

# Black Panther Party

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By Joseph D. Whitaker  
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Two representatives of the Black Panther Party were sent to Washington six weeks ago to organize a chapter of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, an organization created by the Panthers to raise funds and bring urban police departments under community control.

Jim Williams, 29, the unofficial captain of the two-man team, says "some progress" has been made. But he says he's disappointed in what he calls the "bourgeois attitudes" they have found among blacks here.

Washington, with a population that is 71 per cent black, would seem logically to be a choice location for the activities of the Black Panther Party. But since the party's headquarters here was

years ago, it has been reluctant to seek support on a large scale among the city's black population.

Now, spurred by newly found sympathy and the financial strength of the party in other cities, the Black Panthers apparently feel that Washington blacks,

are ready to join the struggle.

But several black organizations here say they won't support the Panther organization because it advocates a coalition between both white and black groups.

Williams, in spite of his high-rise Afro hair style,

the other "official" was wire-rimmed glasses, more like a soft-spoken college student than an envoy of the Panthers when he explains plans for organizing the Committee to Combat Fascism.

"The first thing we have to do," the New York native said, "is raise the level of awareness among the people."

"The government," he maintained, "has been able to control the black people in this city through jobs and poverty programs, and has virtually silenced so-called community leaders by putting money into their pockets."

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Eldridge Cleaver to visit  
Al Fatah in Jordan.  
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Ibn Sudiata, a 27-year-old from Biloxi, Miss., also sporting dark wire-rimmed glasses and an Afro hair cut, says he migrated to Washington in search of a job. He said a previous attempt to start a chapter of the Black Panther Party here in December, 1967, ended when people from Washington who were training for membership refused to follow the party's ideas and practices.

"The ideology and programs of the Black Panther Party are born out of the needs and experiences of the masses of black people," Sudiata explained.

"We cannot start any program unless the people feel a need for us," he said.

So far, the success of the National Committee to Combat Fascism is represented mostly by scattered support among such local groups as the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in

Vietnam, a largely white antiwar organization, and the Coalition Against Racism and Fascism, a new group formed last month by Panther sympathizers, both black and white, following a Chicago raid in which police killed two Panther leaders.

Other organizations that know of the attempt to organize the Panther committee, have not expressed interest mainly because, they say, the group insists on entering into a coalition with whites and because it denounces capitalism.

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The Rev. Douglas Moore, chairman of the Black United Front, said he believes in revolution as long as it takes place within the context of the capitalist system.

The Panthers advocate a socialistic society because, they say, capitalism "is built on the idea of a handful of people exploiting the masses for profit..."

Mr. Moore says that in

any revolution involving black people, "they will have to fend for themselves."

"The Black United Front has been consistent in its policy not to participate in coalition with white groups because we believe you cannot look to your oppressor for salvation," he declared.

Col. Hassan Juru-Ahmed Bey, head of the Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation, said he has not been contacted by the Panther emissaries. But he says he would not support a black-white coalition.

"It is suicidal," he said, "for anyone who is black, who is a nationalist, and who is a Communist to oppose the political structure of this country while continuing to live within her borders."

### In Event of Attack

Hassan did say, however, that his army would not hesitate to defend any Panther activity in the event of a police attack, "not because we

are black."

The major obstacle to Panther activities here, the Panther delegates say, is that too many blacks in Washington feel sufficiently affluent and are not interested in a movement to overthrow "the system."

More than 50 per cent of the 34,000 people employed by the city government is black, as is 40 per cent of the city's public workers in the city.

This problem of affluence, the two emissaries say, has not existed in other cities where the party has set up activities.

In other cities, they say, the distinction between the economically secure and the poor has been very clear. Blacks normally constitute the bulk of the poor.

But in Washington the average annual household income is \$14,200 as compared to the national average of \$12,875. Due to the

employment opportunities here, blacks feel a false sense of security the Panther envoys claim.

"This can be very dangerous," Sudiata maintains, "since we all know this is a company town and that everyone must sooner or later dance to the tune of the federal government."

Williams and Sudiata, showing no signs of discouragement, say that before they can complete their efforts to set up a chapter of the national committee, they will have to educate the city's black community politically. It is still considered virgin territory by the party.

The committee's office, in the 2300 block of 18th Street n.w., adjoins both black and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods.

One day last week there were eight people in the office, including a white girl and a white boy, doing the daily chores of the organization.

Some were writing slogans, in both Spanish and English, to be made into posters and pamphlets. One was developing film. Another answered telephones and scheduled the dates for Black Panther films and lecturers.

