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This thesis explores primary sources, historical content, and theoretical
developments regarding gender, race and class both historical and contemporary to
further investigate the Black Panther Party as a collective political body and individual
identity. By using different perspectives of Marxism, Judith Butler's insight into gender
construction and performativity, and formations of national liberation, a wide ranging and
critical look at the everyday life of Party members, official Party theory, and trajectory of
the Party a new understanding beings to emerge. My thesis concentrates on combining
historical research of the Black Panther Party, analyzes the Party's theoretical
development and how the Party theoretically understood its own politics, and seeks to
merge the theory and practice of the BPP. In approaching the BPP from various
perspectives and methods of research I discovered that gender and methods of gender
construction played an immense role in Party organizing as well as how the Party is
viewed as a researched subject. Different chapters of this thesis detail the individual
transformative experience of members, Party history, historical criticisms, and theoretical
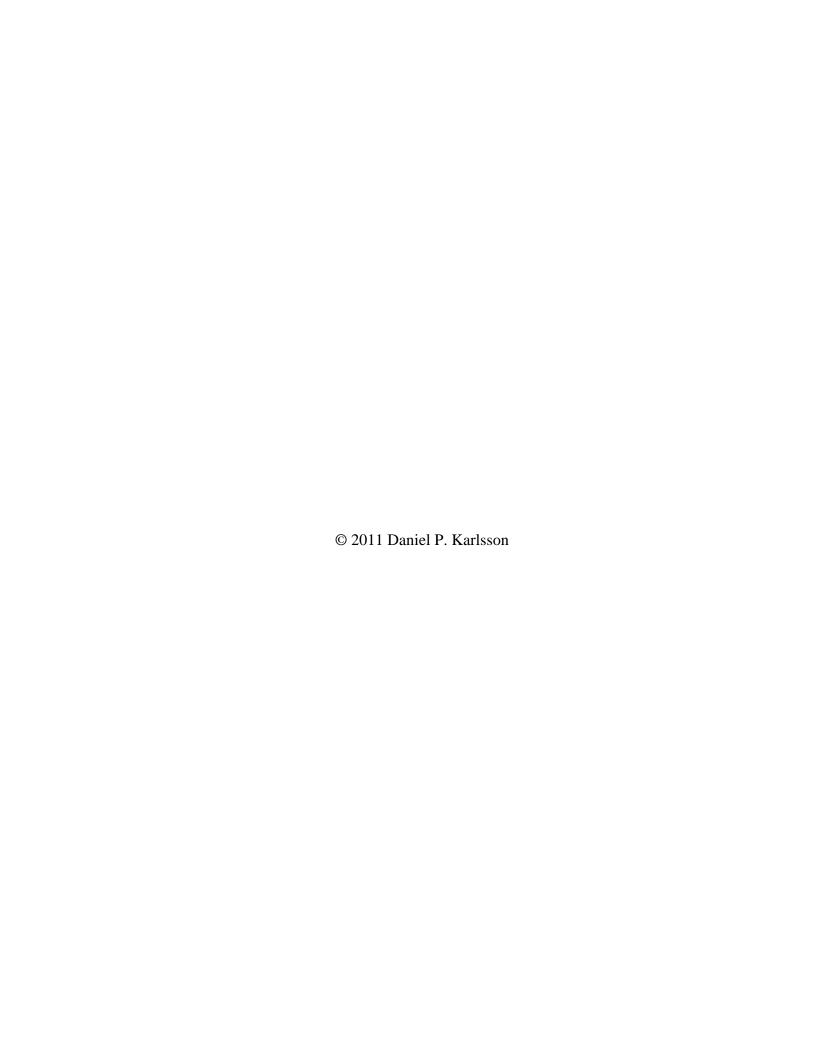critique of the Black Panther Party and gender identity.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, A RE-GENDERING OF REVOLUTIONARY

SUBJECTIVITY

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an examination of the Black Panther Party which goes beyond already existing historical accounts, investigations, analysis, and runs counter to the sensationalized conclusions and moralistic arguments regarding radical organizing and identity. By delving into primary source material, historical accounts, theoretical analyses conducted by Party members, the activities of rank-and-file national membership, and critical analysis of the Party as a collective I present a contextual understanding. This thesis is separated into chapters which concentrate on different forms of analyzing the BPP and allows for more in depth understanding of the Party on historical grounds, individual first hand accounts, and theoretical conclusions. The main focus of the thesis is to interject an analysis that gender reconstruction and transformation within the Party did not happen mechanically but organically grew from the economic conditions and social atmosphere that African American women and men were experiencing and creating during the 1960s and 1970s. In Oakland, early October of 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense as a critical embodiment to older forms of African American organizing and the exclusionary practices of various radical formations. After assessing the urban social environment a Ten Point Program was created which defined why the Party had been organized and laid the foundation for national expansion into the 1970s. In combining

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many radical perspectives with Fanonian militant self defense the Party, quite uniquely, united the material needs of the urban poor and marginalized people with revolutionary politics.

The structure of this thesis and order of the chapters are specific in order to articulate the material or organic development of Black Panther theory through practice. The chronology of this thesis further expresses that practice lays the foundation for critical analysis and social consciousness. The economic changes for African American labor and urbanization created a new set of conditions which created the social unrest to come. Within the urban landscape an opening up for new social identities and behaviors became possible. The BPP seized this opportunity and challenged the capitalistic gendering of subjects. It is so often thought that ideas produce change but in the subsequent chapters, I want to explore the construction of ideas from practice and observation. The theoretical perspectives of the BPP originated from the actions and desires of the urban African American. The following chapters build a perspective that events and social conditions produced a social current that was articulated by the Black Panther Party and in dialectic materialist manner the Party began to recreate gender identities and revolutionary subjectivity. It is not that Marxism or Judith Butler's analysis on gender consciousness and social construction will be used to further understand the BPP. Rather, ideas as complex and separated as Marxism to Butler's idea of gender performativity were already in play and acted upon by women and men. In short, Dialectical Materialism, a Marxist notion deduces that within socioeconomic relationships contradictions can led to negation of old relationships and the founding of

qualitatively new social relations through struggle. The dialectical relationship between capitalist socially constructed identities and the positive antagonistic African American urban population produced the Party and the Black Panther subject. The material conditions and social relationships theoretically understood by the Party grew organically from the American social landscape and practices of revolutionary subjects. Women and men within the Party were already behaving in a Marxist manner and critically recreating gender identity and gender roles, now critical theorists can comprehend and express those behaviors.

The BPP is the organized social locality where this gendered transformation was understood and theoretically expanded upon by Party efforts. Also, this social and political gendered transformation did not happen specifically within Party organizing or events but rather was a result of individuals and the Party interacting with one another. The Party challenged their communities to radically alter their own perception of community and identity. In finding the embodiment of various Marxist and critical theoretical perspectives regarding subjectivity, gender and identity formation, and class re-composition the tumultuous Black Panther era becomes a theoretically interesting moment of social reconstruction of subjectivity and gender. Having read the available autobiographical works, primary source material, and historical research currently published on both Party theory and history a multi-temporal narrative of the Black Panther Party comes into fruition. By studying the chronology of events and political development within the Party coupled with first hand accounts, personal omission and embellishment can be cast aside to produce a clear history regarding the politics and

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behavior of the Party. Candid memoirs and former Party member produced critical bodies of text regarding their own experiences heavily influence the conclusions within this thesis. Also, the theoretical perspectives ranging from Black Nationalism, Marxist thought, gender theory, and Party perspectives on Marxist-Leninism and Maoism have been included to better capsulate the motives, behaviors, and conclusions of the BPP on issues of gender, race, and class. Combining and analyzing these theories, history, and political motives, which are so often separated and excluded from one another in academia, the Party can be understood as an organization which consciously combined a plethora of political praxis and theoretical assumptions.

Gender, race, and class are social categories and social relations. The BPP politicized these categories by antagonistically challenging their formations thus fusing subjectivity with practice. Black Panther political subjectivities changed notions of identity by re-gendering identity through radical organizing. The political flexibility, militancy, and social dynamics within the Party challenged forms of manipulation and control bringing about a new subjectivity based on a reoriented view of gender, race, and class.

In Chapter II, I discuss the historical and economic impact upon the African American working-class which lays the ground work to further analyze the formation of the Black Panther Party within a period of economic reformation and rebellion in the United States. In looking at the material reality or economic conditions, which were in a state of crisis and transformation, through the 1950s and 1970s, the Party begins to emerge as an antagonistic challenge to class composition and re-composition. The

material conditions produced a sexed, raced, classed, and gendered division of labor which was so contradictory and socially volatile that many new possibilities emerged. No longer would the African American working-class be marginalized or segregated and so, through intense struggle new social identities were being created. Women and men began to change their relationships to one another through Party activities and organizing efforts. Through Survival Programs Pending Revolution the rank and file of the BPP began to transform the social dynamics within the community which fostered solidarity, through mutual aid programs, as well as, elevated the collective consciousness of the community.

Chapter III explores the contentious historical accounts of the BPP and begins to assess the political ramifications of popular culture. The Party and rank and file members, discussed further in following chapters, began to understand themselves as part of the popular unrest and rebellion in a global context during the late 20th century. Here the prominent historical works of Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party,* and Judson Jeffries, *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* and *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* are cross examined and compared to one another. The available research and opinions are challenged to unhinge the Party from current academic perspectives to facilitate a wider and more decentralized comprehension of theory and practice which will be further discussed in following chapters. Point being, certain segments of the available research simplifies and inadequately represents the BPP.

Chapter IV expands upon the conclusions in Chapter III to further analyze popular culture and the Party's relationship to news media. This chapter also includes a critique of recent work, written in the 1990s, which focused on the violence and the contradictory personal lives of key Party members, especially Newton. Though the less ideal behaviors of Party members is an important aspect of the Party's own history, the choices and behaviors of individuals should not be used as a justification to ignore the many Black Panther Parties across the United States. Conflict and militant attitudes within the BPP were common place and so too was the Party's relationship with the news media and police agencies, specifically the FBI and the Bureau's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). Here too the battle over social reproduction and the mediation of gendered, sexed, racialized, and classed subjectivities comes into play. The BPP challenged these performative subjectivities and socially constructed gender roles but the news media participated in a successful attempt to reaffirm and project racists and sexist stereotypes onto the BPP.

Chapter V takes a historical look at various local chapters and dissects the local conditions which nurtured the BPP and NCCF (National Committee to Combat Fascism) formation in: Harlem, New York, Winston-Salem and High Point, North Carolina, Baltimore, and Detroit. While all national branches are complex and rich of local narratives these four cities exemplify regional differences and similarities within the Party. The Harlem branch account is told by Safiya Bukhari and in following chapters Afeni Shakur, mother of Tupac Shakur, their combined narratives are quite informative regarding personal transformation, re-gendering, and how an individual became political.

Winston Salem was the first Southern city to organize a BPP branch and Baltimore's branch was youthful and evenly divided along gender lines. Detroit used gender as a central category in their organizing methods in addition to displaying an interesting militancy. These four cities and BPP branches did not imitate Oakland, the national office and home to the Party's leadership, nor did these branches monolithically represent the activities and demographics of most local Party branches.

These four branches take into consideration the following: the differences of all branches, the ideological and social development within individual branches, and give a unique look at both the autonomy and originality of various localities. Also, Chapter V allows for local voices and regional differences to become part of understanding the Party as an organization not led and controlled by key figures that have, until recently, been overwhelmingly discussed solely as the Party. The local histories and local organizers had their own motives and desires for joining and organizing the Party but these individuals also believed in the need to organize themselves in the Party and for the Party. By looking at different localities the nuances in the Party's national identity begin to contribute to the Party's totality and legacy.

Chapter VI concentrates on the formations of new identities, re-gendering, and creation of expected gender roles of women and men within the BPP. Drawing from statements, political texts, and personal accounts of individuals describing their own social transformations in the Party new conclusions on Black Panther identity begins form. Here the Party, the individual and expected social roles, in themselves, come into conflict with one another which challenged both the Party, as well as, the individual

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creating different possibilities of performativity for themselves. The duality of social

subjectivity existed within Party members and though there was not an exorcism of old

socially produced gender roles and gendered bodies, the Party and its members produced

antagonistic social roles with novel desires and needs. Butlers' notion of performativity

and gender construction allows for a view onto Party identities to become more complex.

Performativity being an interpretation of expected gendered behavior, Party members

created a new social medium to negotiate their own behavior. Also, the BPP will be

explored as a body which moved beyond the seemingly impervious bio-political

formation of power as described by Michel Foucault. Rank and file members had created

new expectations of gender and had begun to re-gender the Black Panther subject. The

re-gendering process is a dialectical relationship within the Party's subjectivity. And as

suggested by dialectical theory, contradictions, whether performative or bio-political,

engage in a lethal political struggle and new social formations begin to emerge. Through

the Survival Programs Pending Revolution and political work done by Party membership

new expectations for both women and men began to construct a performative identity for

individuals who desired to be Black Panthers. In combining primary source reflections

and theoretical analysis, both historical and current, the transformation of individuals

within the Party became flexible as gender roles were restructured.

Chapter VII investigates Newton's theoretical contributions, specifically

Revolutionary Intercommunalism and looks at the ideological history of the BPP. Here

the Party emerges as its own entity constructed and molded by its own varied history,

organizing efforts, and responses to political and social challenges. These conditions

forced the Party's ideology to morph and flow through their own social activity. Gender dynamics and gender analysis become an important aspect in understanding the Party historically, and gender became a central theme for the Party both practically and theoretically. Newton's analysis and conclusion that world capitalism had shifted away from national power to an international global power became the Party's outlook but only after having gone through various forms of internationalism. Newton understood capitalism in this totalizing and global manner, but more importantly, Newton focused on the possibilities to counter this new form of capitalism which would open alternate ways to challenge capitalist social relationships in conjunction with material conditions.

Chapter VIII admits and allows for an analysis on sexual violence and chauvinism as it was expressed within the Party on a collective and individual level. By looking at the connection between violence and leadership with an emphasis on gender and gendered perspectives among Party leadership, these roles and constructs begin to evolve. The fluidity of gender and ability to change is examined with a lens on violence to explore the connection between perceptions of identity and violence. Violence is an aspect of any political relationship whether masculine violence enacted to maintain patriarchal relations, racist violence to maintain white supremacy, economic violence to maintain class relations, or defensive violence to alter such relations. Angela Davis, a Party affiliate and contemporary, offers insight and perspective on the relationship between capital, violence, and gendered identities. Davis will be included here to better understand the violent end of the official Black Panther Party as described by former Party Chairman Elaine Brown.

Political conflict is what defined the BPP but it is most interesting that the Party's arsenal in this conflict against poverty, capitalistic gender roles, and racist attitudes was the *Free Breakfast for Children Program* and other Survival Programs Pending Revolution and not solely insurrectionary violence. The desire for a qualitative leap forward in community organizing and human interaction is what is central to the Party and Revolutionary Intercommunalism. The Black Panther Party was not interested in being an imitation of Revolution nor were Party members interested in being performative subjects to produce social alienation. Throughout the Party's history members were willing to militantly defend their new forms of identity and communities in the hopes of producing qualitatively and radically different social relationships between women and men.

CHAPTER II

CLASS RECOMPOSITION AND THE PARTY

The Black Panther Party was as much a creation of the material conditions produced in American urban landscapes, structured political alienation, and constructed poverty through ghettoization as it was simultaneously a response to quasi-colonization. The BPP was formed in an attempt to radically alter the Diasporas' social, economic, and political relationship to political power, social identities, and capitalism. The BPP was a collective force that challenged the gendered, sexed, racial, and classed categorization of a population. The BPP arose during a global and social transformation and resisted: dispersment, marginalization, alienation, and political violence. The Party represents an African American attempt to challenge constructed social relations that resulted from an African American mass migration from the south to urban industrial centers. These social relations were as much sexist, gendered bias, classed, as the social relations were racist. These modes of social subjectivity were economically constructed to service a larger social framework. The Party recognized the socio-economic transformations as a moment where an alienated population could push for a qualitative leap in social reproduction of international social relationships. In contrast to reform the Party sought to radically alter the current social dynamics in play by any necessary means

Newton would later explain with his theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism that a communization of society would happen when a qualitative change in social relations and production had taken place. A qualitative change would begin to transition the desires and needs of international communities into material conditions through the subversion of capitalist superstructures. This notion of qualitative change in socio-economic relationships between labor and capital had taken on more social components rather than just an economic relation. Social identity and social spaces outside of job sites had become an arena for political struggle. The BPP grew organically from the socio-economic conditions that caused large African American migrations from the South to both northern and western industrial city centers. These movements of people into urban areas and the economic changes laid the foundation out of which the Party grew.

Newton's (2002) own Marxist view regarding dialectical contradictions led him to believe, "We can be sure that if we increase the intensity of the struggle, we will reach a point where the equilibrium of forces will change and there will be a qualitative leap into a new situation with new social equilibrium" (p.183). Recognizing that Black Panther Marxism was a theoretical perspective, Newton (2002) stated,

> The dialectical method is essentially an ideology, yet we believe that it is superior to other ideologies because it puts us more in contact with what we believe to be the real world; it increases our ability to deal with that world and shape its development and change (p.183).

Party theory and practice was able to understand the social transformations being produced in the late twentieth Century, and Newton believed that the result of labor

migration and a congested urban second class citizenry had dialectically produced a

qualitative possibility for change. This second class population had been denied decent

labor and therefore acted as a bulwark against social peace and frustration brought on by

refusal of proper employment. The social tension produced through poverty and negative

social roles would later be reformulated within the BPP as reasons to radically challenge

such contradictory relationships. Though the migrating laborers themselves moved

across the country in hopes of better employment to only be reintegrated into a new form

of racist labor practice, it was the BPP which understood the interconnectedness between

social marginalization and economic exploitation. Part of the Party's success in

organizing was their ability to understand the larger economic conditions constantly

being reproduced.

Annelise Orleck (2005) describes in, *Storming Caesar's Palace* how southern

African American labor was becoming less and less useful in the agricultural sector due

to mechanization which spurred, "a veritable flood of black families from the Delta

headed west in the 1940s and 50s. Most of them were drawn to California by promises of

lucrative defense work…By 1960, parts of the South had lost a quarter of their African

American population," to migrations out of the South (p.34-36). In one of the most

recent works on the BPP, *Living for the City,* Donna Jean Murch (2010) points out,

> Large-scale proletarianization accompanied this mass urbanization as migrants
> sought work in defense industries. The rate of socioeconomic change was
> remarkable. By 1970, more than half of the African-American population settled
> outside the South with over 75 percent residing in cities. In less than a quarter
> century, urban became synonymous with "black". The repercussions of this
> internal migration extended throughout the United States leaving their deepest

imprint on West Coast cities that historically possessed the smallest black population (p.15).

Though migrating north and west proved economically beneficial the gains were short lived and,

> Postwar demobilization left Oakland with a sharply reduced industrial base…the Bay Area's liberty ship industry had few peacetime applications. This hastened Oakland's deindustrialization as a steady stream of businesses began to flee to the East Bay's cheaper, more racially homogenous suburbs. By 1964, the federal government officially declared Oakland a "depressed area" (p.17).

