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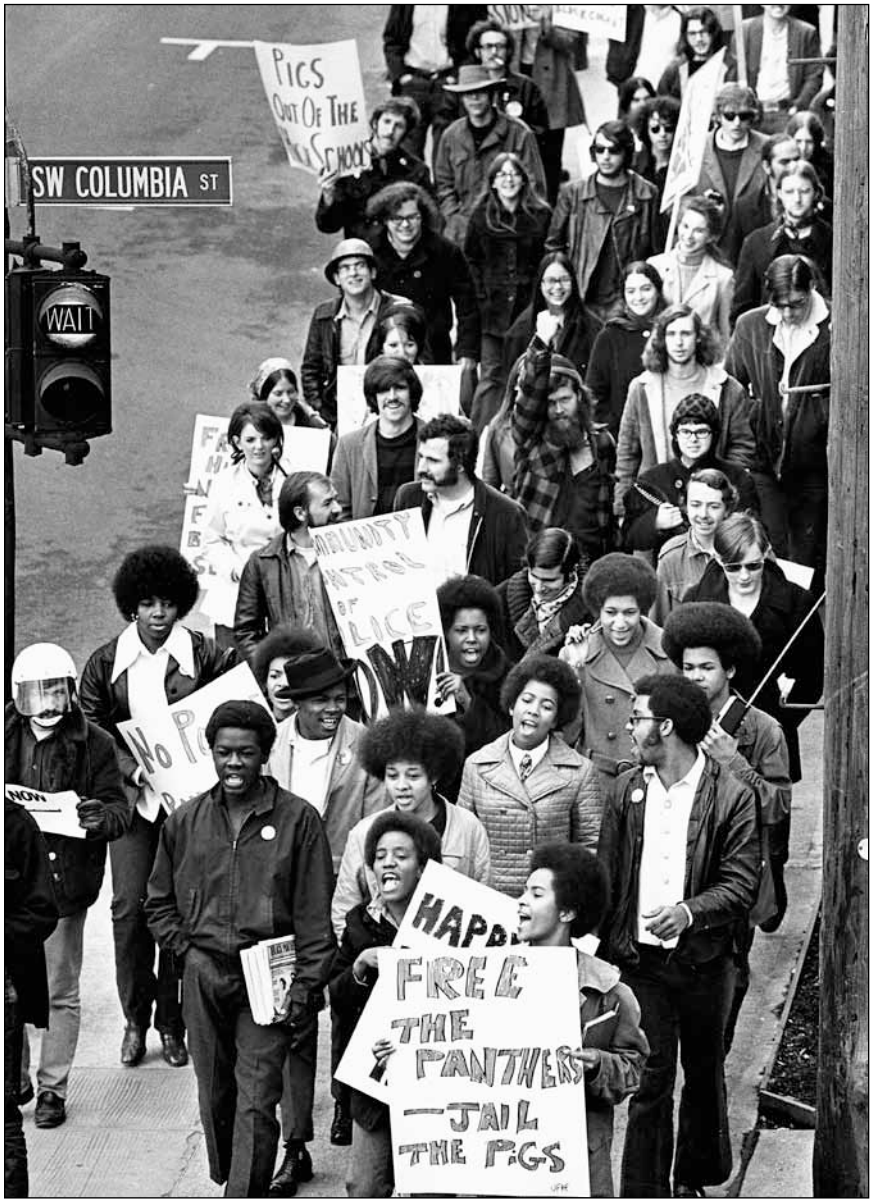
"We're going to defend ourselves"

The Portland Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Local Media Response

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY for Self-Defense, originally founded in Oakland in the fall of 1966, struck a responsive chord in Portland and Eugene, Oregon, as it did in dozens of cities around the nation. A disproportionate number of African-American soldiers, too poor for college deferments, were serving and dying in an unpopular war in Vietnam, and the 1968 murder of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. sent a clear, if unintended, message about the futility of a non-violent approach to social change. The Panther image, militant and disciplined, appealed to many young people who hoped to improve African-American communities and were eager to continue the struggle for civil rights.

We examine here the activism of the Portland chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP) — which was in operation for approximately a decade (1969–1980) — and explore how the city's two major daily newspapers covered the Panthers' programs and activities. Social-movement studies focusing on repression usually consider three repressive agents: the government, private agents, and the media. Numerous scholars have documented state repression designed to thwart the BPP, but analysis of media coverage is scarce.[1]

The mass media are a vital venue where discourse is constructed and reproduced. Media accounts prime the public to think in certain ways, implicitly encouraging us to accept some ideas, opinions, and individuals as legitimate and to reject others as illegitimate. This is largely done through



Better policing practices were, from the beginning, a central concern for the Black Panther Party. On February 15, 1970, about fifty demonstrators, half of them white, marched from Portland State University to the Federal Courthouse in support of community-controlled policing. Demonstrators include: in front, Fern Parker (L, shouting) and Sandra Britt (with sign); second row (L to R), R.V. Poston (carrying newspapers), Charles Moore (in hat), Linda Miller (with afro), Patty Hampton (in quilted coat), Percy Hampton (turned toward his sister); third row, Joyce Radford (carrying "Community Control" sign) and Shelly Battles (buttoned coat).

mass-media framing processes. Media scholar Robert Entman defines framing as having two major components: selection and salience. "To frame," he writes, "is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Media frames help us make sense of the world, imposing structure on the whirl and swirl of on-the-ground politics. The mass media can therefore be a key agent of social change. "As the news media report and comment on the events of the day, they wield enormous *influence* on those events," asserts cultural historian Rodger Streitmatter.[2]

For social movements, positive media coverage is a crucial precondition for collective action.[3] Activists try to frame political discourse to their advantage by expressing their grievances in the most convincing way possible. Thus, social movements also engage in framing, though of a different sort, which sociologists Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer Zald define as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."[4] Their efforts often come into direct conflict — and sometimes even confrontation — with the "shared understandings" of state agents and other pockets of sociopolitical and economic power. The mass media serve as the arbiters of this conflict; through framing, the media tacitly fashion discursive brackets that encapsulate certain ideas as normal and acceptable and others as extremist and unacceptable.

As numerous scholars have demonstrated, the mass media have historically played a constraining role when it comes to portraying dissident citizens and social movements that push for comprehensive sociopolitical change.[5] Media outlets tend to favor activists whose tactics and strategies conform to the rules and laws of the social system and to deprecate dissidents who eschew such rules and laws.[6] This sort of framing, as Entman notes, translates into political power: "the frame in the news text is really the imprint of power — it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text."[7] The frames Oregon newspapers employed in covering the Portland Black Panther Party helped establish "the imprint of power" in the minds of readers.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AT OAKLAND

Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, two African-American students at Merritt College in Oakland, California, founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in October 1966. Together, they drafted the Black Panther Party

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
Ten Point Platform & Program, October 1966
WHAT WE WANT
WHAT WE BELIEVE*

1. WE WANT freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. WE BELIEVE that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
2. WE WANT full employment for our people. WE BELIEVE that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income.
3. WE WANT an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community. WE BELIEVE that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules.
4. WE WANT decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings. WE BELIEVE that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
5. WE WANT education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. WE BELIEVE in an educational system that will give to our people knowledge of self.
6. WE WANT all black men to be exempt from military service. WE BELIEVE that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us.
7. WE WANT an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people. WE BELIEVE we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality.
8. WE WANT freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. WE BELIEVE that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
9. WE WANT all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. WE BELIEVE that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials.
10. WE WANT land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

SOURCE: http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/home/bpp_program_platform.html
*condensed from original

Courtesy of Eve Crane, photographer

In 1968, Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the shooting death of Oakland police officer John Frey. This photograph was taken in jail as Newton prepared to go to court. In August 1970, the California State Court of Appeals overturned the conviction, and on Newton's release, Kent Ford met with him in Oakland to request recognition for the new Portland chapter.

