 12 noon Newspaper or section work from 12 noon to 8 evening Dinner from 8 to 9 (all food must be ready by 8)
Friday	P.E. Classes from 10 morning to 12 noon Newspaper or section work from 12 noon to 8 evening Dinner from 8 to 9 (all food must be ready by 8)
Saturday	Newspapers from 10 morning to 6 evening Dinner from 6 to 7 (all food must be ready by 6) General Staff Meeting at 7:30
Saturday:	Church Services from 10 to 1 P.E. Classes from 1 to 3 Section work 3 to 8 Dinner from 8 to 9 (food must be ready by 8)

1. All letters to political prisoners are due on Monday and Thursday
2. All reports and articles that are going to National have to be in by Wednesday at 9 in the morning
3. Office hours are from 8 in the morning to 5 at night
4. Daily reports are to be passed in every day.

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 2

### **The Black Panther Party Position on the Murder of Alex Rackley, 1971**

The position that the Black Panther Party takes is that the pigs murdered Alex Rackley. It must be understood that the murder of Alex Rackley and the frame-up of Bobby Seale and the entire Connecticut State Chapter of the Black Panther Party as well as Landon Williams and Rory Hithe is a very carefully construed plot put into action by the F.B.I, C.I.A. and various Justice Department task forces. George Sams and the pigs are responsible for the murder of Alex Rackley. In relationship to this fact, questions arise such as: Why did Judge Mulvey squash the subpoena to get the F.B.I. arrest records so that the defense could produce evidence as the the police role in the murder of our party member, Alex Rackley? Why did Mulvey squash the subpoena for the F.B.I. surveillance records of the New Haven Panther Party office, thus hiding the pig's role in this whole frame-up? The people must see and understand this. The people must also ask why did the pig's state's attorney Markle vigorously object to Warren Kimbro testifying to the fact that George Sams was actually a "bodyguard-henchman for Stokely Carmichael."

Sams, and Sams alone, gave the orders to shoot Alex Rackley. Sams terrorized almost everyone in the New Haven Chapter. This fact has been made very clear through the testimony of even the state's witnesses. Most of the members of the New Have Chapter were young and impressionable so they believed George Sams was correct in the things he did and said because he constantly stated that he was sent out by national headquarters. The Black Panther Party stated that Alex Rackley was a member in good standing with the party and we maintain that

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

position. The only persons to assume that he was an informer are George Sams and Warren Kimbro. In the tape recording of Sam's and Kimbro's interrogation of Alex, it is obvious that the man was in pain from the brutalizing treatment Sams had put him through. He would have said anything to put an end to his pain. Alex Rackley was a rank and file Panther so he was not in any position to know any party confidential information. He was not kidnapped and brought there.

The practice of the Black Panther Party is to expel and expose through our national newspaper agents, provocateurs, pigs, and counter-revolutionary fools. We are well aware of the fact that the pig police move on people that the party expels and denounces in an effort to get them to inform on the party. The members of the New Haven Chapter were young and they were immature, so they cannot and must not be blamed for what George Sams did or made them do under the threat of death at his hands. These people made and signed statements out of fear and without knowing what these statements meant. The pigs implanted fear in these people by telling them that they were going to get the death penalty, but by making statements they would be let off or get a lesser sentence. It must be clearly understood that the ultimate goal of the pigs is to murder Bobby Seale in the electric chair. Lonnie McLucas did not engineer this frame-up nor did he give the orders to murder Alex Rackley; George Sams did.

As always, our party is responsible to the masses of poor and oppressed people. The Black Panther Party has to stand in the judgment of the people, because in that period of our party's development, we allowed a maniac such as George Sams to come into our party. Sams is a black tool of a vicious racist ruling class that is bent on trying to destroy the Black Panther Party. He is actually aiding the racist pig power structure in their attempt to murder the Chairman of the Party, Bobby Seale. Black people need only look at history to see how their

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

leaders and organizations are destroyed. Malcolm X stated before his death that he had the best organization for Black People in the Western hemisphere and niggers destroyed it. We will not allow our party to be destroyed by the pigs.