Deindustrialization of urban cities across the United States and migration from the South compounded the labor problem and this dynamic laid the material conditions for the social unrest to come. As a result, the job market constricted while the demand for decent paying jobs and housing increased. Housing segregation and white flight also added to the urban problem. Murch (2010) states,

> White residents fought this incremental progress at each juncture, and when the onslaught of war migrants flooded into Oakland, the noose of economic necessity and residential segregation tightened, forcing newcomers back toward the rail yards of the bay… Left to the vagaries of the private housing market by discriminatory Federal Housing Authority programs, black newcomers concentrated into a few contiguous census tracks in West Oakland, and by 1950, roughly 85 percent of Oakland's African-American population lived in the west end (p.23-26).

By the end of the 1950s industrialization had taken its toll on Oakland. As Murch (2010) explains,

> In 1959, 25 percent of the city's total population lived under the poverty line and roughly 10 percent earned less than $2,000 per year. For black workers, the situation proved particularly acute. Union discrimination, concentration in temporary wartime industries like shipyards, and entrenched patterns of employer discrimination relegated much of the growing black population to secondary labor markets. As a result, an enduring class of the black unemployed and underemployed began to emerge (p.37).

This class re-composition and these everyday living realities for Oakland's African American working-class were the material foundation for Newton's ideas of a politically conscious criminal subclass, the revolutionary Lumpenproletariat and Revolutionary Intercommunalism.

Similarly to Murch's conclusion on the effects of Oakland's deindustrialization and suburban sprawl, the socio-economic conditions that produced the new social formation of working-class antagonisms, Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (2003), in *Beyond the Ruins* highlight how the suburban sprawl and "tax revolt" resulted in a systematic disinvestment in Oakland (p.180). The move of manufacturing plants and other heavy industrial jobs out of Oakland to cities like San Leandro and Fremont, and the drying up of sectors which traditionally employed Oakland's African-American working-class had a devastating impact. In San Francisco's economic transition from an industrial packaging base, which had employed a large portion of Oakland's commuting laborers, to an economy geared towards tourism and the service sector which was, "extraordinarily slow in absorbing African-American and Latino workers, except in low-paying "back of the house" occupations," compounded the woes of Oakland's economic base and household income (p.179).

White flight or suburban sprawl was mediated by state and local city planners

with the development of a rapid transit system which cut out the urban populations and

connected surrounding suburban white-collar workers with the city center. Cowie and

Heathcott (2003) point out that the,

> Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), extended into more than half a dozen East Bay
> suburbs, including San Leandro and Fremont, allowing San Francisco's white-
> collar workforce to commute from peripheral locations, feeding commercial and
> residential capital into those newer cities. The "Metropolitan Oakland Area" was
> also the San Francisco metropolitan area, an overlapping set of restructuring
> whose complexities belied the simple suburban metaphor offered by Oaklanders
> (p.179).

The socio-economic impact of a conservative tax revolt, suburban sprawl, as included in

the 1960s transformation of America's economy led to the further ghettoization of urban

landscapes.   Though more interestingly, these economic conditions negatively nurtured

new social identities, social relationships, and the potential for communities to transform

these social relations in the communities favor.

Social spheres and public space had become a place of production and a type of

reenactment of these social categories and social relationships which reproduced unjust

economic relationships. With the inclusions of new social spheres into the productive

process an opening was created for revolutionary potential and intercommunal

subjectivity. Antonio Negri, Italian Marxist theorist and contemporary to the BPP,

deduced that the working-class had been transformed within the production process from

the mass-worker to socialized-worker which brought about new forms of production and

social reproduction of economic social relationships. As deindustrialization gave way to

the service economy and more precarious forms of labor, the urban African American

worker and Lumpenproletariat as two distinct categories became more diffuse. For

Newton, the Lumpenproletariat had potential to become the most militant group in the era

of the socialized-worker because the Lumpen had less of an allegiance to wage-labor.

Due to the loss of possible industrial employment, as a mass-worker, the African

American worker and Lumpenproletariat now had similar class interests. Negri (2004)

explains,

> The whole of society is placed at the disposal of profit (as if under Colbert) and
> the infinite temporal variations that compose society are arranged, set and made
> malleable in a unitary process. The latter [mass-worker] is a new primitive
> accumulation, which gathers and unhinges inveterate positions (and rents) and
> which mixes, in new and indefinite labour, all that is potentially productive…
> They [socialized-worker] overthrow old work-practices; they disorganize and
> throw off the habits and rules of corporatism. In this way they allow *value to flow*
> *freely* between the various strata of a society which has become inflexible…In
> this way a new human potential can be developed…These conditions consist in
> new ways of thinking and new forms of collective action (p.78-79).

Newton (2009) stated, "I finally had no choice but to form an organization that would

involve the lower-class brothers [and sisters]" (p.116). With labor becoming more

flexible and less fixed within the industrial sector, the underemployed working poor had

become more important and harnessed more social power. Negri and Newton glorify this

new form of underemployed poverty as a moment for renewed conflict. Negri states,

> The poor is destitute, excluded, repressed, exploited—and yet living! It is the
> common denominator of life, the foundation of the multitude…Only the poor
> lives radically the actual and present being, in destitution and suffering, and thus
> only the poor has the ability to renew being…It comes fully in the open because
> in postmodernity the subjugated has absorbed the exploited. In other words, the

poor, every poor person, the multitude of poor people, have eaten up and digested the multitude of proletariats. By that fact itself the poor have become productive. Even the prostituted body, the destitute body, the hunger of the multitude—all forms of the poor have become productive. And the poor have therefore become ever more important: the life of the poor invests the planet and envelops it with its desire for creativity and freedom. The poor is the condition of every production (p.156-158).

As the mass-worker gives way to the socialized-worker, which includes Newton's "lower-class brothers", the very site of production has become even more integrated into the public sphere and as production changed a new form of primitive accumulation began. Newton believed that the precariously underemployed had the ability and strength to change their current condition.

By coupling Marx, Mao, and Fanon's work on the Algerian national liberation struggle, Newton thought that through subclass cooperation revolution had become a possibility. The Lumpenproletariat and other socialized-workers combined afforded new avenues and methods in political organizing. Self-defense and the marrying of different subclasses to traditional Marxist views were the embryonic theoretical ideas that Newton recognized as powerful methods to organize the urban poor. Understanding the relations between capitalism and the world's economically depressed communities, Newton wanted a multitude of people to join in the intercommunal struggle. It is precisely these conditions which the BPP opposed and used to gather support. The BPP wanted to open up social spaces for new identities and subjectivity to begin to express themselves.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS AND THE PARTY

The written content regarding the BPP includes former Party members' own autobiographical work, memoirs, various articles, produced self critical analyses, and historical research. Even though historical works describe the Party's political development and events, the conclusions are often linear and do not account for the tactical shift in organizing methods or political outlook. Chapter III challenges the conclusions of historical research and interjects another interpretation of the Party using the material at hand. Historical research is usually void of political analysis in an attempt to not present a bias but in so doing a bias that is void of political content is constructed. The supposed none bias research regarding the BPP further complicates the ability to understand what and why the BPP organized. The recent research contains both accurate totalizing concepts which understand and project the Party's own motives but also houses conclusions that ignore the political. Historians produce a historical body of work absent of the very politic which the Party created. That very political space where women and men were able to transform their gendered identity and create zones open to re-gendering became possible through political consciousness and actual participation in the Party's programs. It is important to understand the difference between history, a product of academia and the lived history of Party members.

Within the recent growing academic work there exists a notion that there was a clear disconnect or intellectual schism between the leading Central Committee and local BPP cadre across the United States. This disconnect or schism is an oversimplification regarding the organizational structure of the Party as well as a crude look at the multiplicity of the Black Panther Party on a national scale. Prominent Black Panther historians, Judson Jeffries and Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow splendidly uncover rich local histories of complexity. These histories indicate that the BPP was a mass movement and arguably the pinnacle of 20th century African American freedom movements. Though historical research uncovers events, the Black Panther Party was much more than what can be discovered through history. The Party and its revolutionary subjects were a social upheaval, a living social current in reaction to constructs, where a common social space beyond the gendered and economic bodies of the 20th century was forged. The upheaval had been nurtured in the everyday life of urban African Americans and not a manufactured social movement organized by the BPP. The Party was able to concentrate and express the political aspirations of the urban poor rather than assert civic representation as history claims.

Williams, Lazerow, and Jeffries understand that local BPP branches heavily contributed to the overall success of the entire Party and that local branches were responsible for the implementation of the Service to the People Programs such as: the *Free Children's Breakfast Program, Political Education classes, a People's Free Ambulance Program, People's Free Employment Program, Sickle-Cell Anemia Research Foundation*, and many other community relation programs. Yet the Party's own reasons

for People's Programs and the Party's dialectical materialist views are downplayed, reduced to a type of civic-nationalist patriotism contained within America's historical political textual bodies, or the Party is explained as a violent spectacle void of political substance. Williams and Lazerow (2008) claim that, "Pragmatically, the shift away from Marxian dialectical materialism, which the Panthers had openly embraced in the late 1960s, to the Protestant spirit of capitalism manifested itself in the Panthers' army of social service projects," is more of an ideological projection by Williams and Lazerow onto the BPP (p.269). This historical assessment on theoretical development and shift in tactics is a liberal claim that concludes the BPP had become civic-nationalist patriots. Williams and Lazerow (2008) conclude that, "contrary to the prevailing Americanist view, the Panthers, in their own, unique way, were part of America's civic nationalist tradition" (p.270).

Though I am not precisely against the argument that the US Constitution provided a foundation for the Party's political positions, nor that the BPP did strategically use private forms of charity to support their programs. Rather, Williams and Lazerow's argument which concludes that the Party had shied away from revolutionary theory based on notions of charity and patriotism is wrong. Even though the Party did use constitutional arguments and utilized the Protestant spirit and civic nationalist traditions, Williams and Lazerow do not take into account the Party's own political explanations and different methods of organizing during the Party's sixteen year existence. They continue to perpetuate the linear point which suggests the Party was militant early on and in its latter years turned into civic nationalists absent of any critical or radical theory.

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The civic nationalist argument does not include the Party's reasoning behind the Survival Programs Pending Revolution. Newton (1999) states,

> All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community by they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution (p.104).

The political arguments being made by Williams and Lazerow, which intend to tame and divert attention away from the BPP's own political theory clearly does not take into consideration Newton's own statement on the Party's Survival Programs. In short, Williams and Lazerow's historical argument itself is a fine historical piece but lacks the theoretical motivations of the BPP. The Party's intimate relationship to theory and practice becomes null and void when civil nationalism and the Protestant spirit is attributed for producing the Survival Programs. The Party was much more than history wants to admit.

The Party's choice of rhetoric, the using of existing political documents, and American history to sight or legitimatize a political position is much more of a historical and political discussion that should include an understanding of the BPP's own political motivations, theoretical developments, and community organizing efforts. There are moments where the BPP did uphold constitutional law as their sole justification or right for certain political goals. Such as the armed protest at the California state legislature building in Sacramento where the Party marched against the Mulford Act that eventually changed a citizen's right to carry firearms in the state of California (Seale, 1991, p.161-162). The inclusion of Constitutional law and rights of citizens into the larger political

framework of the Party, as interesting as it may be, is but one of the pragmatic

approaches chosen by the Party.

In contrast to Williams and Lazerow, Jeffries (2007) understands that the Party

was neither a constitutional nor an anti-constitutional force and he states,

> The Panthers were not interested in destroying the country as many have argued
> and some have unwittingly accepted as truth. They were interested in
> transforming the country into a beacon of democratic socialism, and in the
> process they were demanding that America live up to its promises as outlined in
> the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bills of
> Rights…The Panthers believed, as did Aldous Huxley, that "liberties are not
> given they are taken," and they argued that doing so was well within Black
> people's constitutional rights as American citizens (p.2-3).

Jeffries understood that the BPP used both legal and illegal means for their own end to

further their own social and political objectives. Tactically speaking, the BPP utilized

various methods to achieve their ends but there was never a clear break with

revolutionary theory in favor of Williams and Lazerow's civic nationalism. Williams and

Lazerow's argument suggests a clear and concise linear theoretical development from

youthful radicalism to pragmatic civic duty. Jeffries (2010) on the other hand continues

to discuss local BPP branches and points out that,

> Oakland is the lens through which the party is most often studied, which is
> problematic, if for no other reason, because the Oakland/Bay Area experience is
> not representative of the entire organization…Moreover, what is written tends to
> focus on dramatic events, such as confrontations with police officers, Huey P.
> Newton's legal troubles, the execution of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, or the
> murder of other prominent Panther Leaders…Through its community survival
> programs [pending revolution], the BPP sought to improve black people's lot.
> Just as important, through these endeavors the BPP hoped to raise the
> consciousness of the people it served. The Party's survival program [pending

revolution] were not handouts devoid of political messages, but were considered the foundation upon which the impending revolution would be built (p.18-19).

It is within Jeffries' history of the Party that various histories, political motives, and various discourses come into contact with each other. Local histories of the BPP challenge the idea of a disconnect between practice and theory. Jeffries understands there is definitively more to the BPP than armed conflict, police confrontation, and the dramatic life of the Party's founder and icon Huey P. Newton. Yet, Williams and Lazerow attempt to capture the lure of the Party falls short both politically and historically because the Party's own revolutionary zeal is rewritten and concludes a more conservative assessment.[1]

Jeffries' (2010) own early trepidation and worry that his academic work on the BPP is not noble enough for history is provided in *On the Ground*. In a conversation with a philosophy professor during his,

> Dissertation phase, [he was asked] "What are you researching?" "The Black Panther Party in Philadelphia," I replied. He [the professor] smirked and replied, "Aahh, resurrecting the unresurrectable, huh?" I stood frozen—removed of tongue and movement—and at a point allowed my insecurities to seep in, as I pondered my future as a scholar-activist… What exactly did he mean? Was I attempting to crawl up a downward spiral? Would I be jeopardizing my academic career by pursuing this particular subject matter? (p.273).

Yet, "After months of reflection, I made the decision to 'resurrect the unressurrectable'" (p.273). It is not important whether Black Panther ideology is within the limits of

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[1]. It is precisely this conservative assessment which has blocked the academic possibility in understanding that the Party was concerned with qualitative change which comprehended, with a Marxist analysis, the economic effect on gender identity and gender roles.

Protestant civic nationalism in order to justify its study as suggested by Williams and

Lazerow. Rather, what is important to remember is that attempts to study and understand

the BPP as "unresurrectable" is precisely because the Party was revolutionary and not

contained within a Protestant civic nationalist tradition.

It is not that the BPP is American or anti-American, as expressed earlier by

Jeffries, or that the Party was an example of Protestant civic nationalism. No, neither is

the case, and to state that the BPP were anti-American is in itself a political attack void of

analysis. As for the conclusion that the BPP were Protestant civil nationalist is a far

reaching interpretation and ideological projection. The Party is not "unresurrectable" due

to the recent academic interest on the Party, yet a full resurrection is missing because

historians' confusion surrounding the Party's own ideology and motives. The inequality

that gave rise to the BPP are not something of the past and historical revisionist

conclusions that suggest the BPP had different motives besides Party documented

explanations for revolution chose to selectively understand the BPP. To resurrect the

Party is to understand the behaviors and reasons for taking up arms and organizing

Survival Programs Pending Revolution and to recognize that qualitative change has yet

come to pass.

The Ten Point Program, "provided would-be affiliates with a blueprint for

achieving power in local setting through what in contemporary terms be best expressed as

a 'think globally, act locally' plan of action'" (Williams & Lazerow, 2008, p.3). Or

better stated in Newton's (1971) own words,

> The Ten Point Program is a survival kit, brothers and sisters. In other words, it is necessary for our children to grow up healthy, with minds that can be functional and creative (p. B-G).

The local chapters participated and organized their local communities through the Survival Programs Pending Revolution which in turn created a many localities for the Black Panther perspective to take root. It is this marriage between theory and practice which made the BPP "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and target of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI (Abu-Jamal, 2004, p.118). This conflict between America's police agencies and the BPP was a struggle between reactionary forces and revolutionary forces where breakfast for needy children was just as important, if not more important, than armed conflicts with the state. The local histories of the BPP, their affiliated supporter groups, and the merging with local residents who volunteered for the Survival Programs were the embodiment of the Black Panther revolution.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARTY AND THE SPECTACLE

Identity and perception are interconnected. As with the BPP, the identity of the Party was in constant flux due to perpetuated perceptions of the Party by the news media and the Party's own activities. Even after the BPP had dissolved biased researchers had a go at the perception of the Party's legacy. In essence two entities known as the Black Panther Party came into existence, the spectacle BPP mediated by a collection of violent images and the BPP mediated through Survival Programs Pending Revolution. With the media created image, one based on assumptions and misrepresentation, there is enough material to cast a damning light on the Party and continue to depict the Party in this manner. Also, the behavior of some individuals within the Party as well as the grandiose and complex lives of key members fueled both the imitation of revolutionary politics and assisted the media in perpetuating a caricature of the BPP and African Americans in general. The relationship between the media and the BPP was an old social and political relationship between economic needs of a nation and a marginalized and alienated population which was both socially and economically exploited.

The Shadow of the Panther, the first book written on the Party outside of the Party, by journalist-turned-author, Hugh Pearson, rendered the Black Panther Party as an organization riddled with violence and controversy. Pearson argues that the actions and desires of the Party are morally questionable. The ideas and portraits conjured up by

Pearson's description of the Party are based on historical media perspectives and

perpetuates and reaffirms the old imagery of dangerous African Americans. Pearson's

assessment of Huey P. Newton and the BPP does not look at the complexity of the Black

Panthers but rather the opposite. Both Pearson's work and the media's representation of

the Black Panthers are transfixed on certain violent events that underscore the multitude

of social subjects and activities within the Party. Williams (2008) in *Liberated Territory*

challenges this view of Pearson and points to Pearson's choice of temporal and

geographical locations in making his point,

> Hugh Pearson's…historical study *Shadow of the Panther* focuses largely on the
> media-hyped Oakland Panthers and the violent life of Huey Newton…personality
> disorders, particularly in the Oakland chapter's later years when Newton
> exhibited manifestations of paranoid megalomania, surrounded by a coterie of
> thugs carrying out his commands, in a manner of a deranged Mafioso boss
> (p.325).

Pearson maintains and builds on the media-constructed picture of hyper-violent black

men while at the same time he downplays the Party's community organizing efforts. It is

an attempt at validating the already misrepresented and constructed image of the Party as

the truth. Pearson's (1994) critique of Newton's Party states,

> During the light of the party, most of the points in the platform would remain
> idealistic pronouncements rather than anything the Panthers actively pushed for.
> And the platform point about prison and the police clearly reflected a Newton
> obsession. He acted as though being brutalized by the police and unjustly
> imprisoned were principal problems most black people faced daily…And while
> Newton, Seale, and the rest of the Panthers were exercising their constitutional
> rights, it was also true that one of their main activities was fraternizing with black
> men who admittedly engaged in criminal activity (p.112-113).