Ten-Point Platform and Program, which demanded decent housing, education, and justice. Point seven reads: "WE WANT an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people. . . . WE BELIEVE we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality."[8] Highly sensitive to police harassment and excessive force, armed Panthers patrolled the streets of Oakland, observing the conduct of law enforcement officials, monitoring arrests, and informing African Americans of their legal rights. In addition to these activities, the BPP provided food, clothing, and medical services to community members by building networks of cooperation and mutual aid.

Though this conduct was legal, many government officials and social commentators found it inflammatory. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and local police focused on Panther programs and actively worked to dismantle them. Writing retrospectively, neoconservatives Peter Collier and David Horowitz captured the right-wing view of the Panthers during the late 1960s, deriding them as "a gang of ghetto thugs" who resembled "some lost Nazi legion whose skin color had changed during their diaspora."[9] The media, with their ingrained penchant for drama and novelty, were attracted to the Panthers' militarized, boots-to-pavement activism, offering lavish coverage to these armed black men in leather jackets, sunglasses, and black berets, while generally ignoring the goals and social welfare programs.

"In actuality," writes African-American Studies scholar Charles E. Jones, "what drove the men and women in the BPP was a profound sense of commitment to improving the lives of Black and other oppressed people."[10] Historian Clayborne Carson adds:

> More than any other group of the 1960s, the Black Panther Party inspired discontented urban African Americans to liberate themselves from oppressive conditions. They provided distinctive guidance for the black struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s, borrowing eclectically from past liberation movements, testing ideas through intense struggle, and sometimes bravely questioning their own approaches and assumptions.[11]

The Oakland model of the Black Panther Party caught on, and local chapters sprang up in cities across the United States; party historian Billy X estimates there were as many as fifty-one.[12] Yet, more often than not, when scholars examine the Black Panther Party, they zero in on the Oakland headquarters at the expense of exploring the rich variation among party chapters. In *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, Judson L. Jeffries has begun to disentangle the relational web of BPP chapters, showing that many of them operated autonomously from Oakland in significant ways. This article builds from that foundation by examining the Portland chapter, which Jeffries does not analyze.[13]

NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The Black Panther Party brandished a no-nonsense style and rhetorical swagger that commanded media attention, and scholars and social commentators have offered wide-ranging assessments of the relationship between the BPP and the media. Panther critic Hugh Pearson asserts the BPP received positive media coverage, with the "left-liberal media" playing "a major role in elevating the rudest, most outlaw element of black America as the true keepers of the flame in all it means to be black." In another assessment, discourse scholar Michael E. Staub observes: "The Panthers were definitively cast in the folk devil role in the mainstream media — portrayed as a motley crew of unstable, paranoid black juvenile delinquents." In *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, Jane Rhodes also finds that racial stereotypes abounded in national-level elite media and Bay Area media coverage of the BPP in Oakland, contending, "press accounts about the Black Panthers relied heavily on certain racially coded frames that communicated deeply held beliefs about black Americans — as a group, prone to violence and criminality, lacking in the ability to behave reasonably and responsibly, and driven by an irrational (and dangerous) hatred of whites." While the press avoided overt racism, "stereotypes about black people were barely hidden, and fear of and disdain for black power were subsumed under

a rhetoric of law and order." In his examination of local media coverage of BPP chapters in Baltimore, Cleveland, and New Orleans between 1968 and 1972, Jeffries finds significant variation in the cities' quantity and quality of journalism. While the media in Cleveland covered the local Party in an evenhanded way, devoting significant column inches to the BPP's programs, the media in Baltimore and New Orleans were biased in an anti-Panther direction, focusing on the BPP's alleged violence, criminality, and negative interaction with police.[14]

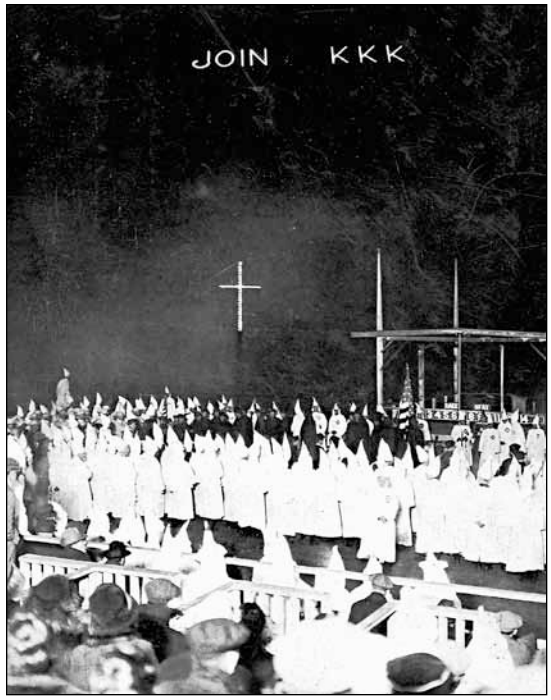
Rhodes argues that when the media covered BPP activity, the Panthers "were fit into narrow, unidimensional frames that told the public little about why the organization existed, its appeal to black youth across the nation, or its relationship to the nation's racial crisis." She continues: "The local press was simultaneously excited and repulsed by these black activists . . . [framing them] as threatening and out of control, while the police were essential for bringing order. . . . The Black Panthers were cast as the villains and the police as the conquerors."[15] Our analysis of local media coverage of the Portland chapter of the Black Panther Party is supplemented by interviews with former Party members Kent Ford and Percy Hampton, who were leaders in the Portland chapter. This work not only illuminates the relationship between Portland Panthers and the local press but also helps spotlight the important differences between the Portland chapter and the national headquarters in Oakland, differences glossed over in historical depictions that portray the BPP monolithically.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, PORTLAND CHAPTER

In 1991, civil rights leader Otto Rutherford recalled "a time when Portland had a reputation as the most openly racist city outside the South." This racism has a long history. Oregon's 1859 constitution prohibited free African Americans and "mulattoes" from migrating to Oregon, voting, and owning property. Historian K. Keith Richard argues the Oregon constitution "was aimed at putting black and mulatto residents in a state of complete subordination and even rightlessness."[16] The discriminatory aspects of the Oregon constitution, which remained in effect until 1926, were preceded by two other exclusion laws, one adopted by the Provisional government in 1844 and another by the Territorial government in 1849.[17]

Despite this steady stream of legal disincentives, African Americans moved to Oregon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many were men who cooked, waited tables, or handled baggage on trains. By 1910, racism and gentrification were combining to push the small black community, always fewer than 2,000 people, to the east side of the Willamette River, and in 1919, the Portland Realty Board adopted a rule making

it "unethical" to sell property to African Americans or Chinese in a white neighborhood.[18] In the public sphere, racism was overtly expressed by the Ku Klux Klan, whose membership dramatically increased in the early 1920s. As communications professor Kimberley Mangun has written, "for African Americans trying to eke out a living in Oregon, the Klan's arrival was terrifying. KKK initiation ceremonies were held on Portland's Mt. Scott, where burning crosses could be seen for miles."[19]



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During the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan's membership spiked in Oregon, and their rallies, such as this one in June 1924 at the Lane County Rodeo Arena, drew large crowds.

