

Black Revolutionary Party served as the umbrella organization for several political entities, and it engaged in international politics and programs before it began to dissolve in the summer of 1972.⁴²

The BRP guided or influenced several organizations and individuals, including local Black Student Unions (BSUs) at colleges in Omaha, Des Moines, and Kansas City; returning black Vietnam veterans; the Vencemos Brigade (an organization dedicated to supporting the Cuban Revolution); Operation Spearhead (a black tutorial program); the Free Angela Davis Committee; and the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) and Rev. Phil Lawson; as well as the Cairo, Illinois, Black United Front, with Rev. Charles Koen.⁴³ The Des Moines Black Revolutionary Party was also very involved in struggles for international justice. For example, it demonstrated international support for other oppressed minorities when the chapter openly supported the independence of the province of French-speaking Quebec in neighboring Canada. Knox explains the Quebec solidarity work:

We traveled to Canada to support the Quebecois in their struggle for self-determination and actually made some contact with people there who were interested in our cause, however, we were not able to pursue any serious commitments because of government repression.

The Des Moines BRP successfully contacted the Chinese and North Korean governments to procure political education materials to help promulgate the Black Revolution. Although heartland chapters were relatively isolated and in minor locations in contrast to international cities like Chicago or New York, the Des Moines BRP successfully engaged in international politics with its limited resources. Knox explained:

We were practical internationalists. We did not believe in this pseudo shadow diplomacy, it was real or nothing. And so the way we dealt with internationalism in carrying out goals. Like, We related to China. For example, I wrote a letter to Chairman Mao. If y'all are serious send us some Red books to Des Moines. Scared Des Moines and the mid-west, scared them to death cause Chairman Mao sent us the books! He sent us thousands of Red books! Before Nixon went to China we were distributing the books. We said we wanted a Red book in every house. If we are serious about this track, let's put one in every house in Des Moines and in Kansas City. So we got the Red books.⁴⁴

Following its success with the importation of Red books from China, the Des Moines chapter of the BRP contacted the North Korean government and procured materials to politically educate the local population in Des Moines. By this time North Korea was considered to be among the international revolutionary vanguard because, although the Chinese leader Mao Tse Tung had established relations with the United States, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung maintained his country's revolutionary stance. However, the Des Moines Black Revolutionary Party also believed in democratically approaching the political education of the local population because community referendums were held to vote on political education materials. Knox recalls the party's reasoning:

We believe in learning from the people. So we took it and we talked about it, that was how our internationalism worked. We wrote to Kim Il Sung, in Korea, and got his books, *all right?* And distributed his books to see exactly whether or not any of this could be applicable to us. Because let me tell you, if it was not applicable we didn't care what it said. We didn't, it had no bearing. It was real for us. Because it had no meaning if we could not use it. You know, there are some things in there that we couldn't use and some things were [becoming] very impractical for us so it didn't make sense for us to use that. So we tried to use what we could in terms of the internationalism and we talked about Canada.⁴⁵

The fragmentation of the BRP began in the fall of 1972 when cadre members attempted to redefine their political direction. The ideological position of the members split into three general directions: Pan Africanism, Maoism, and Marxist Leninism.⁴⁶ Charles Knox was unable to persuade the cadres of the BRP to organize under a single ideology.⁴⁷ The Kansas City faction of the BRP developed the Amilcar Cabral Political Study Group (a Black Anti-imperialist Collective) that supported several causes to include the African Liberation Support Committee, the Chilean Solidarity Committee, the Leavenworth Brothers Defense Committee, the Anti-imperialist Film Group, and the Boycott Gulf Oil Campaign. The Des Moines faction of the BRP was later influential in the development of a black radio station and later founded the Fred Hampton Community Law School in Chicago, Illinois.

In conclusion, the story of the Des Moines Black Panther Party represents the Black Revolution from a distinctly local perspective and conclusively demonstrates that the Black Panther Party was far from one