Shadow of the Panther contains various accounts of Black Panthers engaged in confrontation with the police but downplays the police's behavior that motivated militant self defense; Pearson is very persistent in maintaining that these events were, in some manner, the desired result of Newton's addiction to bravado and questionable motives. Pearson (1994) continues, "rumors spread that the Party had a small-scale protection racket going," and claims that at least one store owner was happy to pay the Party for "protection"(p.118). Pearson's tone along with his presentation of the Party in such context equates the Party with pro-psychedelic advocate Timothy Leary. Pearson's (1994) point being that, "the same Filmore Auditorium used for a benefit concert to pay the court costs of Black Panthers was used to hold psychedelic acid-rock parties by revelers in the hippie movement," is an attempt to couple one movement with the other not because Pearson wants to point out political similarities but pass moral judgment (p.143). Pearson wants his audience not to critically understand the BPP but damn the Party.

When describing the 1967 urban riots across America, Pearson (1994) takes H. Rap Brown's statement, "Black Folks built America. If America don't come around, we're going to burn America down, brother. We're going to burn it if we can't get our share of it," to place the Party in a violent atmosphere even if non-Party personalities made such remarks (p.139). Also Pearson (1994) quotes Bobby Seale's statement at a San Francisco rally describing how young bloods can surprise cops on their coffee break: "Shoot him down—voom, voom—with a 12-gauge shotgun," depicts the Party as if its members were addicted to violent confrontation with the police and is clearly taken out of

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context (p.142). Regardless of whether Seale intended this assertion as a serious act of revolutionary theory, Pearson is not interested in the theoretical or social component to this statement. Rather, Pearson wants to shroud the organization in violence instead of understanding or exploring the dynamics of social power, violence, and revolutionary self-defense.

The BPP coalesced at the beginning stages of the media's attempt to sensationalize everyday life. As televised nightly prime-time news started constructing information and events in eye catching imagery, characters began to represent events and everyday life as entertainment news (Rhodes, 2007, p.63). Entertainment news shifted its strategies and by 1967, the major national networks had allotted fifteen more minutes, increasing nightly news to thirty minutes programs, in a successful attempt to present news in a bold new manner. The BPP and all the controversy that would surround this organization became prime targets of both written and televised media outlets. The Party consciously used the media in order to present themselves to the general American population and the World. The media, consequently, projected a selected and at times manipulated image of the Party. Kathleen Cleaver (1982), former Communications Secretary of the BPP recalls,

> Few Panther recruits [and the media] understood that the theatrical actions
> were primarily a way of dramatizing a revolutionary message, only the initial step
> in organizing a movement for social change"; yet it would become the media's
> strongest focus of attention in attempts to understand and convey the ideological
> aims of the BPP (p.98-99).

Rhodes (2007) confers Cleaver's point,

> The ideological bias projected by broadcast journalists, according to political scientists, Edward J. Epstein, was whatever was in the interest or service of the network. The civil rights movement and the transition to black power politics satisfied the media's growing need for sensationalism, continuing stories, and compelling visual content (p.63).

Visual content would in turn perpetuate an already constructed image of an African American organization as morally questionable and controversial. With social evolution from Civil Rights pacifism to armed organized resistance, news corporations had found bodies that could be depicted and recreated as an image to fit in the format of news and affirm already existing social identities.

The hostile language of Black Power politics being misrepresented and armed African Americans calling into question the validity of state sanctioned violence allowed media sources to present an adaptation of who the Black Panthers were, a spectacle, the imitation of revolutionary politics. The image of the Black Panther has its origins in Haynesville, Alabama in Lowndes Country where local law required political organization to have a symbol that illiterate voters could identify. John Hart, a CBS correspondent concluded that the work done by the pre-1966 Oakland Black Panthers in Alabama shows how political imagery "has changed the climate of county politics," and later national politics (Rhodes, 2007, p.62). The imagery of the Black Panther itself proved to be a sensational object picked up by both the media and later the Oakland Black Panther Party. Though sensationalism played an immense role in depicting the BPP it was also the speeding up of sharing information through television and

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entertainment news that more quickly circulated the racialized and violent image of the Party.

Though the Party willingly used the media to project itself to the world, the media also used their imagery for its own ends. The Black Panther Party and African American men in general are powerful images that have been used throughout American history. From 1966 to 1982, the sixteen year period that the Party actively existed, became an era for the media to maintain and circulate grand images of African American men positioned against the American social order and served as constant threat of violence. The social order and national psyche having been manufactured to represent America as a collective body identified with compliance and non-dissent, while the image of the Black Panther was integrated to present the Party as an outsider to this social order, an alien to American society.

The media postured angry African American men against white America in order to circulate an intriguing and often times frightening image of the BPP. With a strong emphasis on black or the black brute so often used throughout American history to preserve a general racist image of African American men, the media misconstrued African American social organizing as an attack not as revolutionary self defense. The image of the black man as an angry and often prone to violence is a national character that has helped maintain the African American community marginalized, allowed racist tendencies to be normalized, and the media's communication with its wider audience further reaffirm this logic to millions. Regardless of the media's intentions, the image of an angry and violent African American man served to discredit the BPP and maintain an

image of black men as a spectacle that mediated the historically racist manipulated black character. This character, as in D. W. Griffith's 1915 silent film *Birth of a Nation* depicted and captured the national view on what is an African American man, and according to various media outlets currently is, a brute with a violent and lustful nature to destroy white America (Rhodes, 2007, p.33-35). The violent image was not the sole projection of Black but in regards to politics the violent brute invoked a certain response.

The violent image remained and mediated a socially maintained cultural consensus of what a Black Panther is, a violent man. The media recreated that very image when depicting the Party as a quasi-revolutionary criminal network of young gun-slinging men prone to violence. The media resurrected the imagery and further legitimated the racist logic behind ghettoization of the community, but more importantly, the media validated the brutality, intimidation, and systematic repression inflicted upon the Party by various national and state police agencies.

As Huey P. Newton and armed Panthers were captured on TV cameras in 1967 when the Party escorted Betty Shabazz, widow of Malcolm X, from the San Francisco International airport to Ramparts Magazine offices, an altercation between the police and the Panthers ensued. Guns drawn and a stand off occurred, Newton yelled to the policeman, "OK, you big fat racist pig, draw your gun" (Rhodes, 2007, p.69). The Panthers, Shabazz, and the police emerged unscathed, but Bay Area residents had their first glimpse of the Panthers' bravado on local TV and events such as these would become spectacles for the news to circulate and recreate the Party as a captive and violent icon. Rhodes (2007) goes on to explain,

> When the San Francisco Sunday Chronicle and Examiner put them [The Black Panther Party] on page one…The article "It's All Legal: Oakland's Black Panthers Wear Guns, Talk Revolution" sought to tell local readers about this new, threatening organization that was capturing the public imagination…In this news account, the Black Panthers were described as "stars of a movie melodrama of revolution", a theme that would follow the group throughout its tenure (p.68).

And in turn cast the Party solely in a violent light to continuously sensationalize the Panther spectacle.

Early on, the media depicted the Party in its militant stance and selectively choose what to show and what to deemphasize to perpetuate and refine a sensational and interesting image of black revolutionaries. As in 1967, the BPP marched to the California State Capitol building decked out in uniform and armed to present a petition against the Mulford Act. This event proved to become the Party's second TV moment and a highly broadcasted one at that. It turned out to be the "colossal" event that Newton was hoping for since Governor Reagan was present having his own TV moment with school children which provided the ambiance. Bobby Seale, Chairman of the BPP would later be arrested and jailed for "invading" the assembly floor (Rhodes, 2007, p.70). Rhodes (2007) continues to explain, "The *Oakland Tribune* devoted considerable space to what was termed the 'Panther Invasion,'" in the process established itself as the dogged pursuers of the group (p.70-71). Even Lyn Nofziger, Governor Reagan's press secretary stated, "These guys could just as easily burst in the Governor's office as the Assembly. You don't like to feel the Governor is not safe in his own office" (p.70-71). As the Associated Press story continued to describe the Panthers as an "armed band" and an editorial in the *Oakland Tribune* paternalistically titled "Playtime in Sacramento"

described the Panthers as violent children. The rough and on-the-street image of the Party became the center of attention not the Party's petition against a law that would disarm citizens who were victims of police brutality and murder (p.70-75). The social and political environment in which these news stories appeared reaffirmed the news consumers' perception of the BPP.

Rhodes (2007) documents, according to the editor of the *Oakland Tribune*, "one day most of us had to grow up…In this case, groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Panthers acted out their fantasies by dressing up, posturing, and threatening people," which places the Black Panther Party outside of society, belittles their claims, and takes away the Party's political agency (p.70). Rhodes (2007) continues to quote the *Tribune* editor,

> They get the whole gang together, think up a secret name like "The Black Panthers," put on berets and carry guns…Then they go out and pretend they're just as grown up and honorable as the man who wears a badge and is paid to carry a gun to preserve law and order" is yet another example of how the media portrayed the Black Panthers as an alien object acting out against American society while downplaying and normalizing police violence (p.70-73).

By writing about the Party in this manner the media justified violent action to be taken against the Party, placed moral agency with different national police agencies which murdered Party members with no consequence, and made the Panthers seem not human. Depicting the Party as a fringe group whose goal was to engage the police, not defend themselves against police brutality, allowed the readership the luxury of not questioning the brutality against the African American community or the Black Panther Party. This

violent image helped maintain a very unequal and brutal power dynamic between police agencies and the community, which also reaffirmed the liberal notion that militant self defense is amoral and that the state is to have the sole right to conduct political violence.

The *San Francisco Examiner* also ran a story with the headline, "Panthers' Invade Capitol" and worldwide newspapers also quickly circulated stories regarding the Panther's petition and protest in a similar manner. The Mulford Act would and did legally disarm the organization, derailing any direct and legal attempts at holding off police brutality by the Panthers in their own communities (Rhodes, 2007, p.74). *The New York Times* described the situation with a cultural slant, "young Negroes armed with loaded rifles, pistols, and shotguns…barged into the Assembly chamber," in an obvious attempt to place the Panther position on the offensive against California's legitimate political power structure (Rhodes, 2007, p.75). The event dialectically projected the Black Panthers into worldwide recognition and contained within itself many different accounts, perspectives, and imagery that would follow the Party past its existence. Both the BPP and entertainment media wanted a functioning relationship but with two very different goals in mind. The relationship was constructed by two different motives and with it came the dual existence of the spectacle and the Black Panther Party. The two bodies would compete with each other to gain an audience. This was a dialectical relationship between two different sets of interests with two very different class perspectives. Rhodes (2007) concludes that, "the name, the image, and the memory of the Black Panther Party remain something worth fighting for" (p.336).

In all the controversy, the Black Panther image as a revolutionary organization within a marginalized community does go unnoticed by the media, but because there were violent acts carried out by the Party they became media icons. The violent image was capitalized on by the media to make headlines and maintain consensus regarding police violence against the Party. With the media's imagery state sanctioned terrorism became morally correct, even if that violence committed by police agencies was illegal and unconstitutional. Due to the liberal conclusion on violence the illegality of state violence is a moot point since latent within liberal social consciousness is the assumption that any violence, besides state violence, is immoral. The active attempt to maintain an image of the BPP as a male dominated hyper-sexual anti-white Black Nationalist organization whose goal was to make America unsafe for white Americans had economic, racist, and nationalist motivations.

The role of an image is to convey a message and evoke a response from the targeted audience. Both the media and the BPP engaged in a discourse, often resulting in two very difference representations. Media outlets gave the Party a tremendous forum to communicate to an international audience, grow as an organization, and project itself out into the world more so than any organization had been able to do in the past. To understand what type of image the BPP wanted to convey it is necessary to compare the media projected image with the multitude of bodies within the Party. The discourse between the Party and a rapidly growing form of media representation was a dialectical struggle over the production and reproduction of social relations mediated through images which either shattered or confirmed the racial and economic relationship between

political bodies and the spectacle. The imagery that was produced under the appearance of news remained within a liberal social frame work. A social frame work very deep-seeded culturally racist and capitalist stereotype that has long been used by the power structure to place the burden of responsibility upon the shoulders of the same people who suffer the injustices of racial-capitalism, performative gendering, sexism, gentrification, and inadequate socio-economic power.

Regarding the perception of the BPP as rigidly gendered and sexists in contemporary intellectual circles, Cleaver (2001) reiterates how the spectacular image continues to obstruct perceptions, "nowadays, the questions are more sophisticated: 'What were the gender issues in the Black Panther Party? Wasn't the Black Panther Party a bastion of sexism?'" (p.124). Cleaver's (2001) response was that practically women and men had the same roles within the Party, to conduct Party activities (p.124). Gender dynamics and socially constructed gender roles were not created within the BPP nor was racial identity or the division between white and black. American society had maintained racial separation and constructed gender roles for political, economic, and social purposes.

The Party organized within these preexisting social conditions in an attempt to build new modes of communication and interaction between women and men. Cleaver (2001) clarifies what is,

> Distinctive about gender relations within the Black Panther Party is not how those gender relations duplicated what was going on in the world around us…The difference that being in the Black Panther Party made was that it put a woman in the position when such treatment occurred to contest it (p.126).

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Though the media was never interested in the complexity or the organic development of ideas and behavior of the BPP which shattered the spectacle, the media maintained a close relationship with the Party for its own ends. The media did not pay attention to the Party unless it was able to update and reaffirm that the Party was something entertaining and fearful. The media's representation of the Party disproportionately depicted the historically constructed image of violent males. The media perpetuated the narrative that African Americans engaged in social activism are something alien to American society, especially if their actions call into question the validity of state violence.

The BPP became a different social subject from the rest, a character or image transplanted into American society to be regarded as an anomaly. Cleaver's (2001) point deepens the discussion regarding the behavior of the Party in general, "the assumption held that being part of a revolutionary movement was in conflict with what the questioner had been socialized to believe was appropriate conduct for a woman," which rings true for the media's perception of the Party (p.124). Gender constructs and perceptions on proper behavior clouded the media's ability to properly investigate who and what was the BPP. The Black Panther spectacle and the Party's opinions on proper gendered behavior had fundamental differences which could not be reconciled. Cleaver (2001), was more interested in,

> Where [she] can go to get involved in the revolutionary struggle. It seems to me that part of the genesis of the gender question, and this is only an opinion, lies in the way it deflects attention from confronting the revolutionary critique our organization made of the larger society, and turns it inward to look at what type of dynamics and social conflicts characterized the organization. To me [Cleaver], this discussion holds far less appeal that that which engages the means we devised

to struggle against the oppressive dynamics and social conflicts that larger society imposed on us (p.124).

Certain perceptions of the BPP reaffirm the very same imagery of the BPP that was reproduced by entertainment news media. When the media concentrated on the violent and male centered image of the Party so much of the organization slipped through the cracks and went unreported. The same goes for Pearson's assessment of the Party, Huey Newton, and the violence that followed Newton. Elaine Brown who was Chairman of the Party from 1974 to 1977, captivated the complexity of the Party's own gender dynamics but also placed the Party in their proper historical context. Brown's autobiographical work, *A Taste of Power* gives an in depth look from an insider who was placed high within the Party. As a woman, Brown describes the organic development of revolutionary and restructured gender roles. The traditional social roles for women and men were being reorganized within the Party and Brown (1994) as the Party's leader, "considered the issue of merit, which had no gender" (p.363). The Party was able to restructure itself based on the quality work done by both women and men. The Party's social structure was not divided in regards to socially prescribed gender roles but the Party's own re-gendered social roles.

It is the behavior of the Party and the Survival Programs beyond the violence that needs to be assessed in order to come to a better understanding of what the Black Panther Party represents. The revolutionary and militant posturing was a symbol of defiance but also an act of defense against a highly organized and systematic state program of intimidation, violence, and murder (COINTELPRO). The media has to be analyzed and

understood as a conduit that reaffirms what American culture already had historically constructed and placed upon the community. The community had become a socially reaffirming image that the media helped maintain, and when the state violently acted out against resisting social subjects, the media helped justify the illegal actions of the police. The media did not create an image it only maintained, updated, and perpetuated a racist image.

When the behavior of the Party is juxtaposed to the media spectacle one can discover a socially active and revolutionary subject with political and social agency. The BPP not only contradicts the media image, but also one discovers a social environment that embodies women, children, and men recreating their social subjectivity in a collective manner moving beyond capitalist performative social roles. Women within the Party emerge when one looks at the behavior of the Party and the full scope of the Party can be accessed and understood in its historical context when one comprehends the discourse and disconnect between the spectacle and the Party.

According to Angela D. Lebanc-Ernest (1995), Tarika Lewis is recognized as the first woman to join the Party. Lewis staged sit-ins at Oakland Tech High School for Black Studies courses, and Lewis, "earned the respect of many of the men because she, worked just as hard or harder than they did"(p.308). Belva Butcher and Majeeda Roman also received arms training, as LeBlanc-Ernest (1995) points out,

> Therefore, it was not surprising that on May 2, 1967 women were among the armed Party members who traveled to Sacramento to protest at the California state legislature…Kathleen Cleaver and Patricia Hilliard held influential positions at the national level, Communications Secretary and Finance Secretary

respectively. In Panther affiliates throughout the nation, Elaine Brown, Ericka Huggins, Barbara Sankey, Ann Campbell, Afeni Shakur, Yvonne King, and Audrea Jones were among many women who became influential leaders in their respective chapters during the revolutionary phase of the BPP (p.308).

The importance of the Party is its development coupled with an understood perspective regarding the Party's historical context which deconstructs the media image and reconstructs the Party as an organization comprised of a multitude engaged in social struggle. It was in the midst of an emerging women's liberation movement that the Party emerged and was active in recreating gender relations in American society and within its own organization. The Panther spectacle serves a certain role within society to overshadow the agency of the Party. Cleaver (1982) states,

> Television helped the party gain more than thirty-five chapters in less than three years, but its sensationalizing made the Panthers loom far more glamorous and ferocious than they actually were; this affected the types of members and enemies the Black Panthers attracted... More systematically than any other black group, the Black Panther Party exploited television's power to publicize its aims and programs—and used television to counter attempts by authorities to discredit and dismantle the organization. But the Panthers paid a heavy price: As membership boomed, many recruits fatally confused their flamboyant tactics with the substance of their goals…the fundamental concerns of the Black Panther movement would never be transmitted by television. Behind the revolutionary bravado [the Spectacle] was a commitment to obtaining justice for blacks [their behavior], a commitment that remained invisible, overshadowed by television's emphasis on violence (p.98-99).