World War II brought a shipbuilding boom, and companies vigorously recruited workers of any race. Portland's black population grew to more than ten times its pre-war numbers.[20] Edwin C. "Bill" Berry, founding Director of Portland's Urban League, reported for a special issue of *Educational Sociology* devoted to race relations on the Pacific Coast that "most Negro in-migrants have been able to find housing only in the war-housing communities." Most of these people lived at Vanport, the largest war-housing center in the United States. Urban studies professor Karen Gibson notes that the height of the Portland-area black population was about 25,000 in 1945, but by 1950, this had decreased by more than half. As Berry commented, this was partly due to "postwar employment opportunities," which were "dismal in the Portland area for all workers. Particularly are they dark for the Negro."[21] Many African Americans had no jobs and no means to leave wartime temporary housing, a problem that found its solution in the tragic Vanport flood of Memorial Day 1948, when the Columbia River swept away the homes of the city's remaining 16,931 residents, nearly one-third of them African American.[22] Those who moved into Portland were squeezed into the northeast quadrant called Albina, today roughly that neighborhood known as Eliot, bordered on the north by Fremont Street.

When Kent Ford arrived in Portland in 1961, the southern end of the neighborhood to which African Americans were restricted had been demolished to make way for the Memorial Coliseum, and the western edge for the Minnesota freeway section of Interstate 5. Between the two community "improvements," many businesses were displaced, along with 601 dwellings. The condemnations left hundreds of African-American families stranded or in debt as they sought to re-establish homes and businesses.[23]

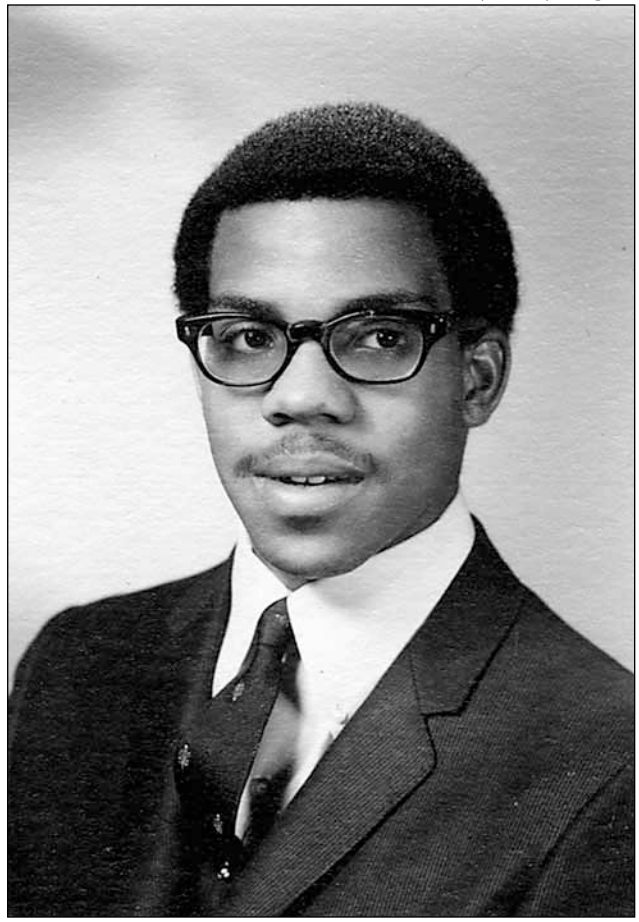
Born in 1943 near Maringouin, Louisiana, and raised after the age of twelve in Richmond, California, Ford moved to Oregon shortly after high school graduation. Though Oregon had finally passed its first public accommodation law in 1953, Ford found the city racist in its job discrimination, housing policies, and tense relations with the police. Making his first friends "in the old days," Ford remembers the bond that formed as acquaintances discussed how much harassment they had experienced from Portland police, asking one another: "How many times have you ever been arrested? How many times have you had your door kicked in? How many times have you been stopped on the street when you were planning to go to the movies and taken downtown instead?"[24] Ford founded the BPP chapter in Portland and oversaw Party programs throughout the 1970s.

Percy Hampton is today a member of Laborers Local 296, an 1,100-member union, of which he has twice served as president. Born in 1950, Hampton is the child of parents who migrated to Portland from Minnesota during World War II to work in the shipyards. He attended eight years of Catholic school and graduated from Jefferson High School in 1968. That summer, he joined the newly formed political discussion groups that would grow into the Party the following year, and in the fall, he also began studying at Portland State College (now University).

"If they keep coming in with these fascist tactics, we're going to defend ourselves." With these words, Ford launched the BPP in Portland. It was June of 1969, and he was standing on the steps of the old city police station at SW Third and Oak, having just been released from jail, where he had spent two weeks charged with riot. His $80,000 bail had been raised by leftists and anti–Vietnam War activists.[25]

Mounting frustration had paved a path to this political moment. The 1965 assassination of Malcolm X grieved and angered the black community. Over the next three years, as the lives of many black soldiers were lost in Vietnam, television viewers at home watched civil rights demonstrators attacked by water hoses, cattle prods, police batons, and dogs. Then, in 1968, the thirty-nine-year-old preacher, pacifist, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis, Tennessee. According

Courtesy of Percy Hampton



Percy Hampton graduated from Jefferson High School in 1968 and began political education classes with other African Americans that summer.

to Ford, "after King got assassinated, we knew that those [nonviolent] days was pretty much over. The people that was always on the left, that wanted radical change, it was their turn now."[26]

It was in the wake of King's murder that Ford and a handful of colleagues from Northeast Portland began holding weekly political education classes that Percy Hampton attended. "The very first one was at Tommy Mills' apartment," Ford recalled.

> It was me and Tommy's collective idea. We invited Oscar [Johnson], we invited Tom Venters. Joyce Radford was there. We had a lot of internal stuff to discuss, like if a person was arrested: What are you supposed to say, who do you call? . . . We read Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*, we read the *Axioms* of Kwame Nkrumah. We had Huey Newton's first published pamphlet, "Executive Mandate Number One" and we would go over the ten-point platform and program. By that time they had one or two issues of the Panther paper out.[27]

The Sunday night meetings went on for fourteen months in private. "Everybody knew we needed to keep the lid on things," notes Ford.[28] In January 1969, at a meeting on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus, two members of a rival group — the Black nationalist cultural US Organization — shot and killed Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins, leaders in the BPP's Los Angeles chapter. Years later, an internal

FBI memorandum revealed what Party members had long suspected: the Bureau's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) played a role in this killing. Through COINTELPRO, the FBI had been deliberately fomenting bad blood between the groups.[29] The double murder affected the way African Americans chose to organize in Portland. "We didn't want to be too visible, to be picked off easily," Ford says, "not after they had already killed Bunchy and John Huggins down at UCLA." Also, with Huey Newton in jail, there was no official contact with Oakland.