## Reading Back Issues

Others sat curled up on a sofa thumbing quietly through copies of the Communist Manifesto and back issues of The Black Panther, the Party's weekly newspaper, which were stacked around the office with Panther posters and copies of Black Panther record albums.

During their two-month-old campaign, the organizers have spent most of their time, according to Williams, handing out copies of The Black Panther, which he says is distributed here at the weekly rate of nearly 2000.

"Our first job in any situation," Williams said, "is to point out the contradictions in the capitalist system to the oppressed people."

"Our newspaper does this through its pictures and stories," he continued, "but we also get a chance to talk to people and explain our party ideology while we are selling the papers."

Williams said that the greatest number of people contacted so far have been those who buy the paper each week at street corners.

"Because we are unable to see all our supporters at one time."

He said that in addition to street corners, papers are also handed out on high school and college campuses, at shopping centers and at meetings called by Black Panther sympathizers.

The Panther representatives have available on request Black Panther Party films. Normally the films are accompanied by lecturers. The films depict the training procedures of the Party and describe its political achievements, plans and ideology.

According to Williams, the film-lecture series have already been held at three D.C. high schools, Howard University, Federal City College and other places.

At Western High School, James Brown, a black instructor, says he was put on administrative leave for showing the film to his American history class.

Brown, a 26-year-old graduate of Florida A & M University and Howard University Law School, says he ordered the film through a distributing company at the request of his class in December, shortly after two Panthers were killed in Chicago.

## Talk to Teacher

George Rhodes, assistant superintendent for secondary schools, says that Brown's account of the incident is basically accurate.

"I want to make it clear," Rhodes said, "that he was not put on leave as a punishment."

"Normally, when we want to talk to an instructor in a case like that," the official explained, "we have him come into our office after working hours."

"But we didn't think he (Brown) would come, so we gave him a couple of days off so he could come down here and answer a few questions during the regular work day," Rhodes said.

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The strongest local support for the National Committee to Combat Fascism, so far, has come from the New Mobilization.

The New Mobilization held a press conference earlier this month to announce the launching of an "antirepression campaign," calling for an end to the repression of black people in this country, and Black Panthers in particular.

## Seeks Closer Ties

Ray Masai Hewitt, the Panther's national minister of education and now the top-ranking national leader, said at the conference his party would seek closer ties with the New Mobilization and that "anyone who acts like a Black Panther, (whether he's black or white), will be treated like one."

The New Mobilization is currently a major supporter of the D.C. Coalition Against Racism and Fascism, a group formed after the Chicago police raid.

Willie Hardy, cochairman of the fledgling organization, said she has been contacted by the Panther organizers but has not decided on a response. "We are planning to start a free breakfast program ourselves," she said.

Williams and Sudjata are quick to admit that their program is moving at a slow pace "because the program can move only as fast as the people are able to understand it."

Sudjata said attempts to organize a chapter of the Black Panther Party here in December, 1967, were halted "because the people weren't ready politically."

## Political Training

Robert Rippy, a former member of the Black United Front who was to be minister of defense for the D.C. Black Panthers, said he and about eight other people went through several sessions of the party's political and self-defense training in December, 1967.

According to Rippy, father of three, a free breakfast program was set up on the corner of 14th and M streets.

## University of California, Los Angeles

Fearing further such incidents and infiltration of the party by police agents, an East Coast Panther official held a press conference here in January, 1968, to announce that the Black Panther Party was discontinuing its activities here.

But Rippy, who is presently employed by Change, Inc. as a housing specialist, says that additional problems brewing among the recruits of the new Panther chapter would have meant eventual disbanding of the group anyway.

## Code of Conduct

"I was sent notification that I would have to go to national headquarters for six weeks of intensive training," Rippy said. "I refused to go because out there (Berkeley, Calif.) you have to live by the Party's strict code of conduct."

"You don't have too many people in this city who are willing to live the rules of the Black Panther Party. And not many are willing to die in the streets for their people," he said.

The 26 "Rules of the Black Panther Party," which are printed in each issue of the party newspaper, stipulate—among other things—that each party member "must learn to operate and service weapons correctly."

Rule 23 states, "Everyone in a leadership position must read no less than two hours per day to keep abreast of the changing political situation."

Another rule reads: "No party member will commit any crimes against other party members of BLACK people at all, and cannot steal or take from the people, not even a needle or piece of thread."

Other rules prohibit the use of drugs and alcohol among party members.

Rippy said that while he was associated with the Panthers, he was arrested for robbery, conspiracy, hijacking, theft of government property in Pennsylvania where he has never been a resident, and for receiving stolen property.

He said the robbery and hijacking charges have since been dropped.

A jury in U.S. District Court last week found him not guilty of receiving stolen property.