The fascination with violence within the Party helps maintain this spectacular image and looms over the behavior of a community based organization. The dialectical relationship between the spectacle and behavior when juxtaposed allows for the voice of the Party to represent itself and present a different image concerning the BPP. Remembering the

Party in its historical context and then realize that the Party openly supported the Women's Liberation Movement and Gay Liberation Movement shows the truly revolutionary development of social consciousness within the BPP. This behavior was not conveyed by the capitalist driven media but was ignored. The support for women's rights and women who actively re-gender social roles within the Party contrasts the media's manipulated image of the Party. Newton (1970) stated, "the women's liberation front and gay liberation front are our friends, they are potential allies, and we need as many allies as possible"(p.152). The Party was one of few radical organizations that supported, early on, the Gay and Women's Liberation Movement but if one understands the Party through the imagery of the media's spectacle this practical and theoretical development is lost. The Party actively tried to re-event a new revolutionary consciousness for both women and men to embody while struggling against a militarized economic enemy.

When the media projected an image by choosing certain actions taken by the Party, the media then maintained a constructed character that no longer resembled its original form. Through the media's dissemination of entertainment and dynamic spectacles, the Party lost control over its own image. The revolutionary and social characteristics of Black Panthers were lost through the media's ability to reaffirm social relations. In this form, the Party became a spectacle. The depiction of Black Panthers through televised events did not create a racist reaction towards the Party; rather, the media perpetuated an already existing negative stereotypes and social roles for African American men to fit in accordingly.

The media's representation of the Party allowed racists and the wealthy to conduct a passive image war against the Party without having to engage the Party itself. Media outlets became another space to challenge the Party by maintaining socially prescribed racial and gendered identity. The constructed image of the Party became a commodity and served the purpose of selling the revolution and pacifying subjects through newspaper articles, periodicals, TV spectacles, and other forms of entertainment as information. The newsroom and newspapers became arenas for class struggle. Just as in the workplace, the media placed the strain and work upon the marginalized and alienated to bare the burden of poverty. The media needed the Black Panther Party icon in order to sell the revolution as a socially consumed commodity.

Party organizing efforts challenged the media depiction and historical narratives created around the Black Panther icon, a spectacle that no longer represented the Party. The media maintained image can be picked apart to reveal the dialectical relationship between the media and the Party. The dialectical relationship is a struggle between classes that are gendered, sexed, and racialized, and put the media at odds with the aims of the Party. By understanding the difference between using the media to convey messages and images of struggle in order to motivate people to identify with the Black Panther Party, and the media using the imagery to make headlines, perpetuate, reaffirm, and construct social relations is to understand the Party and class struggle. Also, the relationship between the media and the Party was another form of struggle between socialized-workers and capitalism. The image of the BPP has been constructed outside of the Party and then placed upon the Party but with it comes the subversive character of the

revolutionary imagery. It was the Party's responsibility to differentiate between performative revolutionaries and revolutionary Intercommunalists for their own needs. With dialectical relationships comes the ability to negate the social relation and create anew. Since the media needs the imagery of the Black Panther Party engaged in spectacular events in order to produce a commodity the media is reactionary and parasitic. The Party itself was proactive and chose to engage in media events to convey its revolutionary nature and subvert the role of entertainment news. A reconstructed and revolutionary Black Panther Party emerges, a collective body comprised of a multitude of individuals whose desire for freedom goes beyond the comprehension of the spectacle.

CHAPTER V

EXPLORING LOCAL BRANCHES AND GENDER

The BPP and local Party branches was ideologically centralized yet the Party is an example of organizing autonomous zones in different regions and cities across the United States. The ideological framework of the Party allowed for a cohesive national organization which included flexible branch organizing of both Black Panthers and supporters. The Survival Programs Pending Revolution and community organizing by local branches allowed for both organizational unity and flexibility. The activities and history of local Party branches serves as the raw material from which other conclusions about the Party become possible.

The memories of Party members offer stories which uncover a deep desire for black liberation and a revolutionary awakening reoccurring across America in the hearts and minds of women and men, young and old. Here is where practice and theory merged as revolutionary bodies began to construct and politically interact with history and capitalism. This historical uncovering particularly by Jeffries (2010) discovered that,

> The Party suffers a distorted and warped image that was largely framed by both the print and television media, which, for the most part, reduced the entire organization to the Bay Area and a few high-profile personalities. Consequently, for some, the Panthers as known more for their histrionics and showdowns with police than their community survival programs…the image

that many academics and laypersons have of the party is a sensational one that does not mesh wit reality (p.x).

And Jeffries continues,

> While we philosophically do not believe that a comprehensive and exhaustive history of any organization can be written, we do believe that it is possible and indeed imperative to fill gaps in knowledge by investigating the events and activities in various braches and chapters of this particular organization…with the expressed purpose of painting a more complete portrait of this organization than has heretofore been done (p.x)

The local histories of BPP are what highlight the complexity and fluidity of the Party. A more comprehensive history and theoretical understanding of the BPP includes deducing the gender dynamics within branch activities and how gendered bodies produced theoretical insight on the practical implementation of Party work. The embryo for revolutionary re-gendering was incubated across America's urban landscape and crafted by the organizing attempts of the Black Panther Party. The women and men within the Party were social products of a sexist, racialized, and capitalist social reproductive system, yet their joining together in the Party shattered this socially created reality and injected a re-gendering desire.

Harlem, New York City

Safiya Bukhari's experience as a university student turned Black Panther in New York City is one of many personal stories from Party members that exemplifies the many complexities of the Party while simultaneously clarifying the myths and fears which surround the BPP. Bukhari's own interesting insights into the Party are significant in that until recently Bukhari was excluded from the Party's historiography, as her rise to fame was post-BPP. Bukhari a survivor and political-activist who fought against the prison industrial complex organized solidarity outreach work for political prisoners of the 1960s and 1970s. As a student, Bukhari's (2010) sorority had decided to,

> Help, "disadvantaged" children as one of our projects for the year and we were trying to decide what country to work with when one of the sisters suggested that we work in the ghettos of New York. Personally, I [Bukhari] had never even thought of people in the United States being disadvantaged, but only too lazy to work and "make it", I was in for the biggest rude awakening of my life (p.2).

Bukhari (2010) and her sorority sisters went to Harlem in order to "investigate the situation and what we came away with was a story of humiliation, degradation, deprivation, an waste that started in infancy and lasted until death—in too many cases, at an early age" (p.2). In witnessing social alienation, Bukhari was able to make the leap and transform her own social identity and everyday activities. Though Bukhari (2010) was a, "tourist who takes pity on the less fortunate", at the time like her sorority sisters who decided to help the children of Harlem her interaction with the BPP would later transform her identity and consciousness (p.2).

Bukhari (2010) decided, "To do what [she] could to help the children. The Black Panther Party was already running a free breakfast program to feed the children. I had a daughter of my own at this point and decided that I would put my energies into this" (p.3). Simply put Bukhari was able to identity with the Party's Survival Programs in Harlem and understood the severe need to assist socially and economically alienated youth. Though it was not until her arrest, a case of political harassment, for standing up to two arresting officers of a fellow Black Panther that she felt a need to join the BPP herself. Bukhari (2010) remembers,

> I had never been arrested before and I was naïve enough to believe that all you had to do was be honest and everything would work out right. I was wrong again. As soon as the police got us into the backseat of their car and pulled away from the crowd, the bestiality began to show. My friend went to say something and one of the police officers threatened to ram his nightstick up her if she opened her mouth again, and then ran on in a monologue about Black people. I listened and got angry (p.4).

After her first arrest and becoming a living witness to the various police agencies national coordinated effort to repress a new radical political movement, Bukhari decided that she would go, "back to Harlem and joined the Black Panther Party" (p.4). Bukhari's daily routine as a Party member had her working with welfare mothers, educating herself, teaching Liberation Schools, and talking to students. Buhkari (2010) remembered "learning the reality of life in the ghettos of America", and "revaluating many of the things I had been taught about the land of the free and the home of the brave" (p.4). Bukhari quit the university, began to work, and dedicated her spare-time to Party activities. Though her reasoning for joining the Party was based on personal experience,

her arrest was one of many transgressions emanating from a gendered and racialized power structure.

Bukhari's experience is precisely the essence in understanding the desire for individuals to join the Party as well as an integral part to further explain the collective subjectivity within the entire BPP.

The political reality for the urban working-class African American population across America was one of economic and socio-political alienation. Living with police control which, as experienced and explained through the BPP's historical content, gave rise to the Party as well as the support for the BPP in America. The BPP resonated with all social strata within American communities from: college students, destitute drug addicts, and the Lumpenproletariat. The Party reorganized the individual's everyday life and psyche into an active political subject defined through radical activities and revolutionary subjectivity. Bukhari (2010) states that,

> At five a.m. every morning, my daughter and I would get ready and go to the center where I was working on the breakfast program. It entailed cooking and serving breakfast, sometimes talking to the children about the problems they were encountering, or helping them with their homework (p.3).

The *Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program* was the first of many Survival Programs Pending Revolution which were implemented across the US by the BPP. The *Free Children's Breakfast Program* started in Oakland in 1969, to meet the nutritional needs of alienated children who were not receiving enough food due to poverty and community suppression (Alkebulan, 2007, p.31).

The main activities of local BPP branches were to maintain community relations and be active bodies in the service of the community. Though local Party branches varied in their activities based on their own capabilities and local community needs, the entire Party's main focus was the community programs in hopes of spreading revolutionary ideals and activities of the Party. Regina Jennings (1995) recalls,

> In Oakland, California, the Panthers and the Black community had a mutual love affair. We brought them Black men and women willing to transform the Black community with social programs, to defend where we lived and breathed with our lives. The people brought us food, joy, assurances, hope, and companionship (p.260).

Jennings describes the relationship between the Party and the community as one of a willing sacrifice that did not end with one entity being indebted to the other but one of mutual survival. Jennings (1995) continues,

> Ironically, as we fed hungry children breakfast, and later gave out bags of groceries to the poor, often times Panthers themselves had little food and certainly very little money. We lived mostly off of paper sales. We sold each Panther paper for twenty-five cents. We turned fifteen cents into the office and kept ten cents for ourselves (p.260).

Black Panthers later began to convert their homes and apartments into collective living spaces to mutually assure each members need for a living space. Selling the *Black Panther*, also gave each member a way to make an income while conducting Party work; Party members living in a collective also lightened the economic load for individuals but this was not an end, but a tactic much like the Survival Programs.

Winston-Salem Panthers

Radical politics in the South has always had a connection to the labor struggles of African Americans which have traditionally merged labor politics with social causes and the fight against racism. African American labor, "Ingeniously recasting job discrimination as a political question," was able to secure certain social victories and maintain a basis for economic survival and political clout (Ortiz, 2005, p.151). In Winston-Salem the connection was tobacco labor. Though a clear victory is hard to extract from the history of Winston-Salem's labor struggles, the ongoing fight between labor and capital nonetheless nurtured later radical elements to permeate other social environments in Winston-Salem.

In the late 1940s, R.J. Reynolds and Local 22 of the Tobacco Workers International Union were in conflict over wages and the general racial division of labor regarding workers and seasonal workers. In the fight for better wages and general improvements of labor conditions at the Reynolds plants which came to a head on May 1, 1947, the Winston-Salem African American community rallied around the needs for economic and social improvements. Though by the 1950s, due to Senator McCarthy's Red Scare, and several federal investigations of Local 22, the union had lost its political strength. By the decades end, Winston-Salem saw their first black political representative voted into office with help from the union. Reverend Kenneth R. Williams was elected alderman the year of the strike. (Jeffries, 2007, p.58).

Winston-Salem's student population was also active in the fight against racism,

much like Greensboro, the city credited for starting the student movement against

segregation. "Only a week after the famous Woolworth sit-ins in nearby Greensboro,

demonstrators filled Winston-Salem's segregated lunch counters, and the voices of Black

protest reverberated through the city's streets" (Jeffries, 2007, p.59). Also, Winston-

Salem did not differ from other major cities across the United States when looking at the

relationship between the police department and the African American community. In

October of 1967, James Eller, then thirty two years old, was approached by Patrolman

W.E. Owens and taken to the Station due to supposed drunkenness. During Eller's

detention he was beaten by Patrolman Owens with a blackjack and suffered a fractured

skull and brain damage resulting in Eller's death days later according to the coroners

office (Jeffries, 2007, p.59). To add insult to injury the charges against Owens were

dismissed. Jeffries (2007) also found that,

> The situation grew tense as Black leaders protested that too much was unknown
> for the court to have made such a swift decision. Within minutes after Eller was
> interred, violence erupted and buildings were set ablaze and looted. The
> insurgents set approximately a hundred fires and did roughly $750,000 in
> damage… Eller's death, coupled with the developments of the preceding years,
> albeit in different ways, helped foment a climate that would give rise to "a burst
> of nationalist-tinged radicalism (p.58-60).

These events were not particular to Winston-Salem, rebellions erupted across America's

urban landscapes due to social segregation and economic deprivation. Rather than

viewing the 1960s and 1970s urban rebellions as "bursts of radicalism" the decades and

the BPP can be seen as an intense conflict between capital and socialized-labor to

restructure and reinvent gender, race, and class within a much larger history of struggle. The violent unrest and organizing of America's urban dwellers was a response to socially mediated identities in capitalism. The entail unrest and riots were insurrectionary forms of resistance to identity constructs and the economic condition of the urban population. Insurrection matured and developed new forms of radical politics with the organization of the BPP. Militant self defense and Party programs began to service the needs of the community. Through the Survival Programs the BPP created new identities which negated old socially mediated identities.

Much like other branches, during the early years the Winston-Salem branch operated as a local NCCF (National Committee to Combat Fascism) branch and like other branches was disrupted by the FBI's COINTELPRO. Panther activism in Winston-Salem, led by Robert Greer and later Larry Little, the branch organized a *Children's Free Breakfast Program* until disrupted by the FBI and police harassment (Jeffries, 2007, p.60-70). Like Oakland, Winston-Salem Black Panthers were forced to organize in a hostile environment. In September 1970, an hour after the Winston-Salem Panthers had left for Philadelphia to attend the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (RPCC) "the NCCF headquarters was ablaze. The fire burned out of control for nearly an hour and completely destroyed the headquarters. The FBI was quick to appear on the scene, searching the debris for weapons and noting the serial numbers of several pieces of printing equipment" (Jeffries, 2007, p.68).

At the convention 10,000 to 15,000 people and radical organizations came together over a series of workshops and organizing methods for a new potential future

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which embraced Internationalism and community empowerment. The main workshops at

the People's Convention were: *Self-Determination of Street People, Workshop on the Self*

Determination of Women, a Statement of Demands for the Male Representatives of

National Gay Liberation, The Family and the Rights of Children, Prisoners' Rights,

Control and Use of the Educational System, Control and Use of the Military and Police,

Health, and *Revolutionary Art* (Cleaver, 2001, p.285-300). Regarding Women's

liberation the BPP at the RNCC put forth a critique of the contemporary problems of

oppression, sexism, racism, and classism which alienated and marginalized a woman's

identity within capitalism. Cleaver (2001) recalls the workshop's conclusion and points

of unity recognized,

> The right of all women to be free, as women, we recognize that our struggle is
> against a racist, capitalist, sexist system that oppresses all minority people and we
> will fight for a socialist system that guarantees full, creative, non-exploitative life
> for all human beings (p.292).

This convention historically shows the BPP's willingness to co-operate with other

organizations, a tradition of expanding their politics and ideology, and the seriousness of

their own fluid politics. The RNCC was an attempt to consolidate the politics and

ideologies of the US radical left and present a potentially revolutionary document,

direction for the future, and a pragmatic approach to the contradictions among people and

the economy. The Winston-Salem branch's participation at the convention is an example

of the Party as a national organization yet the branch's own activities which suited the

particular needs of Winston-Salem residents exemplified the Party's flexibility and cooperation.

Before the dissolution of the Winston-Salem branch by the mid 1970s, the branch had operated a *People's Free Ambulance Service* which received its funds from Joseph Waddell's life insurance policy after Joseph Waddell had died in prison.[2] The Winston-Salem branch again honored Waddell in 1972 with the *Joseph Waddell Free Food Program.* Jeffries (2007) explains,

> The event, attended by two thousand people, was a huge success. The branch donated a thousand grocery bags of food to the residents of the Kimberly housing project, and in addition to free food, people in the housing project were given sickle-cell anemia tests as well as free shoes for their children. The branch also launched a voter registration drive that, according to the FBI, registered five hundred people to vote. The branch used the event as a forum to display its new outlook. [Larry] Little spoke at length about working within the system and announced that he would run for local office in the future (p.75-76).

By the end of the 1970s the BPP on a national level had all but dissolved, and Party members had been relocated to Oakland in order to fulfill the needs and desires of the Party's Central Committee. The Winston-Salem branch becoming defunct after the Central Committee's decision to relocate members to Oakland, Little and others resorted to local politics and city government for reform efforts.

The Winston-Salem branch had members living and organizing in both Winston-Salem and High Point where Panthers operated the Angela Davis Day- Care Center and

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[2] "Suffice to say his death was a shock to many in the community, and, given the inconsistencies in the various reports, some suspected that Waddell had been murdered." Jeffries, J. L. *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party.* Bloomington, Indiana, University of Indiana Press, 2007. (p.76)

other efforts which came under attack from local police. Police harassment and FBI

COINTELPRO measures such as searching for illegal firearms and fugitives based on

fabricated intelligence from other FBI offices around the country were standard tactics to

disrupt branch activities (*The Black Panther*, 1972, p.9). As stated in the *Black Panther*

(1972)*,*

> Haven Henderson, a member of the North Carolina Black Panther Party, whose
> assigned task is to work at the door when police drove up in front of the center
> that day. Several pigs jumped out of their cars and quickly ran onto the
> porch…They pretended to be looking for a brother from the Black community,
> and threatened to "tear down" the office if they weren't allowed in…the people in
> the neighborhood had come outside of their homes to watch. Their presence and
> angry protests let the High Point fascists [police] know that they were not just
> attacking the Day Care Center, but a united Black Community (p.9).

Winston-Salem's NCCF branch in April of 1970, "was officially recognized as a full-

fledged branch of the Black Panther Party", a change in status that was an important

turning point for the Winston-Salem group. The branch, having endured FBI and local

police repression, was able to begin rebuilding strong community service programs that

led to a new respectability for the group" (Jeffries, 2007, p.7-72). The Winston-Salem

branch changed faces and tactics during its short tenure. The local NCCF branch faced

down evictions as described in an issue of the *Black Panther* (1970),

> People of the Community vs. the Slumlords and Fascist Pigs of Winston Salem
> North Carolina: the people of this community got together with a brother and
> sisters of the Winston-Salem National Committee to Combat Fascism and decided
> that Miss Graham nor anyone else was going to be evicted (p.1).

After the national Party was dissolved the Winston-Salem branch members would transform themselves to civic leaders and reformers. The concentration of the Party in Oakland happened shortly after the Winston-Salem branch received national recognition in the *Black Panther* (1972) for its implementation of a *People's Free Ambulance Program* (p.9).