When the Party finally declared itself on the police station steps in June 1969, it took Portland by surprise. "And we intended it to be that way," Ford notes. Hampton recalls: "We called it the Black Panther Party but its official name was the National Committee to Combat Fascism. . . . And it took awhile even to get a NCCF [designation] because there were so many people trying to get Black Panther Party chapters." Ford adds: "We were actually setting up the nucleus of the Party, and after we got that set up, we were going to go out and start recruiting people. But most of the time there was just half a dozen people, people we saw every day and who we could count on."[30]

By the fall of 1969, they had a free children's breakfast program up and running. Every school day for five years, the Panthers provided breakfast for up to 125 children in the dining room of Highland United Church of Christ, at 4635 NE Ninth Avenue, near Highland School (today King School). To this day in Portland, it is not unusual for one of the former Panthers, now in their fifties and sixties, to have people in their forties come up to them and say: "Do you remember me? You used to give me pancakes in the morning before I went to school."[31]

In January 1970, the Party opened a free health clinic at 109 N. Russell Street. "First, we went door to door for three or four months asking people what they needed," says Ford. The Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic — named to honor the young Chicago Panther leader killed in his sleep by a special unit of the Chicago Police on December 4, 1969 — was open five nights a week, from 7 to 10 p.m., and staffed by volunteer doctors.[32] In early 1970, the Party launched the Malcolm X Dental Clinic at 2341 N. Williams Avenue, where volunteer dentists recruited by Dr. Gerald Morrell saw patients on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. At the invitation of Kaiser Permanente, they moved the clinic to 214 N. Russell Street, where it shared Kaiser facilities and equipment on Monday and Wednesday nights. When that office was taken over by Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in 1975, and in 1980, they asked the Panthers to leave.[33]

In August 1970, after the California State Court of Appeals overturned Huey Newton's manslaughter conviction in the 1967 death of Oakland Patrolman John Frey and released Newton, Ford traveled to Oakland to formally

Courtesy of the Lewis & Clark College archives

Raymond Joe stands in the doorway and greets patients arriving at the Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic.

request recognition as the Portland BPP chapter. Newton wanted to know if the Portland group "had any buildings." Ford recalls telling him, "Yeah, we got several buildings — a health clinic, a dental clinic, and a breakfast program." Because they had been working arduously to establish a number of social programs, they were strong candidates to become a chapter. Ford reports: "The next week we got a letter from him, authorizing the chapter status."[34] From then on, the two principal points of contact between Oakland and Portland were sales of the weekly *Black Panther* newspaper — for which Hampton was local distribution manager — and the occasional trip to Oakland for funerals, rallies, or other special occasions when a representative from Portland was expected.

At home in Portland, the Panthers deliberately toned down their image. "We never did openly display our weapons," says Hampton, who considered himself "the kid" in the Portland Party back then. "We kind of kept that out of the limelight 'cause that could frighten our own folks. We tried to keep our issues focused and the violence and the rhetoric down. We didn't want anyone to perceive us as being out-of-control, gun-toting radicals."[35]

In 1973, the Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic was evicted from 109 N. Russell Street to accommodate street renovation for the proposed Emanuel Hospital expansion. When Kent Ford arrived at the clinic on the morning of May 1, with a moving truck, ready to move medical files, equipment, and supplies, he found the building broken into and belongings already going out the door. Here he berates Portland Development Commission relocation chief Benjamin C. Webb (looking away), who had summoned the Multnomah County sheriff to begin eviction. The Panthers lost $1,000 worth of vaccines that required refrigeration.

As Oakland grew increasingly violent — with COINTELPRO fostering dissension in the ranks and with Newton, after 1973, disabled by cocaine — the Portland Panthers pulled even further away, concentrating on their own survival programs. The Portland chapter had approximately fifty members, around one-third of them women, and relied on an extensive volunteer network, including dozens of white doctors and dentists, to keep their programs operating.[36]

When the Williams/Russell neighborhood was razed in the early 1970s for a planned-but-never-built Emanuel Hospital expansion, Party members first protested the loss of their building then relocated the clinic two blocks south, to 2341 N. Williams Avenue, where they continued to give free medical care to all comers, irrespective of race, income, or neighborhood of origin,

until 1980. Testing for lead levels and for sickle-cell anemia, to which African Americans are especially prone, was always an important part of that care.[37]

Between running their programs, raising the money for rent and utilities, and collecting donations of food for the breakfasts and supplies for the clinics, the Portland Panthers had their hands full. The small chapter's energy and resources were stressed even further by police agencies intent on defaming them or closing down the survival programs. In this effort, the media, wittingly or unwittingly, sometimes served as an ally of the police.

LOCAL COVERAGE OF THE BPP, PORTLAND CHAPTER

To analyze local coverage, we collected all the news output from the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal* between 1968 — the run-up to the formation of the Portland chapter — and 1973, when media coverage of the Portland Panthers ceased, a full seven years before the BPP free health clinic closed.[38] To construct our dataset of newspaper articles, we searched the *Oregonian* Newspaper Index using the search terms "Black Panther" and "Black Panther Party." We then gathered additional articles that slipped through the virtual cracks by accessing the Oregon Historical Society's handwritten and typed card-catalogue index for the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal*, obtaining copies of the actual articles via microfiche.[39]

By 1968, when our media analysis begins, Newhouse had already bought out Portland's two daily newspapers. In 1950, after one hundred years as an independent paper, the *Oregonian* was purchased for $5.6 million, which, at the time, was the heftiest price ever paid for a newspaper.[40] In 1971, the *Oregonian* had a daily circulation of nearly 247,000 and a Sunday circulation of slightly over 407,000. This was significant distribution in a city with a population of 382,619 people. According to the 1970 census, "Caucasians" counted for 92 percent and "Negroes" slightly less than 6 percent of city residents. The afternoon paper, the *Oregon Journal,* was also part of the Newhouse media empire, which had purchased it for $8 million in 1961, during the third year of a long and bitter newspaper strike. Newhouse consolidated business and printing operations into one building. *Journal* circulation never climbed back to pre-strike highs; in 1971, daily circulation was 138,000, with Sunday circulation at 129,000.[41]

What is initially striking about the Oregon media coverage of the BPP is its small quantity. Jones has argued that the Black Panther Party "dominated public consciousness" in the late 1960s and "was a mainstay in the national media," a "frequent headline maker."[42] Yet, in the timeframe under consideration — 1968 through 1973 — the Black Panther Party only appeared in ninety-three articles: sixty-one in the *Oregonian* and thirty-two in the *Oregon*

Journal. Two readers working independently read each news article in search of the predominant news frames and coded each article accordingly.[43] Three dominant frames emerged: the Criminality Frame, the Violence Frame, and the Community Organizer Frame.[44]

CRIMINALITY FRAME

The predominant frame employed by Oregon newspapers in their coverage of the Black Panther Party was the Criminality Frame, which depicted Panthers as engaged in a wide range of criminal activity — from assault to arson to attempted murder — that necessitated police intervention. Articles about Panther-related criminal allegations, charges, trials, and acquittals or convictions were commonplace, occurring in more than three of every five articles (63 percent), with the frame appearing in 59 percent of *Oregonian* articles and 72 percent of stories in the *Oregon Journal*. Moreover, actual or alleged Panther criminality was the news peg — the central purpose of or justification for a story — in 47 percent of the articles in our dataset. In other words, approximately half the articles' newsworthiness hinged on the criminal behavior — real, alleged, or imagined — related to the Black Panther Party.