Seize the Time!  
Free All Political Prisoners  
National Headquarters  
Black Panther Party

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

### Appendix 3 Legal First Aid, 1970

This pocket lawyer is provided as a means of keeping the people up to date on their rights. We are always the first to be arrested while the fascist police officers are constantly trying to pretend that rights are extended equally to all people. Carry it with you.

1. If you are stopped and/or arrested by the police, you may remain silent; you do not have to answer questions about alleged crimes; you should provide your name and address only if requested (although it is not absolutely clear that you must do so). But then do so, and at all times remember the fifth amendment.
2. If a police officer is not in uniform, ask him to show his identification. He has no authority over you unless he properly identifies himself. Beware of person posing as police officers.
3. Police have no right to search your car or your home unless they have a search warrant, probable cause or your consent. They may conduct no exploratory search, that is, one for evidence of a crime unconnected with the one you are being questioned about. (Thus, a stop for an auto violation does not give the rights to search the auto). You are not required to consent to search, therefore, you should not consent. **IN FRONT OF WITNESSES IF POSSIBLE.** If you do not consent, the police will have the burden in court of showing probable cause. Arrest may be corrected later.
4. You may **NOT RESIST ARREST FORCIBLY OR BY GOING LIMP**, even if you are innocent. To do so is a separate crime of which you can be convicted if you are acquitted for the original charge. **DO NOT RESIST ARREST UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**
5. If you are stopped and/or arrested the police may search you by patting you on the outside of your clothing. You can be stripped of your personal possessions. Do not carry anything that includes the name of your employer or friends.
6. Do not engage in "friendly" conversation with the officers on the way to the or at the station. Once you are arrested, there is little likelihood that anything you say will get you released.
7. As soon as you have been booked, you have the right to complete at least two phone calls—one to a relative, friend, or attorney; the other to a bail bondsman. If you can, call the Black Panther Party . . . and the party will post bail if possible.
8. You must be allowed to hire and see an attorney immediately.
9. You do not have to give any statement to the police, nor do you have to sign any statement you might give them; and, therefore, you should not sign anything. Take the fifth and the fourteenth amendments, because you cannot be forced to testify against yourself.
10. You must be allowed to post bail in most cases, but you must be able to pay the bail bondsman's fee. If you cannot pay the fee, you make the judge to release you from custody without bail or to lower your bail. But he does not have to do so.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

11. The police must bring you into the court or release you within 48 hours after your arrest (unless time ends on a week-end or holiday, and the must bring you before a judge the first day court is in session).
12. If you do not have money to hire an attorney, IMMEDIATELY ASK THE POLICE TO GET YOU ATTORNEY WITHOUT CHARGE.

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## **Appendix 4 Free Health Clinic, 1971**

The Black Panther Party, along with the help of volunteers from the community, volunteer doctors, volunteer nurses and all kinds of people in the medical profession has instituted twenty free health clinics across the country. The main concern of these medical clinics is preventative medicine—teaching the community about common health problems in the Black Community so they can avoid the disease in the future.

There is a health problem in this country because trained medical people are not utilized in the poor and oppressed communities, also many doctors in this country care more about their well being the patients' well being. The People's Free Health Clinic has enabled people with medical skills to use them in the best way possible—dealing directly with the concrete problems of the community. Our Free Health Clinics across the country have taught community people medical skills and they have started health campaigns, where community volunteers have gone out testing for deadly diseases, like diabetes, inability of one's blood to absorb sugar, lead paint poisoning, caused by lead in paint and Sickle Cell Anemia, a black disease found almost exclusively among Black People.

Our Free Health Center is located at 27 Dixwell Avenue, phone no. 865-9824 and open seven days a week. Clinic hours are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 9. The Black Panther Party has started a nation-wide Sickle Cell Anemia campaign, so we will need volunteers to help us take tests. The People's Free Health Clinic always welcomes volunteers where or not they have medical skills because those skills can be learned at the clinic and used to serve the people.

### SURVIVAL THROUGH SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE

Connecticut State Chapter  
Black Panther Party

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## **Appendix 5 Liberation School, 1970**

The Black Panther Party would like to inform you of another survival program. The Black Panther Liberation School will be starting in July continuing until September for children of school age (5-16).