Though the branch's existence was tense and short lived it serves as a microcosm of the entire Party in its behavior and political outlook until it dissolved. Political and ideological training was given to Larry Little during his six month stay in Oakland before returning and taking the leadership role of the then officially recognized Winston Salem BPP branch. As a result of the national dissolution of the Party and moving members to Oakland, Little and the branch's remnants focused on local politics by running Little for office in the 1974 election. In a huge upset Little lost due to, "nearly three hundred [votes out of some 500] were removed from the registration rolls. This purge may have cost Little the election, as many of those who were disfranchised had been registered during the Panther voter registration drive" (Jeffries, 2007, p.75-78). Though the national break up of the Party differed across the local branches, by the mid 1970s Oakland was for all tense and purposes where the Black Panther Party was solely active.

Baltimore and Detroit Black Panthers

Similarly, the desires for radical change and the need to address the struggles of African Americans across America's urban landscape, the Baltimore branch was formed in either late 1969 or early 1970 and followed the protocols set forth by the Central

Committee. By 1969, "Steve McCutchen (Li'l Masai) was the lieutenant of information,

Chaka Zulu was lieutenant of education, Sherry Brown was lieutenant of finance, Reva

White was communications secretary, and Larry Wallace was the officer of the day"

(Jeffries, 2007, p.40). The Baltimore branch's, according to Jeffries (2007), leadership

went through some line up changes due to police abduction and general reshuffling of

personnel and Connie Felder replaced Reva White as communications secretary and Paul

Coates became new defense captain (p.20). The branch's leadership and membership

reflected a younger generation. Jeffries (2007) discovered,

> The majority of the Baltimore Panthers were primarily in their late teens and early
> twenties, whereas members at the national level were more varied in age. Nearly
> all the Baltimore Panthers were products of working-class families.
> In keeping with the objectives of the organization, the Baltimore branch immersed
> itself in the community service projects...when one lady fell ill and was unable to
> work, the Panthers took her to the department of social services and acted as her
> spokesperson, and as a result she received the necessary funds (p.21-22).

Also the Baltimore branch operated a *Free Children Breakfast Program* which, "was

mandated by the national headquarters. Baltimore's program operated in at least three

different locations at various times from 1969 through 1971" (Jeffries, 2007, p.22).

The gendered dynamics within the Baltimore chapter and Panther volunteers was

not rigid but rather fluid. Rather than adhering to socialized gender roles the needs of the

community and the Baltimore chapter took priority. Documented by Jeffries, Glenda

Conwell recalls (2007),

> On a given day at Martin de Porres one might find more men than women
> cooking and serving children their meals. At about 7:30 A.M. children trickled in

to eat a balanced breakfast before making their way to school. Community worker, Glenda Conway has fond memories of the breakfast program. [Conway recalls], after Eddie and I got off work we would pick up kids at their home, drive them to the breakfast program where we would serve the kids cold cereal on some days and sausage, eggs, grits, fruit, milk, and juice on other days. After the kids had eaten we would take them to school. We served a balanced breakfast (p.22).

Also, the Baltimore chapter introduced a free lunch program during the summer months held "liberation lessons" before the serving of lunch, and temporarily established a food co-op in East Baltimore (Jeffries, 2007, p.23). Women and men within the Party did not decide their roles within their Survival Programs based on gender distinction but on the ability of each person. Both practically and ideologically, the BPP utilized both women and men to fill their branches, ranks, and maintain their Survival Programs Pending Revolution.

In Detroit the BPP emerged in the late 1960s and were in full operation during 1970. Detroit is a city with a rich history of working-class struggle. In the Motor City, the automotive factories were a place of contention regarding race and labor politics. During World War II and post-war period: the Communist Party (USA), the black United Auto Workers', the NAACP, Urban League, the League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), and later the Black Panther Party all attempted with varied strategies in organizing Detroit's African American urban population around issues of: labor, race, state sponsored violence, gender, and social alienation (Jeffries, 2010, p.125-155). Despite being involved in three separate armed confrontations with various police agencies in Detroit, the local BPP was able to maintain both the Survival Programs and militant self defense simultaneously in the Detroit area

(Jeffries, 2010, p.126). With Papers sales and local donations from various businesses

the Detroit Panthers were able to finance their operations and social activities for

Detroit's population. As in Los Angeles, the Detroit Panthers emerged in the aftermath

of the infamous urban rebellions of 1967. In Detroit the riot kicked off after a long list of

transgressions and disregard of due process regarding white on black violence. Jeffries

(2010) states,

> Early in the summer of 1967, for example, a black man was killed by a group of
> whites when trying to protect his pregnant wife from their sexual advances.
> Adding to the tragedy was the loss of the baby. If anyone doubted that Detroit's
> law enforcement community viewed blacks differently, perhaps it was because
> they chose to ignore the evidence. For example, fifteen blacks had been shot by
> whites during the term of the incumbent prosecutor, and all had been ruled
> justifiable shootings despite a number of bizarre circumstances surrounding
> several of the deaths (p.129).

Detroit, much like Oakland, was losing its tax bases due to the organized efforts of the

affluent fleeing to the suburbs. As a consequence the city's civil infrastructure, public

education, and housing market bottomed out. Jeffries (2010) highlights,

> Beginning in the 1950s, the big car manufacturers such as Ford, Chrysler, and
> General Motors (GM) began to automate their assembly lines and outsource parts
> production to subcontractors located in other cities as well as in foreign countries.
> Black males were especially hit hard by the combination of deindustrialization
> and entrenched job discrimination in the automotive industry (p.129-130).

So even the earlier successes of black labor had been re-appropriated by the automation

of the production process new forms of radical organizing had to come from outside the

factory walls. Though attempts to organize a more militant front for the urban population

through such groups as Republic of New Africa (RNA), Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), and SNCC all with varying success it was the Detroit BPP branch that would gather national attention.

As with many other local branches, the Detroit office was maintained by both women and men. According to Tracy Wilson, a descendant of Nat Turner and early member of the Detroit branch, "if one stopped by the Bewick Street office one might find more young men serving food than young women" (Jeffries, 2010, p.144). Jeffries (2010) continues his discussion with Tracy Wilson, "on the gender dynamics played out in the kitchen", Wilson laughed and shot back, "Hey the men were the best cooks…They could cook better than any of the women" (p.144). Jeffries (2010) also asked Wilson why young men were attracted to the breakfast program and Wilson concluded that it was one of fascination for Detroit's young men and one of wanting to emulate the older Black Panthers. Tracy states, "a number of the young men in the neighborhood were being raised by single mothers, hence some of them were hungry for male mentors and father figures… They admired the Panther men and thus wanted to emulate them" (p.144). According to Wilson's testimony gender roles within the Party were not set in stone.

Gwen Robinson, another woman in the Detroit branch, "was the brainchild behind the lunch program," and the *Free Children's Breakfast Program*. After securing a local church for a space to cook and serve children breakfast before school and lunch during the summer months of 1972, the Detroit BPP was praised in the *Black Panther* (1972) with an article titled, "Free Food All Over Motown!"(p.7). Also on May 20, 1972 the Detroit branch held a *Free Food Giveaway Program* were, "the Jeffries projects were the

target audience. The Jeffries complex consisted of thirteen separate high-rise towers, five

smaller towers, and 415 low-rise town homes, housing nearly 8,000 people" (Jeffries,

2010, p.145). Wilson recalls handing out thousands of leaflets letting the residents

known of the upcoming Survival Day which took on the environment of a festival where

the BPP handed out 1,000 bags of free groceries on the first day, conducted health

screenings, sickle-cell anemia testing, and registered voters for the up and coming

mayoral election. The Detroit branch unofficially backed candidate Coleman A. Young

for mayor in the 1973 election (Jeffries, 2010, p.145). The success of the Detroit branch

in electing a liberal mayor who went on to implement various progressive measures and

disbanded the controversial STRESS (Stop Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets) police squad,

which targeted black youth in Detroit. Detroit Panthers' efforts motivated national Party

Headquarters to grant Detroit's cadre with official Party membership (Jeffries, 2010,

p.145-46).

The Detroit Panthers also involved themselves in the supposed Party split of 1971

between the followers of Newton and Cleaver, which also marks the most violent and

militant time during the Party's existence, as Detroit temporarily sided with Cleaver

through militant deeds. During both routine policing of areas populated by the Panthers

and routine *Black Panther* sales on October 24, 1970 a confrontation occurred as detailed

by Jeffries (2010),

> Detroit police officers confronted two Panthers distributing party literature on a
> street corner near the NCCF's new headquarters on the city's west side and
> attempted to cite them for harassing passersby. Perceiving another instance of
> police brutality in the making, a small crowd formed as the two Panthers resisted,

eventually breaking free from the police and running to the nearby NCCF house on Sixteen and Myrtle… By this time, a jeering crowd had gathered in the street and began pelting the police with rocks and bottles, prompting the officers to call for backup (p.169).

This confrontation between two Black Panthers and the police escalated to an armed confrontation between not only the Party members and the Detroit police but also involved the local residents who reportedly burned three police cars in defense of the NCCF office. Members of the Detroit NAACP, by phone call with national Panther leadership, reporters, and journalists, one Nadine Brown of the *Michigan Chronicle,* all came to negotiate a cease-fire and surrender. Before the situation ended two police officers had been shot and one killed, Marshall Emerson and Glen Smith. Eight women and seven men from inside the NCCF office emerged and became known as the imprisoned Detroit 15 (Jeffries, 2010, p.169-170). This siege and the act of revolutionary self-defense is another interesting case of women within the BPP blatantly behaving outside their socially constructed gender roles when picking up arms in defense of their Headquarters, Party, individual safety, and political desires.

Jeffries (2010) research concludes that gender played less of a role in deciding what women and men did or did not do which was, "certainly the case in Detroit, where women were ostensibly viewed as warriors on equal footing with men" (p.170). Women and men shared an equal stake within the Party and their shared experience in cooking for children and defending their office from police attack were examples of this practical gendered equality. Jeffries goes on to place the problems of gender inequality and sexism outside of Detroit but then places these contradictions in Oakland without further

explanation (Jeffries, 2010, p.161-162). The Detroit branch in their behavior and organizing efforts did not place much focus on gender but rather the individual's strengthens and ability to partake in the Black Panther revolution.

Jeffries divorces the Detroit branch from the rest of the Party when discussing sexism and uses the Detroit cadre as an example of an organization moving beyond the gendered distinction of male and female similarly to Elaine Brown's own basis of judging the individual on merit. Jeffries (2010) argues,

> As the Panthers became a national phenomenon, the role of women in the Party slowly expanded in the late 1960s, as women became more outspoken about the grave prognosis for a revolution divided by sex and relying solely on the efforts of men. Between 1969 and 1971, events conspired to raise the consciousness of Panther women and eventually alter the perceptions of what a woman's role in the revolution should be (p.162).

Though Jeffries recognizes an organization's ability to grow and mature, socially and politically, it is not the Party's national expanse which forced socially constructed roles to be altered within the Party. Rather, the Party went from a localized group to a national organization and changed their political outlook and activities greatly precisely because new bodies and realities filled the ranks of the Party. The Party emerged and moved with the times rather than stood as a bulwark against re-gendering and women's participation. Kathleen Cleaver's arrival in Oakland in 1967 to coordinate the Free Huey campaign which spurred national organizing efforts can better mark the emergence of a different more fluid and inclusive BPP. Women were always present within the Party and highly active on all fronts, whether it was selling papers, feeding children, leading campaigns, or

partaking in armed resistance. To only talk about the gendered relations within the Party and not take a closer look at their activities places more emphasis on the media contrived imagery of the BPP rather than the Party's own history, activity, and membership.

The visual language of the media and the gendering of politics is as much a political conflict as the conflicts between the BPP and various police agencies. The BPP became a totalizing collective political subject where their activities were at all times political whether this collective was feeding children, selling revolutionary literature, or armed self-defense. The Party created an atmosphere where both women and men were included. The women and men who made up the local branches of the BPP are the ones who created theory made the Party possible. It was the desires and needs of the urban population coupled with the Party that gave rise to revolutionary practice and theoretical comprehension of their lived experience.

The local branches of the BPP were able to act with relative autonomy but were still bound to the rules and regulations of what constituted the Party, the Ten Point Program, and the Rules of the BPP. Also, local branches had to at least have one running *Free Children's Breakfast Program*. As Larry Little from Winston-Salem went to Oakland for Political Education and leadership training, local branches were required to send members to Oakland for similar training in order to insure Party unity, cohesion, and political unison. Though local branches were affected by their region, city histories, and local struggles there was still a uniformity to the Party and its branches. Ideologically the Party was one and through varying community programs and local circumstance each branch was unique.

Similarly for the women and men inside each branch their personalities and individual qualities were maximized in activity while the *Black Panther* served as the pulse of the entire Party. The local branches were connected to both Oakland and each other through the *Black Panther*. Mumia Abu-Jamal (2004) documents that women and men's involvement in the Party varied from branch to branch, and contrary to popular myth, a survey taken by Party Chairman Bobby Seale in the late 1960s, uncovered that two-thirds of Party membership were women (p.165). Women and men both took part in all aspects of the Party and there existed a type of practical equality within the Party, as well as the ideology of the Party openly supported a woman's right and want to join in the revolutionary struggle of the Black Panther Party.

The idea of being a revolutionary, the act of changing one's subjectivity to a revolutionary subject was important for both the Party and its members. To recast oneself and to begin identifying with social change and creating new social formations was happening within the Party. The Party was interested in finding where the body becomes a political body which counters capitalistic gender roles and racism. The Party gained its momentum precisely for radically articulating this contention. Their activities were beyond female and male oriented behavior and expected social roles. As Black Panthers partook in a social revolution the distinction female and male began to delude under the political undertaking of the Party. This deluding of gender identities through revolutionary practice was as much a core issue within the Party as their Survival Programs and ever expanding revolutionary theory.

CHAPTER VI

INTERCOMMUNAL WOMEN AND MEN

Personal accounts and individual experiences of struggle both highlight the social

and political transformation of a person from an African American in themselves to a

socially conscious and politically active revolutionary subject for themselves. Within the

Marxist duality of in themselves and for themselves gender identity and race emerge as a

locality for confrontation and transformation. These social categories and behaviors of

gendered and racialized bodies were either servicing capitalism or intercommunal

revolution. Production of capitalist dynamics and social relations between worker and

capital had far reaching effects into the community outside of the actual space where

material production occurred. Interactions between communities and individuals more

efficiently reproduced the gendered and classed dynamics needed to continue with

production.

Similarly to the category of worker, social distinctions also contain a

socioeconomic relationship. Socially antagonistic consequences have been constructed

within capitalism and are maintained by individual interaction. Frances Beale (2005)

states,

> The system of capitalism (and its afterbirth—racism) under which we all live has
> attempted by many devious ways and means to destroy humanity of all people,
> and particularly the humanity of Black people…Many Black women tended to
> accept capitalist evaluation of manhood and womanhood…The ideal model that is

projected for a woman is to be surrounded by hypocritical and estranged from all real work (p.109-110).

Within the economic construction of American culture the African American, as the BPP, for themselves, negates its duality and transforms behavior and identity. The distinction of in themselves and for themselves is noting the transformation and recognition that the very living space beyond work had become a productive arena and social reproduction had become absorbed into the process of production. Beale (2005) elaborates,

> Capitalism found it necessary to create a situation where the Black man found it impossible to find meaningful or productive employment…And the Black woman likewise was manipulated by the system, economically exploited and physically assaulted (p.109).

Society in its entirety had become economically viable and politically charged. In such a political and economic environment the BPP organized all various strata of working-class subjectivities, which included identities from woman to the intelligentsia. Womanhood and Manhood, through struggle and political consciousness, during the 1960s and 1970s clearly became extremely active entities through bio-politics. Michel Foucault pointedly clarifies,

> This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes…it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing…life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern (p.140-141).

Beale understood capitalism as a bio-politically devious ploy to destroy all humanity and particularly African American humanity. The manipulating aspects of bio-power were more precisely capital's ability to reproduce its power dynamics within the interaction of gendered, raced, and classed bodies. As these social identities were being reproduced and acted out as genuine personal relationships, there could no longer be personal or collective interaction between women and men without bio-political consequence. In regards to the BPP and the African American community a devious ploy assisted by bio-political subjectivity needed to be theoretically understood and challenged. Butler's theoretical contribution to understanding gender as socially constructed performativity and imitative behavior will also help to grasp the BPP's recreation of gender roles. But first Black Panther behavior and theoretical conclusions need to be discussed in order to clearly point out how a positive performativity originates.

Women and men who joined the Party did so in hopes of finding a social and collective cure to the bio-political alienation lived by the individual through a gendered and racialized capitalist social framework. In, *On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party,* Eldridge Cleaver (2006) states,

> We say that we are Marxist-Leninists, we mean that we have studied and understood the classical principles of scientific socialism and that we have adapted these principles to our own situation for ourselves…Essentially, what Huey did was to provide the ideology and the methodology for organizing the Black urban Lumpenproletariat (p.172).

And, Huey (1999) added to the ideological explanation of the Party,

The Black Panther Party is a Marxist-Leninist party because we follow the dialectical method and we also integrate theory with practice. We are not mechanical Marxists and we are not historical materialists. Some people think they are Marxists when actually they are following the thoughts of Hegel. Some people think they are Marxist-Leninist but they refuse to be creative, and are, therefore, tired to the past. They are tied to a rhetoric that does not apply to the present set of conditions (p.23).

It is precisely this attitude of creativity around theory and the willingness to apply

practice in theory which makes the Party so interesting as a revolutionary subject, and it

is the creativity which makes understanding the Party's own revolutionary theories more

complex. The individuals drawn to the Party became revolutionaries precisely because

history had lead up to this point. Capitalism is a social power and relationship and within

American history and development, the African American identity has had many

different phases. These identities, from slave to African American, were created and

molded through historical struggles and desire for a new existence. The economic need

for identity to be connected to production and continued reproduction is not fixed. From

resisting slavery to segregation, the African American identity was forged in struggle and

continued to become a political entity distinguished by its ability to resist. In relation to

the BPP, women and men joined because they had directly experienced the social and

economic conditions of capitalism.

The BPP created a possibility and a revolutionary rupture which occurred during a

capitalist transitional phase from imperialism to reactionary intercommunalist capitalism.

This new era of capitalist economic control was a more hyper-technological and non-state

form of global capitalism. This rupture and reorganization of capital became a place of

political, social, and economic contention. The women and men in the BPP and the

Party's theoretical understanding and analysis of this capitalist transformation happened

simultaneously. The Panther's battlefield being in all social fields which did not exclude:

gender, sexual, political, economic, or racial contradictions in modern day socio-

economic interaction refused to focus on any singular manifestation of bio-power. These

contradictions forced the possibility of social transformation onto the restructuring of

global social reorganization of productive relationships.