Four contentious episodes involving the Black Panther Party generated a majority of the articles in the dataset: Kent Ford's arrest and beating at the hands of Portland police in 1969; the police shooting of Albert Williams at Panther headquarters in February 1970; Black Panther Party picketing of McDonald's in summer 1970; and the imbroglio over whether to issue the Fred Hampton People's Health Clinic a fund solicitation permit in the winter of 1970–1971.[45]

Many of the articles that portrayed the Black Panther Party as a criminal entity exhibited a descriptive, police-blotter tone. For instance, short articles described the legal woes of Panthers outside Portland: the extradition hearing of former Bay Area Panther Warren William Wells; the sentencing of former Eugene Panther Arthur L. Cox on firearm-related charges; and the arrest of another former Eugene Panther, Tommy Lee Anderson, on driving-related charges.[46] A steady flow of stories like these had accumulated into a palpable message for readers: the Black Panther Party was a group enmeshed in a dense network of criminal enterprises. This tacitly communicated to readers that the Panthers were a threatening, menacing group, and that there was an urgent need for the police to try to control them.

At times, an image rooted in toughness and defiance served the Panthers well. Ford acknowledged this when he told *Oregonian* reporter Bill Keller in the fall of 1971: "If we have to, we can be just as vicious as ever. We're here to serve the people and if you mess with our programs, prepare to meet

Table 1: Criminality Frame

Source	% of articles
Oregonian	59
Oregon Journal	72
Total	**63**

your maker."[47] Such bold dissent should not be conflated with criminality, but many news accounts did just that. Sometimes they accomplished this through enthymematic reasoning, or argument whereby the journalist made a number of assertions in succession while leaving a gap in the assertions that invited readers to fill in the missing link. By creating an enthymeme — a syllogism with an unexpressed premise that leads to a logical yet unstated conclusion — journalists can mislead newspaper readers.[48] An example of this occurred on August 22, 1970, when a McDonald's on NE Union Avenue was bombed in the early morning hours. A front-page story in the *Oregon Journal* reported on the explosion as well as the physical and monetary damage it caused, finally noting: "The site has been the scene of picketing by the Black Panthers, claiming racist policies and refusal of the firm to support community programs."[49]

The *Oregonian* offered an almost identical account, but with an alternative explanation for the picketing. The newspaper described "a dynamite explosion" that "shattered windows and caused other damage" to McDonald's before immediately — via enthymematic reasoning — pivoting toward culpability: "The stand has been picketed for the past several days by Black Panthers and sympathizers after it refused to donate cash to Panther-sponsored projects in the Albina area."[50] The articles encouraged the idea that the Panthers were responsible for the bombing. No one from the Black Panther Party was ever charged for igniting the blast.

The picketing of the McDonald's restaurant on NE Union Avenue was part of an ongoing BPP effort to collect funds and food for their survival programs. Al Laviske, general manager of six Portland McDonald's franchises, contended that Kent Ford and Linda Thornton were engaging in extortion and that they had demanded $300 per month in cash payments. His allegations were printed at face value in the media, though the Panthers denied they were trying to extort money from the businessman.[51] The Portland

Police were also monitoring the situation. In an Officer's Report submitted on June 30, 1970, detectives Frank Smith and Jim Davis wrote:

> The reports indicate that KENT FORD, assisted by FREDDIE WHITLOW, SANDRA BRITT, and LINDA THOMPSON [sic], and other unknown negro males, have by intimidation been obtaining money from the Albina businesses for the Black Panther breakfast program. The business people in the area that have given to the program largely did so because of fear of retaliation from this group, either in the form of vandalism or firebombing.

Nevertheless, the district attorney felt sufficient evidence was still lacking "to obtain a conviction in court," so no one was arrested or charged with extortion.[52] About a week before the bombing, the police filed another report, this time identifying Laviske as the business owner registering complaint and attempting to secure a restraining order against Ford and the Black Panthers. The internal police document also makes clear that telephone conversations between Ford and Laviske were being recorded.[53]

The media dutifully informed the public of alleged infractions carried out by Party members, even when such allegations and arrests did not translate into charges or convictions. In September 1970, for instance, the *Oregonian* reported that Ford was being charged for trespassing at a local Fred Meyer store as well as for disorderly conduct (using profane and abusive language). A municipal judge dismissed the charges in March 1971, but the media had already propagated the deprecatory rumors.[54]

The standoff between the Panthers and McDonald's franchise owner Al Laviske had a positive ending, and Laviske became an important supporter. "We had a meeting with him and the whole thing was resolved," Ford recalls. "He came forward with a proposal and we accepted it: he gave us 50 pounds of hamburger meat and 500 cups every week." This agreement was reported, though, again, with reference to the "blast on August 22."[55] But Laviske's cooperation on another issue, equally important to the Panthers, never made the press. The police had been using the McDonald's parking lot to transfer arrestees to the patrol car that would transport them downtown. Reform of policing practices had been a key issue since the Party's beginnings, both in Oakland and in Portland; among the demands in the Ten-Point Platform and Program was community control of police.

"Here's McDonald's, supposed to be projecting this image around the world, and they're in league with a repressive police department," Ford says. "So we asked Laviske to stop the police department from using his parking lot as a transfer station. He listened and he stopped it!" It was an important victory for the Party, whose members resented the police practice

of recruiting the business community to help with policing efforts. "But I knew they wasn't going to print that," Ford says with a shrug. "Then, later on, [Laviske] let us do sickle cell testing in the McDonald's parking lot and he even gave out complimentary McDonald's cards for a hamburger and a drink and some French fries to people who got tested."[56]

Rather than reporting on such positive outcomes, Oregon newspapers tended to highlight alleged criminality. Criminal Justice Professor Dennis Rome has argued that "blacks are the repository for the American fear of crime." He adds, "crime in America is often portrayed in blackface," and this plays into the "black demon stereotype."[57] The predominance of the Criminality Frame in Oregon newspaper coverage of the Black Panther Party lends empirical support to Rome's contention.

VIOLENCE FRAME

The Black Panther Party was frequently depicted as engaging in violence or threatening to undertake violent acts — such as arson, shootings, or beatings — and instigating violent clashes with the police. Nearly half of all articles (48 percent) employed the Violence Frame, with the *Oregonian* using it in 43 percent of its articles on the Panthers and the *Oregon Journal* utilizing it in 59 percent. As logic would have it, this frame often dovetailed with the Criminality Frame.