We feel that a child needs the type of education that will help them to perceive the world as it is and form concepts that apply to their everyday lives as black children. Not only will we be able to instill the awareness and pride each child needs but we will also be able to instruct the children in regular courses such as reading, mathematics, and science.

We will need people who can donate their time in helping us structure a curriculum. People who have experience teaching children basic skills will be very helpful. Also, you can be of great help if you can provide transportation to and from Liberation School.

If you wish your child(ren) to attend or if you have questions and would like further information, please contact the Black Panther Party at 865.9824.

**OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE YOUTH!**

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## **Appendix 6 Free Clothing Program, 1970**

In the past we have organized Free Clothing Drives all across this American Community to insure that our people have decent clothing, especially our youth. Everywhere welfare is being cut-back and allowances poor people are allotted for necessities like clothing, is almost nothing. Since clothing is one of the necessities for survival we will have to organize ourselves to provide clothing until we are able to control the machinery that can produce this necessity. In Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party is organizing a Free Clothing and Free Shoe Factory so the people can begin to produce their own needs.

Right now the Connecticut State Chapter is organizing a Free Clothing Drive and we hope to continue this into the winter months when warm decent clothing is really needed. Again it needs to be stressed that the community must participate in the organization of this program. It is very easy to see that unemployment is steadily increasing while welfare is steadily being cut-back, so our survival depends on being united. You can help with the Free Clothing Program by helping us get donations of clothing, helping us to prepare these clothes for distribution (washing, ironing, mending) and helping us set up places to distribute these clothes. Your help is needed in any way you can assist.

**SURVIVAL THROUGH SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE!**

Connecticut State Chapter  
Black Panther Party

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 7 Why The New Haven Coalition was Organized, October, 1969

The Coalition to Defend the New Haven Panthers was organized in September 1969 by individuals and organizations concerned about the evident abrogation of the Constitutional rights of a group of Black Panther Party members held in Connecticut prisons since April 1969 on charges of murder and conspiracy to murder.

- The BPP members were arrested without warrants.
- The premises where they were arrested were searched without warrants.
- Office equipment, cash, and other properties of the BPP were seized without warrants.
- The men and women (three of them minors, three of them pregnant) have been held in jail since last April under conditions comparable to those for convicted persons. In effect, they have been denied their right of presumptive innocence and have been punished without due process of law.
- Their jailing under strict conditions has drastically limited their access to lawyers, families, friends and information. It precludes or makes extremely difficult and costly the preparation of their effective defense.
- The Court has forbidden defense lawyers (and prosecuting attorneys) from communicating in any way with the public. (In the Chicago conspiracy trial defense lawyers hold daily press conferences.) This action has deprived the accused of their most convincing method of counteracting the damaging material already leaked by the police to the press.

There are now 15 people accused of this case. The Coalition believes they must be well defended because all citizens are entitled to a fair trial and because the precedents that are being set in New Haven are dangerous to everyone. Legal expenses are presently estimated at \$70,000.

Coalition Chairman: Robert H. Abramovitz, M.D.  
Coalition to Defend the Panthers  
140 Goffe Street  
New Haven, Conn. 06511

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 8 Counter Intelligence Letter, 1969

*The FBI developed many tactics in their attempt to neutralize the Black Panther Party. One strategy was sending anonymous letters to BPP members and/or their allies. Below is one such letter sent to a potential supporter of the Party. It was written by the New Haven Special Agent in Charge and sent to a religious institution in the New Haven area. Names and personal information have been redacted, but the letter reveals enough information to allow the reader a sense of how letters of this sort were used by the agency to undermine the Panthers as well as the extent to which the FBI would go to protect them when the counterintelligence program ended.*

New Haven, Connecticut  
November, 1969

Dear [Name Redacted]

It pains me to have to write this letter to call your attention to a matter which, if brought to public light may cause the church a great deal of embarrassment. I wish to remain anonymous with regard to the information because in divulging it I may have violated a trust. I feel, however, that what I am writing is important enough that my conscience is clear.

You probably know that [Name Redacted] has been involved in anti-war movements here in New Haven. This, [Information Redacted], feels tin here rights as guaranteed by our Constitution and although some do not agree with her viewpoint, this has never been a cause for concern among those who know here.