It is not a mere coincidence that American industries were deindustrializing,

world capitalism was shifting from national production and competition to world trade

cooperation. The BPP took it upon itself to analyze multiple aspects of social life and

social relations to better understand the power dynamics surrounding and involving

citizens; the BPP concluded that citizens were either social entities in themselves existing

in alienation or social entities for themselves in resistance. Recognizing that alienation

and subjectivity were being reproduced bio-politically, through immediate social

interaction, the Party constructed new identities based on new gendered behaviors. In

Reading Capital Politically, Cleaver (2000) states,

> The working class for itself (or working class as working class—defined
> politically) exists only when it asserts its autonomy as a class through its unity in
> struggle against its role as labour-power. Paradoxically, then, on the basis of this
> distinction, the working class is truly working class only when it struggles against
> its existence as a class. The outcome of the dialectic of working class in itself and
> for itself is not the creation of a pure working class after the revolutionary
> overthrow of capital but rather the dissolution of the working class as such (p.83-
> 83).

In relation to the creation and recreation of social subjects the rank and file began to challenge preexisting subjectivity and recreating new subjectivities for themselves. Intercommunal subjects engaged in activities which defused the behaviors that reaffirmed subjects in themselves and began to construct subjects for themselves. No longer was the point to strictly organize a political organization but to live in revolution. Beale (2005) states to die for the revolution is easy but to life for the revolution, "means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns" (p.121). The Survival Programs ranging from *The Free Children's Breakfast Program* to militant defense of the community, the BPP was a commitment to changing the gendered, sexed, and classed patterns of everyday life.

As Malcolm X (1992) believed and lived as an example, the revolution or the struggle was able to rescue the alienated subject from a social existence of internalization which constructed socially alienated beings (p.186). So too, the BPP, focused their efforts on changing the individual's world view through struggle. It is this marriage between theory and practice which brings the Party to the forefront and into the hearts and minds of people in America. People wished to join the party because members led by example and produced activities which empowered the individual. The BPP turned individuals into a collective subject that was antagonistic to capitalist gendering.

In understanding the BPP there needs to be an investigation into the activities of the Party, as in Chapter V, in combination with analyzing the radical transformation of the individual, and the social theories which not only motivated the Party but also added to their creative refining of Dialectical Materialism as defined in Newton's Revolutionary

Intercommunalism. By not being dogmatic or "tied to the past" the BPP developed its theories simultaneously as social reorganization of social reproduction was emerging in and around the Party. Newton and the Black Panthers understood that not only was the Party a product of social struggle but so too were their social dynamics in which they existed in and wished to change. The Party had become a comprehensive antagonistic social force against capitalist social relationships and production. A need to re-gender their own ranks was as much an aspect of the Black Panther revolution as much as their dialectic materialist understanding of class and race relations.

Within the Party it then became a collective identity that was not an inward looking or a self-gratifying social identity but a political body which moved across social constructs to connect a multitude based on their ability and needs. This political body and political force was not based on an identity but activity such as the Survival Programs. In challenging the material condition of urban America the Party could formulate revolutionary theories which presented a clarified perspective of the entire Party. The identity of the Party came from their own activities and so too individual Black Panthers constructed themselves according to the needs of the Party and the community. Survival Programs became centers for new cultural expression and collective consciousness. Through the behaviors and actions of individual Black Panthers patterns of communication with cultural and political implications were created.

Individuals who joined the ranks of the BPP did so from an intense desire to change not only their lives but the living conditions that existed around them in and around the American urban landscape. A social transformation happened within the BPP,

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as with Regina Jennings, who came into contact with the Party as an addict but

persevered. Jennings (1995) recalls,

> My struggle from a drug addict to soldier was a hard-fought personal war. The
> Panthers, like many people in the Black community, understood my dependency
> on drugs; under the leadership of the captain, they helped me gradually abandon
> my addiction. The captain assigned me so many activities, as he did other
> Panthers, and our teachers taught us so vigorously about our importance to our
> community that I started to care about learning and understanding our situation
> with an undrugged mind…The way Panthers taught new recruits, I wanted to
> devour history books…I had never considered Black people as a subject of
> knowledge…We studied about revolutions in China, Cuba, and Africa. The void
> I used to fill with drugs was now filled instead with pure and noble love for my
> people…The free breakfast for school children seems to be common knowledge,
> but people may not know about the dances we staged for the Oakland youth. We
> decorated the community centers, halls, or churches… On vending tables, there
> were the usual posters and buttons of our national leader, Kathleen Cleaver,
> Eldridge Cleaver (The Rage), Bobby Seale, and Huey P. Newton (p.259-250).

And Jennings continues,

> In addition to studying revolutions in Africa and Cuba, we studied the Red Book
> of Chairman Mao. The Film The Battle of Algiers was our orientation theme; yet
> at core we were Black Americans struggling with issues that pertained directly to
> our people. Our local leaders organized political education classes regularly for
> Panthers and the community folk where we all learned about the nature of
> America…we attended exercise classes before we were vanned to various
> churches to cook and serve breakfast to our school children…Our main purpose
> from 1968-70, however, was to free Huey P. Newton. Our leaders planned and
> organized broad-based with diverse Black activist groups: the Brown Berets, a
> Chicano organization, the Red Guard, an Asia organization; and the Peace and
> Freedom Party, an organization of White leftist radicals (p.261).

Jennings goes on to explain her changing point of view on co-organizing with white

organizations. Jennings' attitudes had been transformed through the practical application

of Party programs, organizing, new identities, and being exposed to new perspectives and

political theories. Jennings (1995) had answered in 1968, "I wanna kill all White people; that's why," to questions as to why she wanted to join the Party (p.259). Newton would have recognized Jennings' position as a state of reactionary suicide but through her development, individual empowerment, recovery, and collective reorientation Jennings obtained new answers to the problems and rage which plagued her. During Jennings' co-organizing with the Peace and Freedom Party during the Free Huey campaign in 1968, as punishment for breaking the Party line for not cooperating with allies, she then experienced anew. Jennings (1995) states,

> I had not forgotten either the racism of White cops or the racism of my former coworkers. Firmly believing that they hated all Blacks, I saw no value or sense in working with Whites. This belief remained solid until I witnessed how hard some Whites worked on the Free Huey campaign (p.261).[3]

Jennings' experience as a Black Panther and her personal account and story of transformation exemplifies Malcolm X's faith in redemption through social organizing. Similarly Afeni Shakur (2004) organizing experience with the Party in New York City further demonstrates how individuals transformed within the Party. Shakur states,

> Sweetness let me tell you something. All the shit I was doing to people—against humanity. Robbing people, beating people. That wasn't shit. Before I joined the party, I was fucked up…So, the Panther Party for me, at that time, clarified my situation, they took my rage and channeled it against them [she points outside], instead of us [she holds her heart]. They educated my mind and gave me direction. With that direction came hope, and I loved them for giving me that. Because I never had hope in my life…They took me and looked at me and said,

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[3] Jennings (1995) continues, *"However, I always wondered and openly asked why they were not working as aggressively to solve the racism that existed within their own communities"* (p.261).

Afeni, you are strong so use your strength to help the weak. You are smart, so use your mind to teach the ignorant (p.62).

Regarding women within the Party, Shakur (2004) states, "Kathleen Cleaver, Eldridge's wife and the only visible female force of the party. They were brilliant to me. I wanted what they had" (p.62). In Shakur's (2004) conversation with Jasmine Guy she continues to explain her own reasoning for joining the Party, it was a personal matter,

The principles, the plan. I started the breakfast program to feed children on their way to school. I joined because I could use my mouth for speeches to raise money for the program. I joined 'cause I was fearless. I was a gangster, I could do whatever was necessary to keep the party alive. I joined for free clinics. I joined for all that because it would have helped my mama if we had had that kind of help from our community. Those programs would have helped my mother with her two girls tremendously. And those programs would have helped my mother in a way that would have saved her dignity. I joined because the Panthers answered the needs of the people in my community. I believed in those programs, and I still believe in participating in your community, especially in schools (p.62-65).

Shakur (2004) explains the importance of both theory and practice in, *We Will Win*:

Letter from Prison,

The Black Panther Party was formed three years ago [1966] in Oakland California by Huey P. Newton—but was it? Black Panther historians argue themselves over the beginning of the spirit of the Black Panther Party…And all agree on the modern adaptation of it—that Frantz Fanon put it on paper, that Malcolm X put into words, and that Huey P. Newton put it into action (p.161).

What Shakur and the Party referred to as the spirit of the Black Panther Party is not a specter but rather the reemergence of an antagonistic force brought on by the social and

economic contradictions within social relations of capitalism. These social relations were a continuation of dialectically opposed imperialist and colonized subjectivities. Whether the theoretician was fighting colonialism in former French Algeria or speaking against colonialism as did Malcolm X, Shakur (1995) remembers, "Huey P. Newton put it into action" (p.181). According to Shakur and her personal reasons for joining the Party was as much political as it was personal the two were intimately connected.

Gender roles were fluid throughout the Party's existence and individuals did behave contradictory to the Party's position. But this behavior was enacted and imitated throughout society on all levels were women and men existed together. Liberalism would conclude that certain individual's contradictory behavior undermined the entire Party, but the collective behavior of the Party coupled with the individual experience of women such as Afeni Shakur shatter this simple and biased response. More importantly in regards to discussing gender dynamics within the BPP: means to explore the behavior of the collective subject, the Party's position on gender, and the role of women and men within the party. Beyond accusations, former Black Panther, Tracye Mathews (1995) explains, "the social consequences of these changes, including more sophisticated and insidious forms of racism and sexism, demand not only new responses, but also a closer investigation of and learning from past practices of collective organized resistance" (p.268).

As Mathews (1995) continues,

> In my analysis, gender is not to be understood as a discrete category unto itself, but one of several interacting factors, such as race, class, color, age, and sexual

orientation, that together make up individual identities, as well as the social terrain upon which we experience our realities. To say that I am examining gender and the politics of the BPP does not mean that this work is solely about sexism in the Party, or women's experiences. Instead, a gender analysis also encompasses the experience of men; definitions of manhood and womanhood; the interconnections between gender-, race-, and class-based oppression; and the impact of all these factors on the success and shortcomings of the BPP. The category of gender was not as fully politicized and theorized during the late 1960s as it is today, thus one must resist the temptation to impose current standards to measure the feminist, nationalist, or revolutionary credentials of the BPP…The stories of the BPP cannot be reduced to a monolithic party line on "the woman question", or linear progression from an overtly and overwhelmingly sexist organization to a pro-black feminst/Womanist one (p.268-269).

In regards to revolutionary politics and organizing the BPP served as a political force which allowed for an exploration beyond the gendering of individuals, the Party constructed a space where women and men were placed within roles that were needed for the Party's daily activities, and various roles were interchangeable due to the needs of the Party. Revolutionary roles were re-gendered specifically for the Party and the outlook on gender was based upon the need of communities. Going beyond what one's views of oneself and seeing the collective's interest in the struggle against capitalism, racism, chauvinism, and reactionary elements produced an intercommunal possibility. In 1970, in the *Guardian,* Bobby Seale (1995) stated in opposition to Cultural Nationalism and chauvinism in general,

> The fight against male chauvinism is a class struggle—that's hard for people to understand. To understand male chauvinism one has to understand that it is interlocked with racism. Male chauvinism is directly related to male domination and it is perpetuated as much by the ruling class in America. When we are talking about women's liberation we're not talking so much about biological equality…All people talk, think, feel and human relationships have to be determined on that basis, not on a sex basis. The same goes for racial

differences…cultural nationalist like Karenga, are male chauvinists as well. What they do is oppress the Black woman. Their Black racism leads them to theories of male domination. Thus black racists come to the same conclusions that white racists do with respect to women. The [Black Panther] party says no to this. Personally, I don't think women who want liberation want penises—they just want to be treated as human beings on an equal basis, just as blacks who demand the liberation of their people (p.273).

For Seale, class struggle plays as much of a significant role as the re-gendering of bodies through politics and practice within the Party. For Seale women are not subjects for the party but revolutionary subjects within the Party.

What Seale articulates was practiced across the US in local branches of the Party and women as well as men recognized the Party's stance and it resonated with people on a personal and a socially political level. Liberation here is being defined as a class struggle waged against a sexist, racist, and capitalist social structure that maintains gendered and racialized bodies. Seale and the Party's outlook regarding the woman question and sexism recognizes that these forms of social division are integral parts of social relations which must be challenged. In order for the BPP to engage in this struggle, Seale and the Party, recognize that race and gender are an integral part of the class struggle. The gender question and challenges to sexism are synonymous to class struggle. The point Seale is making is that sexism, male chauvinism, and racism are symptomatic to class society and socially constructed barriers which individuals as well as organizations must seriously consider when acting out politically.

Similarly to Seale's comment in the *Guardian,* Newton issued a statement, *The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements:* August 15, 1970, in which Newton

pointed out the interconnectedness of sexual identity to revolutionary politics. In a rather

lengthy quote Newton explains the Party's position on women's liberation, sexism, and

homosexuality. I find it particularly insightful and historically important because his own

words state exactly the opposite to what is suggested by other sources when discussing

the Party. Newton (1999) States,

> Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and
> the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of
> the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with
> them, in a revolutionary fashion…We must gain security in ourselves and
> therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed groups. We must not use the
> racist attitude that the White racists use against our people because they are Black
> and poor…This kind of psychology is in operation when we view oppressed
> people and we are angry with them because of their particular kind of behavior, or
> their particular kind of deviation from the established norm. Remember, we have
> not established a revolutionary value system; we are only in the process of
> establishing it. I do not remember our ever constituting any value that said that a
> revolutionary must say offensive things towards homosexuals, or that a
> revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak out about their own
> particular kind of oppression. As a matter of fact, it is just the opposite: we say
> that we recognize the women's right to be free. We have not said much about
> homosexuals at all, but we must relate to the homosexual movement because it is
> a real thing…They might be the most oppressed people in society…We should try
> to judge, somehow, whether they are operating in a sincere revolutionary fashion
> and from a really oppressed situation…But the women's liberation front and gay
> liberation front are our friends, they are potential allies, and we need as many
> allies as possible…We should try to form a working coalition with the gay
> liberation and women's liberation groups. We must always handle social forces
> in the most appropriate manner (p.152-155).

Women, homosexuals, or any other group engaged in a social confrontation for rights,

liberation, or social and political recognition are potential allies for the BPP. More

importantly for the Party this alliance or allegiance for one group to another was based on

intercommunal practicality. With a tactical outlook, the Party is interested in forging

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alliances with other marginalized groups and social categories in order to extend their

revolutionary outlook to other social strata. The Party's view of revolutionary politics

and revolutionary alliances is both practical and ideologically based on their materialist

understanding of capitalist social reproduction, social alienation, and the consequences of

class society.

Matthews, like Seal and Newton, look at the distinction between women and men

as symptoms of class stratification and class antagonism in the larger social environment

and not something exclusive to revolutionary groups or marginalized populations looking

for political expression. Matthews (1995) states,

> In order for women to be truly emancipated in this country there is going to have
> to be a socialist revolution…In their [Black Panther women] opinion and
> experiences, the WLM [Women's Liberation Movement] viewed, the
> contradictions among men and women as one of the major contradictions in
> capitalist society…and develop[ed] it into an antagonistic contradiction, when
> actually it is a contradiction among the people. It's not a contradiction between
> enemies (p.275).

Kathleen Cleaver (1995) has also pointed out, "the problems between Black women and

the problems of White women are so completely diverse they cannot possibly be solved

in the same type of organization nor met by the same type of activity"(p.275). Here

Cleaver goes beyond the contentious binary of black and white or women and men in

discussing the immense differences between gendered or sexed social distinctions.

Cleaver clarifies that these social contradictions are as much part of social alienation in

capitalist society as they are barriers to social interaction between different groupings of

political bodies. The BPP, women, and homosexuals are in relation to the greater

revolutionary objectives and therefore the Party is interested in the correct handling of these contradictions within organizations and social categories. Beyond liberal individualism and with the inclusion of a Marxist perspective on social categories, these categories and mixtures of people are not contending groups but mutually compatible. Chairman Mao (1972) states, "we are confronted by two types of social contradictions— those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people themselves. The two are totally different in their nature" (p.43). The two type social contradictions pointed out by Chairman Mao reaches past liberal social subjectivity which maintain the social divisions constructed within capitalism. While liberalism maintains these contradictions as natural and continuously reaffirmed contradictions through the individual, people and political bodies are split into two subsequent categories, one being social contractions among political bodies and the other being social contradictions between political bodies. Both contradictions are contentious but not antagonistic to the social transformation which was of interest to the BPP. It is this plurality or multitude of struggles that are not excluded but included within the revolutionary political bodies of the Party.

Cleaver highlights the gendered issues within the logic of Black Panther revolutionary ideology and practice. Cleaver (2001) states,

> We are revolutionaries, I'd explain. Back then, I didn't understand why they wanted to think of what men were doing and what women were doing as separate. It's taken me years, literally twenty-five years, to understand that what I really didn't like was the underlying assumption motivating the question. The assumption held that being part of a revolutionary movement was in conflict with what the questioner had been socialized to believe was appropriate conduct for a woman. That convoluted concept never entered my head, although I am certain it was far more widely accepted than I ever realized…It seems to me that part of the

genesis of the gender question, and this is only my opinion, lies in the way it deflects attention from confronting the revolutionary critique our organization made of the larger society, and turns it inward to look at what type of dynamics and social conflicts characterized the organization. To me, this discussion holds far less appeal than that which engages the means we devised to struggle against the oppressive dynamics and social conflicts the larger society imposed on us (p.124).

In a Maoistic manner, Cleaver explains the differences between contradictions among the people and contradictions between antagonistic political bodies. Cleaver is claiming that women and men within the Party were resisting social constructions produced and reproduced by capitalist social relations. With women being taught how to handle fire arms, a classic masculine activity and men participating in feeding children, a feminine activity, the social divisions of labor or contradictions among the people were being defused through practice. Cleaver is asserting that women and men within this multitude of struggles can combine, not one gendered body subordinate to another, but rather these bodies come together in struggle and for a mutual goal in creating a new commons where re-gendered bodies and political bodies in general can begin to express their new desires. Cleaver (2001) takes on the gender question as such,

Not many answers to the "gender questions" take into consideration what I've experienced. What I've read or heard as answers generally seem to respond to a particular model of academic inquiry that leaves out what I believe is central: How do you empower an oppressed and impoverished people who are struggling against racism, militarism, terrorism, and sexism too? (p.124).

Again Cleaver, like Mao, accuses liberal perspectives regarding gender analysis of being just as divisive as the social alienation which produces these gendered bodies. Liberal

gendered bodies play out their behaviors and roles towards each other as antagonisms

among political bodies and not merely as maintained tension among people. Gender

inequality as viewed by Cleaver suggests that inequalities within the multitude are

symptomatic to capitalism not innate social relations between gendered bodies.

The Party's conclusion is an obvious one; if everyone struggles together for a

common goal of expression even though those expressions are not identical the struggle

becomes struggles for a multitude of expressions and possibilities. It is precisely this

openness within the Party's ideological make up and practice which makes a new politic

inclusive. Power relationships and social dynamics among members of the Party are

created relationships which have to content with the social dynamics and practical

hierarchies being bio-politically recreated within the Party. Cleaver separates the world

within the Party and the rest of society not in a utopian manner but as a matter of

practicality for women and men in dealing with the dynamics that arise from gendered,

racialized, sexed, and classed bodies.