Before the Panthers ever formed a chapter in Portland, the media were priming news consumers to think in certain directions. In a November 4, 1968, *Oregon Journal* article titled "Black Militants Split on Violence," the authors wrote: "A significant split has developed between black militants over whether to continue stirring up race riots." According to the article, the Black Panthers wanted "to continue ghetto rebellions, which they believe will lead to anarchy and revolution."[58] Those who promote "ghetto rebellions" and "anarchy" — in this case meaning mayhem — are not likely to gain the approval, let alone the support, of the general public.

Jeffries and Ryan Nissim-Sabat write that media depictions of the Panthers have "reinforced the dominant perception of the Party as a violence-prone organization, when in fact the Party was anything but violent. The Party's posture was defensive in nature. The Panthers did not advocate violence, but instead dared to say openly that 'we will defend ourselves by arms *if driven* to that point'." In their ten-point platform — What We Want, What We Believe — the Party stated a commitment to self-defense, avowing in point six: "We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary." In point seven, they wrote they "believe that all black people should arm

Table 2: Violence Frame	
Source	% of articles
Oregonian	43
Oregon Journal	59
Total	**48**

themselves for self-defense."[59] Neither the *Oregonian* nor the *Oregon Journal* ever discussed the platform or articulated the difference between violence and self-defense in their coverage of the Portland BPP.

The Violence Frame was widely employed in February 1970, in the coverage of Ford's nine-day trial for participating in a riot. In an *Oregon Journal* article, prosecutor Larry K. Brunn alleged that Ford was a vigorous participant in "the disturbance during which policemen were kicked, beaten and struck with thrown objects." A follow-up story the next day afforded capacious space for Portland police to level accusations against Ford, with patrolman Richard E. Sothern claiming Ford shouted "Get Whitey" and "Get the Pigs." The *Journal* then noted that Sothern injured his ribs during the melee. The newspaper added that patrolmen Gary Buck and Ronald Hegge "testified that they, too, heard Ford yelling encouragement — spiced with profanity — at the mob" and that "Hegge said he was struck in the head from behind and knocked partially unconscious." An article the next day featured the testimony of Lt. Lawrence Brown, who claimed Ford shouted "Let's kill those white . . . pigs!" The lieutenant added that he was physically attacked, knocked down, and had his badge torn from his uniform.[60] Neither of the latter two articles afforded space for Ford's attorney Nick Chaivoe to challenge or rebut the claims that Ford encouraged violence.

"The fact was, all this stuff happened thirty minutes before I even got there," says Ford today. A riot had been in progress over the 1969 Rose Festival weekend, and Ford, driving south on Union Avenue, stopped his car at NE Shaver Street, where he saw a number of police cars assembled and a kid he knew sitting in the backseat of one of them. At the February trial, when Chaivoe subpoenaed the police radio tapes, by way of proving his client had not yet arrived on the scene during the aforementioned brawl, the tapes turned up missing. Ford recalls: "In his summation to the jury, he says, 'Okay, where are the tapes?' And when police officers came to testify in uniform, he pointed out to the judge that they hadn't been in uniform the

night of the riot. So the judge made them go upstairs where they put their street clothes and change back into them. Chaivoe said it was an old trick used by the police to try to get sympathy from the jury."[61]

A few days later, Ford was acquitted on the riot charge, but his attorney was not finished. Because Ford had been handcuffed and then beaten the night he was arrested for riot, Chaivoe filed a civil rights suit in federal court. Astute not only in the courtroom but in the ways of the world, Chaivoe also took half a dozen Panthers into his office Friday afternoon after Ford's acquittal came back.

> He told us to be real careful. He said the police would come after us. "Don't be belligerent. Turn on your turn signals 100 feet before you turn. Make sure your turn signals and brake lights are working properly. No speeding, no erratic driving, absolutely no alcohol in the car." We had walked over to his office, we all sat down, he had sandwiches and gave us all a drink and went over all of this with us. And he was right! The weekend went by, and I'll be damned if we didn't get hit that next Wednesday.[62]

On Wednesday, February 18, Freddy Whitlow brought Albert Williams, a nineteen-year-old known drug addict, to the Panther office at 3619 NE Union Avenue around four o'clock in the afternoon. Almost immediately, two policemen appeared in a patrol car, chased the young man into the office, — claiming they had a warrant for his arrest — and shot him. This incident, widely covered by both Portland newspapers, invoked the Violence Frame, though it was a "Panther story" only insofar as the shooting occurred in the Panther office; Williams, who was addicted to Seconal, was not a Party member.[63]

Portland Panther Percy Hampton, who was not in the office at the time, remembers his shock at hearing about the shooting later. "I don't even know how Albert ended up in the headquarters that day that he got shot. I have no clue, cause he never really came around. He never sold a newspaper, he never was involved in any of the programs. He was in and out of the penitentiary back there in that time." Hampton could only conclude that Williams had been planted by the police.[64]

In its fifteen articles on the shooting and the two trials that followed, the *Oregonian* only once mentioned that Williams was not in the BPP. In a July article about the move for a mistrial, reporter Janet Goetze stated — five months after the shooting — that Williams was not a Black Panther. Subsequent articles about the second trial again omitted this detail. Moreover, front page photos — a freelance photographer happened to be driving by the scene of the shooting that day, stopped, and was later able to make an exclusive photo sale to the *Oregonian* — all identified the location of the incident without any clarification in the text.[65]

The account that appeared in the *Oregonian* was the version told by the police, who asserted that when they attempted to serve a warrant to Williams for petty larceny charges, he darted into the storefront office of the Panthers on NE Union Avenue. Police pursued him into the office where, they claimed, Williams shot at them with a rifle. Officer Stanley Harmon proceeded to shoot Williams, wounding him.[66] Neither Ford nor Hampton was at the office that day, but Ford was summoned from his home immediately after the shooting. He heard the story of what happened from Joyce Radford, who was working the front desk of the office when Williams first showed up:

> This office had been a used clothing store and it had a funny layout. There was a kind of tunnel on the back wall which led to a staircase up to a balcony overlooking the office. Joyce was sitting at the desk and Albert came in and overpowered her to get into the tunnel. He ran upstairs and went right to an old .223 rifle up there that we kept for Joyce's protection. He knew where it was and he even knew where to find the bullets to load it. Freddy [Whitlaw] must have told him where to find this stuff. He got the rifle loaded and was standing in the balcony when Harmon came in. Joyce was very upset. She said, "Put the gun down, Albert. They got a warrant for you so just put the gun down and come down here and go with them. We'll follow you downtown and make sure you're okay." So Albert put the gun down and that was when Harmon jumped up on Joyce's desk, pulled out his .38 revolver, and shot Albert.[67]

Shortly after Ford arrived at the office that day, a phone call came in from Nic Wickliff. Ford explains: "He was the first black television reporter for the Channel 8 News, KGW. Dave [Dawson] came and got me and it took about 15 minutes to get there [to the office] and Nic called and I took the phone call. He said, 'Has your place been raided yet?' They monitor the police radio." The call from Channel 8 about the planned raid and the fact that Albert knew exactly where to look for the rifle led Ford to conclude it was a set-up. "Albert had the drop on him, but didn't pull the trigger. That's when I knew it was a set-up. 'Cause he was full of Seconal, and reds make you really mean."[68]

Chaivoe made another connection: if there really had been an outstanding warrant, they could have served it right there at the courthouse during Ford's trial. Williams, along with a huge number of people from the African-American community, attended every day of the trial. Protesters circulated flyers asserting that there was no warrant issued for the arrest of Williams prior to the day of the shooting.[69]

The day after the shooting, protesters marched down to City Hall, where the *Oregon Journal* described them as "an unruly mob." In the aftermath of the shooting and march on City Hall, the *Oregonian* published an editorial

34 3M THE OREGONIAN, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1970

Crowd Storms City Hall To Protest Shooting

CITY COUNCIL chambers Thursday afternoon was invaded by more than 200 young people who protested the Wednesday night shooting of 18-year-old Albert Wayne Williams by police. Speakers demanded ouster of several police officers and "community control" of police. Demonstrators stayed about 40 minutes and left peaceably as Police Tactical Squad arrived at City Hall.