[Name Redacted] latest escapades, however, are known to a select few, and needless to say thos of us who are aware of the situation are deeply concerned as loyal Americans and Christians.

Specifically, I am referring to the fact that [Information Redacted]. I recently heard through a close friend of [Name Redacted] that he is a revolutionist who advocates overthrowing the Government of the United States and that he has turned over a sizeable sum of money to the Panthers. I can present no evidence of fact, but is it possible [Name Redacted] is being influenced by Communists? Some statements has made both in church and out have led me to believe he is either a Communist himself, or so left-wing that the only thing he lacks is a card.

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

I consider myself a liberal, as do many of the people in the church. [Name Redacted], however, has taken not one but many steps beyond liberalism and I sincerely question his loyalty.

I beseech you to counsel with [Name Redacted] and relay our concern over his political philosophies, which among other things, involves association with a known revolutionist [Name Redacted] head of the Black Panther Party in New Haven. It truly believe [Name Redacted] to be a good man, but his yearning to help his fellow man may have caused him to go overboard and he now needs a guiding light which only you can provide.

Sincerely,  
A Concerned Christian

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 9 Black Panther Party, Platform and Program, October 1966

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### 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.

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.

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

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.

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

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.

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 10 Statement by The National Committee To Combat Fascism, Bridgeport, 1969

Historically, the power structure has demanded that Black Leaders cater to their desires and to the ends of the Imperialistic racism of the oppressor. The power structure has endorsed these Black Leaders who have reduced themselves to nothing more than apologizing parrots.

They had divided the so-called Black and Puerto Rican Leaders within the Community. These Black and Puerto Rican Leaders serve the oppressor by purposely keeping the people submissive and passive-nonviolent.

Few Blackmen have rejected the handouts of the oppressor and have refused to spread the oppressors treacherous principals of deceit, gradual indoctrination, and brainwashing and have refused to indulge in the criminal activity of teaching submission, fear, and love of an enemy who hates the very color black and is determined to commit Genocide on an international scale. Those few Black Men are the Implacables.

There has always existed in the Black Colonies of Afro-America, a fundamental difference over which tactics from the broad spectrum of alternatives Black People should employ in their struggle for National Liberation.

The OPPRESSOR, the ENDORSED SPOKEMAN, and the IMPLACABLES (NATIONAL COMMITTED TO COMBAT FASCISM, BLACK PANTHER PARTY, BGPT . BRANCH) form the three points of a Triangle of Death. The OPPRESSOR looks upon the ENDORSED SPOKEMAN as a tool to use against the IMPLACABLES to keep the Masses passive within the acceptable limits of tactics he is capable of containing. The ENDORSED SPOKESMAN looks upon the OPPRESSOR as a guardian angel who can always be depended

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

upon to protect them from the WRATH of the IMPLACABLES, while he looks upon the IMPLACABLES as dangerous and irresponsible madmen who, by angering the OPPRESSOR, will certainly provoke a blood-bath in which they themselves might get washed away. The IMPLACABLES view both the OPPRESSORS and the ENDORSED LEADERS as his deadly enemy. If anything, he has more profound hatred for the ENDORSED LEADERS than he has for the OPPRESSOR himself, because the IMPLACABLE know that they can deal [with the oppressor].

The BLACK LEADERS endorsed by the Power Structure have committed to sell the People the simple-minded theory that politics is holding a Political office; being able to move into \$40,000 home; being able to sit next to the white people in a restaurant (while in fact the Black Masses have not been able to pay the rent of a \$40.00 rat-infested hovel). The Heirs of Malcolm X now stand millions strong on their corner of the triangle facing the RACIST DOG OPPRESSOR and THE SOULLESS ENDORSED SPOKEMAN. The Heirs of Malcolm have picked up the gun and taking first things first, are moving to expose the ENDORSED SPOKESMAN for the Black Masses to see them for what they are and always have been.

The choice offered by the HEIRS OF MALCOLM to the ENDORSED SPOKESMAN is to Repudiate the OPPRESSOR and crawl back to their people and earn a speedy Reprieve or face a Merciless, speedy and most timely execution for treason and being too wrong for too long.