Cleaver (2001) reflects,

> What is distinctive about gender relations within the Black Panther Party is not
> how those gender relations duplicated what was going on in the world around us.
> In fact, that world was extremely misogynistic and authoritarian. That's part of
> what inspired us to fight against it. When women suffered hostility, abuse,
> neglect, and assault—this was not something arising from the politics of the Black
> Panther Party, something absent from the world—that's what was going on in the
> world. The difference that being in the Black Panther Party made was that it put a
> woman in a position when such treatment occurred to contest it (p.126).

Cleaver is not claiming that the separation between the world inside the BPP and the world outside the BPP was a clear demarcation or that the inside world was rid of sexism and uneven gender dynamics. Rather, Cleaver is suggesting that the Party's ability to recognize that their very own subjects were of the outside world which is rampant with sexism and uneven social dynamics all the while the Party was practically challenging these bio-politically maintained social dynamics. The women and men in the BPP had the ability to more openly challenge the social roles and gender dynamics already in play.

In regards to gender and the construction of gender identity, Butler suggest that within these social creations lays the ground work for resistance and re-gendering of subjects much like Newton's conclusions regarding the revolutionary role of women and men. Butler (1990) states,

> If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity (p.186).

In accordance to Butler's notion of gender performativity, the re-gendering of Black Panther revolutionary subjectivity was able to be creative and not repeat capitalist gender performance. The Party defined womanhood and manhood based on women and men's abilities to conduct Party work and organizing which was not rigidly split along gender lines. Women and men were able to reconstruct gender roles and dynamics based on the political needs of the Party and the Party "instituted and inscribed" new gender forms. For practical reasons Butler will be quoted at length to better facilitate explanations of

terms used to describe the Party's re-gendering process. Butler (1990) on gender

fabrication and the interiority of gender recognizes that,

> The gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart
> from the various acts which constitutes its reality. This also suggests that if that
> reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and
> function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of
> fantasy through the surface of politics of the body, the gender border control that
> differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject. In
> other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusions
> of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for
> the purpose of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of
> reproductive heterosexuality. If the "cause" of desire, gesture, and act can be
> localized within the "self" of the actor, then the political regulations and
> disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are
> effectively displaced from view. The displacement of a political and discursive
> origin of gender identity onto a psychological "core" precludes an analysis of the
> political constitution of the gendered subject and its fabricated notions about the
> ineffable interiority of its sex or of its true identity (p.185-186).

The Party understood performativity then reconnected the "self" with the political

regulations in a manner which challenged, "the disciplinary practices" of gendering. The

political dimensions of gender within the Party became apparent through revolutionary

antagonism which also recognized the socially constructed "interiority" of any gender

subject through "the public regulation of fantasy". As Butler suggests about the act of

drag and in going beyond the simplistic understanding or differentiation between the

"imitation" and the "original" the revolutionary re-gendering of subjects goes beyond the

simple notion of woman and man. Gender was politically described in varying

definitions from both inside and outside the Party and because gender was not innate the

Party felt free to re-gender the Black Panther subject. Butler (1990) clarifies,

But the relation between the "imitation" and the "original" is, I think, more complicated than that critique generally allows. Moreover, it gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between primary identification—that is, the original meaning accorded to gender—and subsequent gender experience might be reframed. The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman" (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary. In place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity (p.187-188).

It is precisely this fabricated unity between the binary which are supposedly opposite that the re-gendering Black Panther subject establishes itself upon; the revolutionary re-gendered subject breaks from the fabrication and the performativity of capitalist gender categories in favor of a new gendered subjectivity. The re-gendering of the BPP collective began canceling out the imitative capitalist structures surrounding gender. Based on a practice of an antagonist force against a gendering constructed to obstruct social and economic equality among genders, the Party exposed bio-political perpetuation of economic exploitation through identity. Re-gendering through practice created new forms of womanhood and manhood which were reframed in regards to desire of the BPP collective. An antagonistic environment which refused the economic and social

categories within capitalist social forms allowed for re-gendered identities to emerge within the collective. This open space was based on the activities of the Party and articulated through the Party theory.

These new roles and new measurements of a proper womanhood or manhood were able to begin to form because the social environment around individuals was transforming, and within the collective new social roles and social desires were being created for themselves. Even though these new social roles were performative to the new gender roles being created by the social environment within the Party, the revolutionary subjects were still antagonistic to capitalist gender roles. The limits that rested upon these new gendered bodies were in relation to the different reactions to multiple social environments swirling around each re-gendered Panther body. These interactions and mixtures of social environments made the various gendered and re-gendered bodies contentious, fluid, and flexible between the different social environments. The reproduction of social bodies and the collective bodies within the BPP became two opposing forces. The distinction between the two various forms of being were not clear cut nor were they two different political bodies which individuals would chose to imitate. Rather, both forms of gendering the body cohabitated the bodies of Black Panthers as the Party sought to alleviate contradictions between a multitude of people and challenge contradictions between classes.

CHAPTER VII

PARTY LEADERSHIP, THEORY, AND PRACTICE

For the Black Panther Party revolution became something more than an idea of a change of hands on the political spectrum. Revolution became an all encompassing socio-political and economic transformation were issues of gender, sexuality, work, race, and social existence were part of the totality. Revolution was not a political experiment but a social force or a social current moving through urban landscapes and social spaces in an attempt to politicize and antagonize everyday life. Though it would be easy to politically criticize the BPP for their revolutionary romanticism and fascination with revolutionary martyrdom, the Party's behavior and revolutionary practice complicates this critique or view regarding the Party. To criticize a collective political body or base an observation on political rhetoric either undermines the practice coupled to the political organizations theory or calls out the lack of political activity. On a political level, the Party's programs served as the material expansion of theory. There are three distinct phases of political expression within the Party's existence and the Party's political development morphed more so than divorced these theoretical phases to produce a practice of theories. In an effort to understand the particularities and complexity of racial economic repression experienced in an urban setting, the BPP combined various theoretical methods of investigation on social formations to conclude that the Party's outlook needed to reflect the conditions experienced in the larger society. Cultural

nationalism, third world revolutionary theory, anti-imperialism, Marxist perspectives, and

Survival Programs being the expression of Black Panther theory constantly shifted with

the urban population's response and needs to the structural effects of economic

reorganization. Black Panther theory and programs were not organized on charitable

grounds. Rather, the Party sought to create moments of resistance and nurture the bodies

which produced these conditions of resistance.

The BPP in its earlier stages remained a Revolutionary Nationalist or Black

Power organization, quickly shifted to an Internationalist political current, and finally

developed what Newton coined Revolutionary Intercommunalism. Revolutionary

Intercommunalism brought together the political implications and critique of liberal

capitalist marginalization of minorities to explain the Intercommunal subject. Newton

(2002) recalls,

> When we started in October 1966, we were what one would call black nationalist,
> and the BPP then argued for nationhood as an answer to the racial conflict within
> America. Later the BPP realized, "if we look around now…we see that the world
> the landscape, the livable parts as we know them—is pretty well settled. So we
> realized that to create a new nation we would have to become a dominate faction
> in this one, and yet the fact that we did not have power was the contradiction that
> drove us to seek nationhood in the first place. It is an endless circle, you see: to
> achieve nationhood, we needed to become a dominate force; but to become a
> dominate force, we needed to be a nation (p.184-185).

With further analysis the BPP moved from a Black Nationalist organization to a

Revolutionary Nationalist perspective viewing Africans around the world as a Diaspora.

As Fanon argued, after decolonization there was no ability to return to the social and

economic conditions which predated colonialism, new forms or social organization

would need to be constructed. The decolonization process theoretically and ideologically

motivated Newton to take the Marxist dialectic beyond Lenin's (2008) conclusions in,

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (p.123-128). Revolutionary

Intercommunalism concluded that the informal vanguard were marginalized communities

interconnected in a global economic formation that had transcended imperialism and the

rigid formal Leninist vanguard model. In yet another lengthy quote, Newton explains the

material conditions which produced the ability for the Party to move past dogmatic

Leninist analysis. Newton (2002) asserts,

> If colonies cannot "decolonize" and return to their original existence as nations, then nations no longer exist. Nor, we believe, will they ever exist again. And since there must be nations for revolutionary nationalism or internationalism to make sense, we decided that we would have to call ourselves something new. We say that the world today is a dispersed collection of communities. A community is different from a nation. A community is a small unit with a comprehensive collection of institutions that exist to serve a small group of people. And we say further that the struggle in the world today is between small circle that administers and profits for the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destines. We call this situation intercommunalism. We are now in the age of reactionary Intercommunalism, in which a ruling circle, a small group of people, control all other people by using their technology. At the same time, we say that this technology can solve most of the material contradictions people face, that the material conditions exist that would allow the people of the world to develop a culture that is essentially human and would nurture those things that would allow the people to resolve contradictions in a way that would not cause the mutual slaughter of all of us. The development of such a culture would be revolutionary Intercommunalism…Imperialism has laid the foundation for world communism, and imperialism itself has grown to the point of reactionary Intercommunalism because the world is now integrated into one community. The communications revolution, combined with the expansive domination of the American empire, has created the "global village." The peoples of all cultures are under siege by the same forces and they all have access to the same technologies (p.187-188).

Class conflict, within communities, is the main contradiction which motives or alleviates other social tensions within communities. Newton saw intercommunalism as a duality, a class conflict elevated to another level brought on by the ending of imperialism through anti-colonial struggles at the century's end. Newton (2002) understood these new social and economic relationships as a possibility for communities in their multiplicity to produce a qualitative leap forward to "resolve contradictions of racism and all kinds of chauvinism" (p.187-188). It was these material conditions which the Party experienced and the possibilities, within dispersed communities, that motivated the Party's activities and theoretical development. This communizing approach in coupling communities beyond national boundaries does not cancel out difference by forming a platform, but reversely produces political relationships within communities. Communities embody politics and generate politics through bio-political reproduction. The relevance of the BPP is that their political practice and theory openly challenged these historical formations of the body, the institutions that benefited from such social constructs, and ideologies which maintained the illusion of natural gendered bodies and class.

Newton's Revolutionary Intercommunalist theory concludes that the Lumpenproletariat will expand as a class base due to emerging hyper-technocratic form of production forcing working-class people out of jobs and into more precarious methods of employment. It is this process of unstable employment which localized the maintenance of capitalist social relations outside the material production process which in turn allowed intercommunal theory to become articulated and understood on these material conditions. To discuss the need for integration or inclusion of African American

women or men into any struggle is faulty. Selma James (1975), West Indian feminist

describes this process,

> The Black working class was able through this nationalism to *redefine class:*
> overwhelmingly Black and Labor were synonymous (with no other group was
> Labor as synonymous—except perhaps with women), the demands of Blacks and
> the forms of struggle created by Blacks were the most comprehensive *working
> clas*s demands and the most advanced *working class* struggle…This struggle was
> able to attract to itself the best elements among the intellectuals who saw their
> own persecution as Blacks-as a caste-grounded in the exploitation of Black
> workers…In the same way women for whom the caste is the fundamental issue
> will make the transition to revolutionary feminism based on a redefinition of class
> or invite integration into the white male power structure (p.8).

The African American body had been historically constructed, since slavery, as an

economically productive body. This materialist history and tumultuous existence of the

body created the re-gendered intercommunal relationships based on historical laboring

bodies of equality among women and men. Angela Davis (1983) states,

> Black women [have] always worked outside their homes…The slave system
> defined Black people as chattel. Since women no less than men, were viewed as
> profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the
> slaveholders were concerned (p.5).

Black Panther communities became the refusal of a historical identity based on the

genderless history of the laboring African American body, an economically constructed

identity based on production. The African American as a caste based on the historical

genderless embodiment of labor power was recognized by the Party and thus organized in

such a manner to negate this notion. The Lumpenproletariat served as a reserve for

militant action to defend this negation. Whether intercommunal theory relied too heavily

on the Lumpen as defenders of restructuring community relationships could indeed have

been a structural weakness or is just another historical narrative surrounding the Party

which is fixated on singular aspects. Newton's (2002) hopes were that,

> The [working-class] will join forces with those people who are already
> unemployable, but whether he does or not, his material existence will have
> changed. The proletariat will become the lumpen proletariat. It is this future
> change—the increase of the lumpen proletariat and the decrease of the
> proletariat—which makes us say that they lumpen proletariat is the majority and
> carries the revolutionary banner (p.193).

The critique against the Party, by Chris Booker (1995), elevating the Lumpenproletariat

to the level of vanguard is that this "unemployable" subclass is unreliable and

opportunistic due to its criminal elements which seek to exploit its own class for personal

gain (p.346). In regards to the Lumpenproletariat, Booker (1995) explains, the Party saw

this subclass as potentially the most militant element within the working-class which was

precarious and had, "irregular and usually lowly paid—with the exception of criminal

activities" allowing the Lumpen to not have any real material attachment to production.

Booker (1995) continues,

> Contrary to much of orthodox Marxist theory, the Black Panther Party
> theoreticians viewed the line separating the Black proletariat from the subclass of
> the Black lumpen proletariat as a tenuous and fragile one that often resulted in a
> blending of the two classes (p.345).

The BPP saw potential in allying the Lumpenproletariat, the proletariat, and other

marginalized communities in an intercommunal class struggle that used the strengths of

each subclass to service each other. In a network of power relations which marginalized

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minorities to the point that the margins can potentially become a revolutionary intercommunal majority was the desire of the BPP. This outlook and theoretical conclusion was based on the Party's dialectical view on the relationship between African American labor and capital.

The BPP played an instrumental part in the development of post-nationalist and post-nation-state transnational global networking of social recreation and resistance to capitalist alienation. It is within intercommunalism where social networks and political structures began to demystify capitalist social relations based on race, class, gender, and national identity. No matter what social category any African American had bio-politically reproduced as themselves, the BPP had exposed economic components tying these categories together, and had positioned African Americans bodies in total resistance to capitalist social formation. The BPP sought to express its political desires in and around multiple social categories to better express the need for revolutionary intercommunalism to stand against economic and social exploitation. Whether through: gender recreation, class struggle, antiracism, Survival Programs, or reshaping the globe's political understanding of political power and how power is reorganized through different social mediums, the Party understood and appreciated various forms of subjectivity and validated different forms of political struggle.

The performative social bodies reproduce, reaffirm, and valorize a produced experience. Exploitative performativity is bodied images which relate to each other through performance and reaffirm the bio-political condition which further alienates either women from men or black from white. Everyday life then becomes a series of

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spectacles, as termed by Guy Debord (1995) and coupled with Butler's performativity, social existence becomes more precisely, "not a collection of images [but] a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (p.12). Revolutionary Intercommunalism was the Party's attempt at dialectically understanding the social conditions being reproduced in America's de-industrializing urban landscapes. The BPP attempted to create new forms of existence which challenged capitalistic performative social interaction.

Revolutionary Intercommunalism then became an all encompassing understanding of the multiplicity of desires for social and political change for the BPP, similarly to Negri's *Multitude* which will further be explained by comparing, at length, Newton and Negri's own formulations of revolutionary subjectivity. Negri's similar Marxist conclusion on current revolutionary subjectivity has expanded what Newton's Intercommunalism expressed and brings forth the Party's intellect and corrects negative political assumptions placed on the BPP. Intercommunalism breaks with national identity and understands the world through anti-capitalist struggles, the resistance to movements of global capital, and the global reproduction of social categories. Revolutionary Intercommunalism and Reactionary Intercommunalism are in conflict over social production. Negri has termed these two opposing forces as Empire and the Multitude. This dialectical process or struggle between the colonized and the imperialist has produced a multitude of alienated social bodies which form intercommunal subjects. Newton viewed the successes of anti-colonial struggles as the destruction of imperialism. Regrettably, the anti-colonial movements had only quantitatively changed the post-

colonial subject's relationship to global capitalism and no fundamental transformation

had occurred. Therefore capitalism had morphed and subsumed the relationship between

post-colonial and post-imperialist into a global system of exploitation where national

boundaries became diffused and communities could no longer depend on national

sovereignty. Newton (1999) explains,

> These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves
> intercommunalist because nations have been transformed into communities of the
> world…The ruling reactionary circle, through the consequences of being
> imperialists, transformed the world into what we call Reactionary
> Intercommunalism…They laid siege upon all the communities of the world,
> dominating the institutions to such an extent that the people were not served by
> the institutions in their own land…We see very little difference in what happens
> to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in
> Vietnam…We see very little difference in what happens to a Black community in
> Harlem and a Black community in South Africa, a Black community in Angola
> and one in Mozambique. We see very little difference (p.32-33).

Intercommunalism arose out of the conditions brought on by the revolutionary nationalist

struggles throughout the Third World and the process of decolonization. Decolonization

opened up the possibility of new social expressions and political subjects which could

openly challenge old forms of colonial performativity. Regarding decolonization Frantz

Fanon (2004) states,

> Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters
> being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a
> privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of
> History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men [and
> women], with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the
> creation of new men [and women]. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a
> supernatural power. The "thing" colonized becomes a man though the very
> process of liberation (p.2).

Through decolonization new opportunities for political action begin to emerge and make

it possible to challenge the alienation and marginalization of old subjective forms and

political bodies. Intercommunalism is not decolonization but becomes a possibility after

decolonization and national liberation struggles created that political space.

Intercommunalists become new subjects which struggle against old forms of subjectivity

and new social reproduction being reintegrated into the post-national capitalist matrix.

The BPP sought to restructure socially marginalized communities and their relationship

to production through the communization of everyday life. Newton (2002) redefined

communism as,

> When the people seize the means of production, when they seize the mass media too and so forth, you will still have racism, you will still have ethnocentrism, you will still have contradictions. But the fact that the people will be in control of all the productive and institutional units of society—not only factories, but the media too—will enable them to start solving these contradictions. It will produce new values, new identities; it will mold a new and essentially human culture as the people resolve old conflicts based on cultural and economic conditions. And at some point, there will be a qualitative change and the people will have transformed revolutionary Intercommunalism into communism. We call it "communism" because at that point in history people will not only control the productive and institutional units of society, but they will also have seized possession of their own subconscious attitudes towards these things…They will have power, that is, they will control the phenomena around them and make it act in some desired manner, and they will know their own real desires. The first step in this process is the seizure by the people of their own communities… I would like to see the kind of communism I just described come into being, and I think it will come into being (p.197).

Communism seizes to be a political program that needs to be mechanically placed onto

communities of resistance or political parties which seek to represent citizens. Newton's

communization of communities happens when such formations of resistance begin to

express themselves politically. There is an organic or material process that defines

communism and not the reverse where organizations mechanically apply directives onto

communities. The communization of communities is expressed through political struggle

and organizing efforts which transforms the subject's perception and relationship to an

economic system which exploits communities through social relations.