Harmon, "I'm going to kill you, Harmon," and fired a shot. The bullet hit the center of the ceiling.

Taylor said Harmon drew his pistol and fired once. Williams fell. No other shots were fired, according to Taylor.

Ford said he was not in the office during the incident. He said witnesses told him Williams was unarmed and had raised his hands to surrender "when Harmon jumped up on a desk and put two shots in him at point-blank range."

Ford said Williams "had a right to defend himself."

He said police had "beefed up patrols" in the neighborhood since Ford was acquitted last week of riot charges stemming from disturbances in Albina last June.

Ford said the Panthers had been "tipped off" that police planned to raid the party headquarters. Taylor termed the charge "a bunch of B.S.

"We don't make a 'raid' with a two-man patrol car with a 10-year-old child in the car," Taylor said.

Taylor said the child made a statement to the district attorney Wednesday night which substantiated the officers' account of the incident.

Ford said the shooting was "a pattern of pig harassment to keep the Black Panthers from serving the community.

"This means no one in the black community is safe from the fascist, racist pigs," Ford said.

Two hundred protesters showed up at City Council chambers the day after Portland Police Officer Stanley Harmon shot Albert Williams. Bill Grandy (L, clenched fist) addressed commissioners at length, demanding that Harmon be suspended from duty and tried for attempted murder. Percy Hampton (C) moves toward the podium. Claude Hawkins (R) stands facing council. The newspaper article quoted Commissioner Ivancie describing the protest as "unpleasant."

titled "Bad Scene" in which the editorial board wrote, "Black Panthers and their defenders must realize that to preach violence is to invite violence, and when it comes they cannot convincingly attribute all the blame to somebody else."[70] Such tacit exoneration of police conduct and blunt deprecation of dissent was par for the mass-media course.

Meanwhile, six months after his acquittal on the riot charges, a U.S. District Judge awarded Ford $6,000 — $1,000 for "indignities suffered" and $5,000 for "punitive damages." (Ford had sued for $50,000 in general damages and $50,000 in punitive damages.) The judge noted that he awarded the $5,000 punitive damages "because it is time the community realizes that the police are not free to inflict punishment." The comment indicated a desire to place checks on police force, though it was curious that the judge wished the realization on "the community" rather than the police who

actually perpetrated the violence. Yet, his comment offers a window into the zeitgeist: the "community" was capable of violent acts and needed to be dissuaded from taking to the streets.[71] "We was considered radicals, thugs," Hampton recalls today.[72]

There were, however, exceptions to these trends: the *Oregon Journal,* for instance, noted the "peaceful pickets" at Laviske's McDonald's franchise. The *Oregonian*, in an editorial printed in the wake of an altercation between Ford and a black Portland police officer whom Ford allegedly called "nigger pig," opined, "it would appear little would be gained should Mr. Ford be convicted of expressing publicly the convictions he and his colleagues hold, and will continue to hold, regardless of the outcome of his trial." The writer concluded: "If there is a solution to the policing problem posed by the likes of the Black Panthers, it can only come with the ending of the conditions which inspired the formation of his prickly organization." To acknowledge the structural conditions that gave rise to the Black Panther Party was strikingly atypical.[73]

Rhodes argues that the decisions journalists make about framing news stories "impose their own logic that works against alternative frameworks. The logic of 'Panther stories' was that they contained elements of violence, racial discord, defiance, or dissent; otherwise they might not be deemed newsworthy."[74] This was the case in almost half the articles on the Black Panther Party that appeared in the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal*.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER FRAME

While the two Oregon dailies often made use of the Criminality and the Violence frames, they did not entirely ignore the role the Black Panther Party played as an energetic community organizer. Approximately 37 percent of all news accounts described some Panther program or goal, with 43 percent of *Oregonian* articles and 25 percent of *Oregon Journal* accounts adopting this Community Organizer Frame. Although Jeffries and Nissim-Sabat have noted, "oftentimes what gets lost in the writings and discourse about the BPP is the mundane grunt work done by local Panther activists across America," roughly a third of Oregon newspaper articles made note of the Panthers' community outreach programs.[75] Nevertheless, most of these articles — generally brief, neutral, and carrying no byline — appear to have been taken directly from press releases generated by the Party.

Planned in 1969 and opened in January 1970 in conjunction with a group called Health-RAP (Research Action Project), the Fred Hampton Memorial People's Health Clinic was mentioned numerous times by the Oregon press. The *Oregon Journal*, for instance, ran a substantive article to mark the opening of the clinic, noting its location, hours, and some of the medical

Table 3: Community Organizer Frame

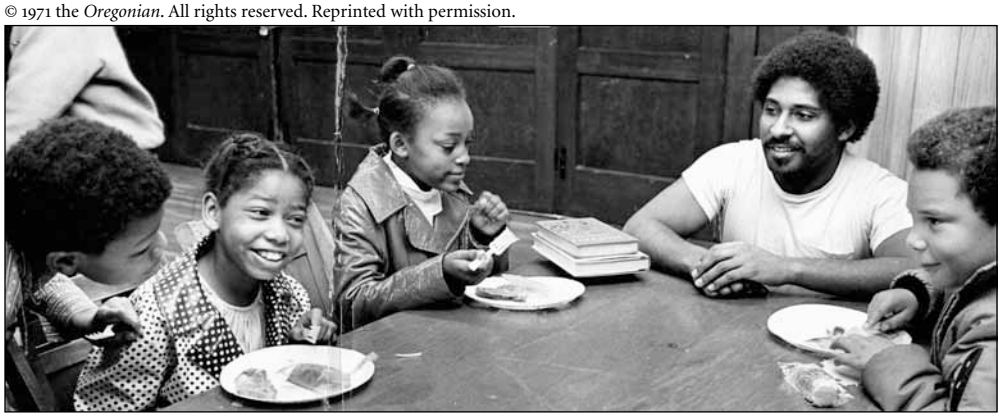
Source	% of articles
Oregonian	43
Oregon Journal	25
Total	**37**

procedures and equipment that would be available. Jon Moscow, a white Reed College graduate who helped local Panthers organize their clinics, was interviewed about the financial backing of the clinic as well as its relationship with doctors and hospitals in the area.[76] The media also covered the Black Panther Party and Portland Committee to Combat Fascism's proposal to revamp the Portland Police Bureau's organizational system.[77]