All Power to the People  
Seize the Time  
Off the Slime

# THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

## Appendix 11 Speech Delivered by Jose Gonzalves Stamford, Connecticut Spring 1969

“All Power to the people.” It is good to be here. It is always good to be brothers and sisters. Before we go into the question period, I would like to say a few things in the name of the Black Panther Party.

The Black Panther Party is a party of production because we will do everything possible to produce for the people. The Black Panther Party is a “political” party because every move made by the BPP is a political move, moving towards the political Freedom that the Black Communities need in order to determine the destiny of their Community. The Black Panther Party is a “Vanguard Party” because the BPP will provide leadership for the people and other revolutionary groups across the country. Black people are getting brainwashed and killed, black babies are dying of hunger, black women are being raped, black brothers are being drafted into a racist army and Black Panthers are being harassed and brutalized by members of a racist society. We don’t have time to join organizations that “JUST TRYING TO BE BLACK.”

We must speed up our struggle because our enemies are moving faster and are now recruiting other helpers. We are now fighting capitalism, imperialism, racism, and two other new members of a racism family: PIGISM and PORK CHOP CULTURAL NATIONALISM.

We, as revolutionaries must weaken the Camp of the Reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries and give all power to the Revolutionary Camp which is the people’s camp. We must stop the racist pigs from Oinking all over human beings. The only Oink you must hear

## THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY OF CONNECTICUT

from this is their last dying Oink! Bang!!!!!! You pig, Oink, Oink, Oink, Oink. The only good pig is a dead pig, that's why we have pig tails, pig ears, and pig feet.

This is a Revolution. A revolution against the system that teaches a man to be less than a man, a revolution against ignorance, fear and hate. An armed revolution against capitalism, racism, imperialism, pigism, and Cultural Nationalism. The shit has been on, it started when pigs marched into Newark, Watts, Washington and Hough Ave. in Cleveland, and the shite started when Malcolm X was killed, when Martin Luther King was murdered in cold blood and they were trying to show you that the shit was on when racist made mechanical robot pigs try to kill Huey P. Newton, the Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party.

Let's take the strength from the few and give power to the people. "All power to the People." (People's Power).

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Levine, Todd

From: Paul Hammer <pauldhammer@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 11:00 PM  
To: p.bass@newhavenindependent.org; Levine, Todd  
Subject: Re: Meeting tomorrow at Book Trader

Coursebook - Hilary - modeled the trail  
- May Day

Hi Paul and Todd,

Looking forward to seeing you both tomorrow. In re-reading *Murder in the Model City*, I thought of several potential Freedom Trail sites. These would include the New Haven Green, Project More (in its current location, I would think), and several others - Ethan Gardens, Panther Defense Committee headquarters, site in the Hill neighborhood where Panthers provided free meals, Superior Court, Yale Law School, Ingalls Rink, Battell Chapel, Sprague Hall, Old Campus and residential colleges where protesters were welcomed by Kingman Brewster, Woodbridge Hall and the Yale Presidential residence on Hillhouse Ave., law enforcement and National Guard sites. Of course, I'm not suggesting that we propose all of these sites to be incorporated in the Freedom Trail, but I could envision proposing a few.

See you tomorrow!

Paul H.

- ① Court House / Superior Project More - women Kingman
- ② Ethan Gardens - BP Headquarters Orchard St / Sec 8 Now
- ③

On Tuesday, March 10, 2020, 09:31:34 p.m. EDT, <p.bass@newhavenindependent.org> wrote:

Priority program for converts

Glad you wrote! I had it down for Thursday. Will see you tomorrow, Wednesday.

-----Original Message-----

From: "Paul Hammer" <pauldhammer@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 7:39pm  
To: "New Haven Independent" <p.bass@newhavenindependent.org>, "Todd Levine" <todd.levine@ct.gov>  
Subject: Meeting tomorrow at Book Trader

Hi Todd and Paul,

Looking forward to seeing you at 12:20ish at the Book Trader (1140 Chapel St., New Haven). Best way to let me know about any changes is to text me at 475-201-3810.

Best,  
Paul H.

Touks in the street  
feat State  
Ingalls Rink - Bomb went off  
Chapell - Bobby Seal spoke right before shooting  
Security Hall meeting