In, *Empire* Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt build on Fanon's idea of free

political space being created after decolonization and national liberation struggles. Negri

and Hardt (2000) state,

> Even if the blackness of the colonized is recognized as a production and a
> mystification constructed in the colonial imaginary, it is not denied or dispelled
> on account of that, but rather affirmed—as essence! According to Sartre, the
> revolutionary poets of negritude…adopt the negative pole that they have inherited
> from the European dialectic and transform it into something positive, intensifying
> it, claiming it as a moment of self-consciousness. No longer a force of
> stabilization and equilibrium, the domesticated Other has become savage, truly
> Other—that is, capable of reciprocity and autonomous initiative. This, as Sartre
> announces so beautifully and ominously, is "the moment of the boomerang." The
> negative moment is able to operate a reciprocal destruction of the European
> Self—precisely because European society and its values are founded on the
> domestication and negative subsumption of the colonized.

Negri and Hardt (2000) continue,

> The power of the dialectic, which in the hands of colonial power mystified the
> reality of the colonial world, is adopted again as part of an anticolonial project as
> if the dialectic were itself the real form of the movement of history. Reality and
> history, however, are not dialectical, and no idealist rhetorical gymnastics can
> make them conform to the dialect…Fanon, for example, refuses the cultural
> politics of negritude with its consciousness of black identity and poses the
> revolutionary antithesis instead in terms of physical violence. The original
> moment of violence is that of colonialism: the domination and exploitation of the
> colonized by the colonizer. The second moment…The only path to health that

Doctor Fanon can recommend is a reciprocal counterviolence. Moreover, this is the only path to liberation. The slave who never struggles for freedom, who is simply granted permission of the master, will forever remain a slave. This is precisely the "reciprocity" that Malcolm X proposed as a strategy to address the violence of white supremacy in the United States. For both Fanon and Malcolm X, however, this negative moment, this violent reciprocity, does not lead to any dialectical synthesis; it is not the upbeat that will be resolved in a future harmony. This open negativity is merely the healthy expression of a real antagonism, a direct relation of force. Because it is not the means to a final synthesis, this negativity is not a politics in itself; rather, it merely poses a separation from colonialist domination and opens the field for politics (p.131-132).

It is on this open political landscape in a post-colonial world of intercommunal communities that the BPP wished to begin to construct a network of communities with a chance for: creative meaningful labor, the social deconstruction of gendered bodies, moving beyond racialized categories of people, and participate in the negation of capitalism. Beyond the act of violence, Newton takes the party into new forms of political expression. Newton (2004) states,

So we believe that people have to defend themselves: that is why we armed ourselves openly when we started the Party. We took the risk because we felt that the people had to be educated about the potential power of the armed black community; and now that the example has been made, we are concentrating on helping the people develop things they will want to protect—the survival programs (p.52).

Violence, a social interaction between two political groups now becomes devoid of its moral wrappings and becomes just another form of political expression. The confrontations between police agencies and the BPP, in earlier chapters, is an expression of two different class interests in competition over what variation of African American identity will be reproduced. And in practice the BPP started "patrolling" the Oakland

police during their routine incursions into the African American community of Oakland to challenge the maintenance of bio-political construction of the African American caste. Newton (2009) states,

> The police have never been our protectors. Instead, they act as the military arm of our oppressors and continually brutalize us. Many communities have tried and failed to get civilian review boards to supervise the behavior of the police. In some places, organized citizen patrols have followed the police and observed them in their community dealings. They take pictures and make tape recordings of the encounters and report misbehavior to the authorities. However, the authorities responsible for overseeing the police are policemen themselves and usually side against the citizens. We recognize that it was ridiculous to report the police to the police, but we hoped that by raising encounters to a higher level, by patrolling the police with arms, we would see a change in their behavior. Further, the community would notice this and become interested in the Party. Thus our armed patrols were also a means of recruiting (p.125-127).

This is precisely where the Black Panther "moment of boomerang" occurred which shattered old forms of identity. Political violence allowed for the formation of new re-gendered identities and reorganized the social and political relationship between the African American community and capitalism. As new forms of political struggles began to emerge, new identities free from the old form of "Otherness" were not concretely established but exploded with possibilities backed by a political and antagonistic social force. The BPP furthered this "moment of boomerang" by going beyond violence, since violence being only an initial negativity which opens up new possibilities for politics, with the institution of their various Survival Programs Pending Revolution. The BPP were able to create in the Fanonian sense, new women and men. Though violence had an integral part in bringing about the Black Panther Party and the re-gendering of Black

Panther women and men, what began to politically happen within the BPP collective was much more important. A decolonized opening up of new political bodies rose out of political violence. Revolutionary intercommunal bodies were now contenting with capitalist influence within communities of resistance.

CHAPTER VIII

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

There is a clear difference between an individual and the collective body of any political group but to what extent? Even though the individual is included in the collective body the individual still has a dual identity, one being the self and the other a representation of the collective. Though the individual may not live up to the expectations of the collective ideals or at times clearly break from the ideals and expectations of the collective is the individual or the collective responsible for any transgression? Concerning the BPP the issues of sexism, violence, domineering sexuality, and sexual abuse have often been brought to light in a political manner to condemn the entire Party. The actions of individuals in this case have become a reflection of the entire Party, no matter how specific and subjective these instances of sexual abuse and sexism these violations did occur. Sexism and sexual violence discussed in context to Party members and the Party has become a blanket argument in claiming that the Party was a bastion of sexism and male domination. What is interesting here is that sexual violence has become a type of original sin that Black Panther men conjure up, reaffirm, and exude more so than a social relationship and social dynamic already in play with or without the existence of the Black Panther Party. Due to the generally accepted notion that sexual

violence permeates social and political relationships both historically and contemporarily it is obvious that sexism and chauvinistic violence did not originate from with the Party.

Sexual violence and sexist masculinity within and the Party needs to be discussed but in a manner that clarifies and differentiates between individual acts and the acts of the Party. The motivations of individuals and the Party need to also be included in such a discussion to distinguish between personal and political ambitions. The idea that revolutionaries in the past either need to be sanctified or damned is a rather simple view of both history and the practice of revolutionary theory. Sexual experiences and sexual assaults are subjective yet these actions and behaviors reflect a wider social dynamic not a social dynamic created by the Party. So far the only clear conclusion that can be drawn from the Party's history is that Black Panther women and men enacted social relations that maintained sexist social relations and these social relations fit into the historical context of the late twentieth century in general. For every account of sexual abuse, domineering masculinity, or the behaviors and statements of Huey P. Newton and Eldridge Cleaver, there was Masai Hewitt and John Huggins; For every account of sexual abuse and the mistreatment of women or the experiences of Elaine Brown there was Afeni Shakur and countless other women who's experiences differ from the often referenced and iconic members of the BPP. Not discounting the accounts of sexual violence and domineering relationships within the Party but rather putting these accounts in context and discussing the political ramifications concluded from these generalizations. There is a clear distinction between individual experiences and the Party yet the two intersect. Beyond the moralist trappings of liberalism's contempt for violence

the violent events within the Party these acts need to be contextualized and violence be

recognized as an aspect of everyday life and politics in general. Rather than being

stunted and victimized within these violent altercations the individual and the Party's

response and ability to respond is of more importance.

Before Elaine Brown was made chairman of the Party she had been politically

active in Los Angeles and Oakland and had acted as a go between for both Party

branches. In her biography she recalls being violently beaten and assaulted by a man win

the Party who she referrers to as Steve. The violence detailed in Brown autobiography, *A

Taste of Power* is shocking. When Brown became chairman she attempted to restructure

the Party and bring the internal violent elements more inline with the Party organizing. A

violent event transpired in her attempts to create this new form of leadership over the

various levels within the Party structure. Brown (1994) recalls,

> I had not intended committing an act of vengeance. Despite my memory of the
> fists that had brutalized my body a few years before, there were larger issues
> involved when I ordered Steve to Oakland. I called him from his Los Angeles
> underground because he had become a blatant transgressor of party rules… Four
> men were upon him now, Larry [Brown's enforcer] stood icily by, supervising
> every blow. Steve struggled for survival under the many feet stomping him.
> Drawing out his hunting knife…only encouraged the disciplinarians. Their
> punishment became unmerciful. When he tried to protect his body by taking the
> fetal position, his head became the object of their feet... Blood was everywhere.
> Steve's face disappeared (p.368-371).

Before the disciplinary beating, Brown (1994) recalls, Steve stating, "the only reason

you're doing this is because I kicked your ass…Man, this is some personal

bullshit"(p.367). Though not much is known about or recorded of the Black Panther

underground, through various memoirs, it is clear that this section of the Party dealt with the unofficial activities that where at times violent and controversial. The violence which Brown underwent while in Los Angeles was motivated by sexism, chauvinism, and a general disregard for a woman's body and position within the Party as a member. Though Brown underwent and survived violence done to her, it is not the violence itself that is deplorable. Rather, the violence done to Brown was enacted due to Steve's own negative violent masculinity and chauvinism. Politically this violent act is a physical reminder and consequence of the Party's own lack of structural integrity. The weak protocol in dealing with socio-political convergence between personal and political life was a structural flaw within Party organizing. The underground seemed to function as a semi-independent organ of the larger Party, and there was no clear accountability regarding the actions and behaviors of the Black Panther underground. Unchecked violence contained domineering masculine characteristics precisely because the behavior was free of critical inquiry. Criticizing violence is not automatically an affirmation for nonviolence. Rather the opposite, though the Party would have been unable to idealistically and mechanically impose nonviolence on its membership, the Party did have the ability to respond and the responsibility to respond to negative violence.

Another interesting perspective regarding sexuality and gender dynamics was the idea of "pussy power" in the Party's early existence, around 1968. As described by Brown (1994), in conversation, Sister Marsha shouted, "Can't no motherfucker get no pussy from me unless he can get down with the party… A sister has to give up the pussy when the Brother is on his job and hold it back when he's not" (p.189). In Sister Marsha

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and Bobby Seale's public conversation Seale added, "A Sister has to learn to shoot as well as to cook, and be ready to back up the Brothers. A Sister's got to know the ten-point platform and program by heart" (p.189). Here sexuality and the early attempts at transforming gender dynamics and gendered behavior are both contradictory and converging to create new social possibilities for social roles of women and men within the Party. Though women were still sexualized and viewed as the giver of sexual reward when and if men conducted themselves accordingly to Party rules and programs. Sexual expectations had created new sexual dynamics within the Party that where both personal and politically contradictory and empowering. More importantly, new sexual dynamics and expectations had challenged old mediated forms and views on proper behavior for women and men.

In regard to female and male interaction as political categories, Angela Davis describes these interactions as mediated through cultural assumptions on what is natural. This idea of something being natural, as argued by Davis, has also been redefined to benefit capital. Davis (1998) states,

> When "nature" is superseded by the commodity form, and human beings relate to their environment and to one another through the nexus of exchange, the family initially forges a pre-established harmony between the individual and capitalist society (p.181).

And Davis continues,

> So the "female principle" is presumptuously (although sometimes in a utopian vein) counterposed to the "male principle." In the epoch of bourgeois rule, a recurring ideological motif proclaims women to be firmly anchored in nature's

domain…Nature is posited as hostility, mysterious, inexorability, a resistance to be broken…The ideology of femininity is likewise fraught with contradictions. It is an indictment of the capitalist performance principle[4] and simultaneously one of its targets. As nature, women must be at once dominated and exalted…The definition of women as nature is ideology; it was engendering by and is a response to real conditions of oppression. As illusory consciousness, it is a distorted and obscuring representation of reality. It distorts the oppression of women by making it appear innocuous (p.163-164).

In regards to violence between women and men within the Party, these interactions intersect and contradict the Party's larger anti-capitalist analysis because, "the real oppression of women today is inextricably bound up with the capitalist mode of appropriating and mastering of nature" yet, "human beings [can] create and transform their own human nature"(Davis, 1998, p.164). Davis (1998) points out that these specific personal interactions between Party women and men was brought on by historical developments, "during which domination has been increasingly rationalized" (p.163). The violence perpetrated was a perpetuation of masculine capitalist performativity structured on the historical conditions and rationalized domination masqueraded as natural behavior. In the end, these specific instances of violent interactions and sexual domineering behavior were failures in bridging the gap between the realms of personal and the social. In an era of struggles that had brought about new forms of antagonisms and challenged the capitalist performance principles, the Party's individuals were still bound by their temporality and contemporary "human nature". More importantly, the

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[4] Marcuse says in *Eros and Civilization,* "We designate [the specific reality principle that has governed the origins and the growth of this civilization] as *performance principle* in order to emphasize that under its rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performance of its members. …The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized."(Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* [London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1969], 50.)

Party had concluded that collectively there exists the potential to modify and transform

their social relationships and in so doing modify what is regarded as human nature.

Violence against women motivated by chauvinism did not only happen during the

early years of the Party. In the latter years of the Party, Regina Davis, Ericka Huggin's

assistant at Oakland's Intercommunal school was beaten by Party disciplinarians for no

other reason than on orders from a paranoid and delusional Huey P. Newton. Brown

(1994) recalls,

> Ericka called me…her assistant, had been hospitalized as the result of a severe beating, her jaw broken. The Brothers [either Newton's own squad or the underground] had done it…I [Brown] called Huey. His response was not that of my lover or leader. It was a bland acknowledgement that he had indeed given his authorization for Regina's discipline... I emphasized that Regina managed the teachers, cooks, maintenance people, and other personal at the school. Regina planned the children's daily activities, weekly field trips, health checkups. Regina oversaw menus, and food and materials purchase. Regina communicated with parents and other schools as to the status of current students, former students, and prospective students... On the one hand, Bob, who had violated nearly every party disciplinary rule, had been virtually lauded for his behavior. On the other, a stalwart like Regina had been actually hospitalized on account of a verbal indiscretion. The women were feeling the change, I noted. The beating of Regina would be taken as a clear signal that the words "Panther" and "comrade" had taken on gender connotations, denoting an inferiority in the female half of us (p.444-445).

In response Newton said, "I know all that…The Brothers came to me. I had to give them

something"(p.445). At the end of Brown's autobiography she attempts to express her

shame and need in leaving Oakland and the Party. Brown had recognized that the Party

no longer functioned as a radicalizing force and had rapidly morphed into some estranged

organization during the Party's latter years. Brown (1994) remembers,

> Now I was flying away, abandoning what I had sworn to die for, leaving comrades and friends, and so much work undone. Yet I could not be so arrogant as to imagine I was indispensable. I could not be so mad as to sacrifice my life to a dream that was dying. The pain was entwined in the complexity, for I loved the Black Panther Party (p.445).

Violence that had lingered since the Party's formation had not been critically analyzed since this unchecked violence had not been part of the official organs of the BPP. Therefore, masculine and dominating violence in the end was able to undermine but not negate all the achievements by the Party. Violence itself is just another interaction between bodies and political organizations. The difference between the violence perpetrated by police agencies and the violence enacted by the BPP is the precise reasons that cause that violent act. Also, what makes violent encounters between individuals unjust or justifiable? The motivation of any act needs to be assessed and critically examined before constructing a perception on the violent event itself. Dominating masculine and chauvinistic bodies when behaving violently due so because of fear. In fear of losing the ability to dominate, violence is the last result to maintain a notion of superiority. But in such a moment, the violence act itself is recognition that the notion of superiority is false. Militant self defense, a violent act is the final response to oppression and opens up new possibilities. For the Black Panther Party, revolutionary intercommunalism was to become our existence after the violent moment of boomerang by any necessary means.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Individual women and men were both a product of their time and a result of the political conflicts between Intercommunal bodies, communities, and the capitalist social relations which were produced and reproduced. The BPP was interested in challenging capitalist domination by various means and recognized that the economic interests of reactionary intercommunal capitalism was not only maintained through the imposition of work and military superiority but also through the reaffirmation of social subjectivities and social behaviors. The media spectacle affirmed the supposed innate collective behaviors of modern subjects. Also, individuals played an immensely important role as conduits for performative subjectivity acting out and simultaneously reaffirming their social relations mediated through socially recognized imagery, behaviors, and imaginative subjectivity.

As Black Nationalists concentrated on creating an original identity, the BPP deconstructed the gendered, classed, and racial body and re-gendered the revolutionary rank-and-file to service the needs and desires of a revolution not only against power but how power had historically categorized human beings for the needs of a militarized global economic structure. The BPP took their theoretical inquiry beyond understanding the world through a singular lens and recognized that a fluid global economic system utilized all social relations and divisive social dynamics. These power relations did not

take power away from individuals but included heightened divisions among these social categories which had been produced and reproduced by individual bodies as much as capitalist institutions. The BPP experienced and understood their everyday lives but their desire was to change their everyday lives.

Intercommunalism is not the forcing together of socially alienated and marginalized categories and subjectivities. Rather, Intercommunalism recognize that minorities have become the majority and through multiplicity come desires for alternative subjectivity and alternative means of existence, production, and social reproduction. Revolutionary identities and subjectivities are not based on current performativity, performance principles, or bourgeois notions of natural human existence. Revolutionary identities during the years of the Party were constructed upon a dialectical-materialist understanding of race, class, and gender. The gendering of subjects here begin to perform and reflect new affirmed gender roles, forged in Fanonian antagonistic violence, Black Panther women and men defined their social interaction and challenged performative and capitalist subjectivity. Intercommunal women and men define their gendered bodies based on the activities and needs of the Black Panther collective. New images of identity had been socially constructed on new social relations, dialectically negated former social subjectivity, and revolutionaries now mediated their relations through intercommunal imagery, theory, and practice. The Party successfully disempowered the sexist, racist, and classist spectacular imagery by replacing the imagery with performative revolutionary imagery, and the Black Panthers defined their

revolutionary subjectivity on antagonistic activities which transcended capitalist performativity.

Black Panther re-gendering did not force the individual to alter their perception of the self or one's behavior. Rather, members of the Party through their actions constructed new identities based on their own revolutionary subjectivity. Intercommunal women and men are conduits or negotiators of a new revolutionary performativity of genders which had been produced and reproduced within the collective space of the Party. Members re-gendered themselves and the Party's Survival Programs Pending Revolution served as the material conditions to construct these new identities. An opening up for the possibility of new subjectivity was created through social conflict. Gendered behavior is a reflection of social structures and subjects that act out the changing of social environments which produce possibilities of new genders and behavior. The BPP produced a revolutionary environment where former subjects could be deconstruc ted and rearranged for themselves. Old identities and capitalistic performative subjectivity lost its bio-political ability to reaffirm classed relations which allowed women and men to then create new forms of gender.

Beyond imitation and capitalist social performativity, the Black Panther Party in theory and practice began to revolutionize many aspects of social existence whether it was: personal, social, political, economical, collective, or an individual's own consciousness and identity. The Party and its members, as two distinct entities acted in unison to antagonize and reemerge as a revolutionary socially productive force. The historical importance of the Black Panther Party is precisely their success in melding

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their: political aspirations, their theoretical understanding of capitalism as more than an economic system, and the Party's ability to practically draw on those contradictions and combine a multitude of peoples to challenge these social contradictions. The deeply entrenched effects of capitalist production and social reproduction in the everyday lives of citizens in general and African Americans in particular came to a climax with the militant creation of the Black Panther Party.

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