Still, the general propensity was to mention the Panther programs but not include substance about the goals of the Black Panther Party or the context that gave rise to the programs. In an *Oregonian* article about a controversy that emerged in Hood River over Black Panthers being allowed to speak to students, for instance, the newspaper reported that "more than 100 students, most of them seniors, heard Panthers explain their party's aims." Yet students in Hood River ended up being more informed on Panther principles than readers of the *Oregonian*, since these "aims" were never disclosed in the article.[78] Similarly, in a separate article, the *Oregonian* discussed a controversy about a Panther "liberation school" in Eugene. The school was mentioned, and it was noted that some First Congregational Church members challenged the idea that the school should be running on church grounds, but neither the school curriculum nor the specifics of the controversy were disclosed.[79]

The second trend regarding the Community Organizer Frame was that reporters mentioned Black Panther Party survival programs only in articles *about* BPP programs, rather than as contextual information in other BPP-related articles, let alone articles about the civil rights movement more generally. They cordoned off information about BPP survival programs from the bigger happenings and trends in society, thereby depriving readers of the relevant context necessary to more fully comprehend the rise of and support for these community programs.[80]

Still, there were significant exceptions to this media rule, and the editorial page was one space available for fomenting dissent from the status quo. Freelance writer Twila Harris took advantage of this relatively open field



Kent Ford takes a break from serving children free hot breakfast at the Panther program in Highland Community Church. Girl with big smile (L) is Judy Washington; all four children were attending Highland School.

twice in 1970, writing a letter to the editor praising the Panther-run health clinic for its professional, thorough treatment of her son and, later, an op-ed that challenged many myths that swirled around the Portland BPP. "It is a common belief that the Panthers are racists," Harris wrote in her letter. "This is simply a lie. This clinic, as well as their free breakfast programs, are for the benefit of all who need them." In her op-ed, Harris pointed out a number of ways the Black Panthers were strengthening the African-American community. She also challenged the Criminality and Violence frames used in coverage of Ford, writing that he "is a man who cares deeply for the welfare of his people. He is one of the many who has learned that the commissions and task forces do not solve problems. He is doing something to make life a bit more comfortable for black people, and for any poor person."[81]

The most in-depth, substantive article published on the Black Panther Party's community organizing and the reasoning that undergirded it was written by *Oregonian* reporter Bill Keller in 1971. His piece — "Breakfast, Clinic Programs Belie Militant Panther Image" — explored wide-ranging Panther programs. Everyone interviewed for the article spoke positively of the BPP, with King School principal Bill D. White praising the free breakfast program ("The Panthers serve a much better breakfast than we do") and an unsourced "leader of a federally funded antipoverty program" commending their deep community ties ("Most people in the black community are, frankly, more familiar with the Black Panthers than they are with established programs. And while whites tend to think of the bad things the Panthers have done, the blacks may think of the first time their youngsters had breakfast,

or the first time they were able to get a tooth pulled without feeling like they were the scum of the earth"). Ford was also interviewed at length for the piece, and his pro-Panther quotes give depth to the article, helping readers understand why the Black Panther Party was working so hard on health care and feeding school children.[82]

It is a tribute to the skill and objectivity of Keller, who is today Executive Editor of the *New York Times*, that he was able to get Ford to cooperate with this story. By late 1971, Ford had pretty much given up on talking to the press:

> Every time you give them the scoop and you think they were going to be fair, then you find out the next day — or later on the TV evening news — that the story is totally upside down. And so you realize that they didn't hear a word you said. Or they heard it, they went to the other side and took sides with the other side. We just decided to stop talking to them and told the rank and file to do the same.[83]

Not only did Keller get his story, but he and Ford stayed in touch even after Keller left Portland in March 1979. In the last Panther story Keller wrote for the *Oregonian*, he reported that thousands of documents had been recently (1978) released by the FBI showing, as the headline stated, "Portland Said 1970 Target of the Anti-Panther Effort." One day after his article ran, Peter Grant wrote in the *Oregon Journal* about the "recent disclosures that the bureau in 1970 attempted to dissuade Portland doctors and dentists from donating their service to the Fred Hampton center. The released documents state the bureau discontinued sending the anonymous letters to doctors and dentists in 1971."[84]

Even during a public controversy over the Portland Public Solicitations Commission's decision to deny the BPP a fund solicitation permit, Panther programs received a public airing from the media.[85] On behalf of the Portland City Council, the commission screened groups who wanted to raise funds from the general public. City code allowed the commission to deny applicants who "were not a responsible person of good character and reputation . . . and [therefore] the control and the supervision of the solicitation will not be under a responsible and reliable person."[86] In an article that described a hearing as to whether to grant a fund solicitation permit to the clinic, the *Oregonian* reported that all the witnesses who testified "contended the clinic performs a badly needed service by providing free and convenient care to poor persons who need it most. No one spoke against the clinic, and council members generally agreed it appears to be fulfilling a serious need."[87] Eventually, the commission granted the Panthers a temporary permit.[88]

Local media coverage of the Black Panther Party in Portland did not conform entirely to historian Simon Wendt's assessment: "The news media . . . distorted the revolutionary message of the Panthers, focusing solely on the

group's paramilitary character rather than on the dismal conditions that [Huey] Newton and [Bobby] Seale intended to improve."[89] While Oregon newspapers never referred directly to the Panthers' ten-point program, they did make relatively frequent mention of the Free Breakfast for Children Program, the Fred Hampton Memorial People's Health Clinic, and the Malcolm X People's Free Dental Clinic.

Local media's willingness to discuss Panther survival programs can be explained in part by considering key mass-media norms that drive what becomes news: personalization, dramatization, and novelty.[90] Newspapers often covered the Panthers and their sociopolitical agenda because they were fascinating personalities engaged in controversial, dramatic politics. They were deftly able to swerve coverage onto their programs, in part because these programs were unique. The health and dental clinics were an alternative form of health care delivery that by most accounts was thriving.

Another factor that helps explain media coverage of the health-care programs is that the Black Panther Party was, in certain respects, trying to "work within the system," as Joe Morhead, lawyer for the Fred Hampton People's Health Clinic, told the *Oregonian*.[91] Additional evidence of the Panthers playing by the rules and thereby scoring media coverage was the group's willingness to apply for a fund solicitation permit from the city in the first place, though that effort would evolve into a controversy that was one of the four most-covered episodes during the timeframe under consideration.

FRAMING THE PORTLAND PANTHERS

What our content analysis did *not* find in media coverage of the Black Panther Party is also salient. Previous research suggests we would find an "anti-white frame" in articles about the BPP. National-level media adopted this race-based frame as the Black Power movement emerged on the sociopolitical scene and began to gain adherents in significant numbers. Publications such as *Life* magazine published overly simplified portrayals of the Black Power movement in general, depicting it in an article called "Plotting a War on 'Whitey'" as "a growing cult of Negro extremists who have been storing arms and stoking the angers of the black ghettos." Fueling fear in their largely white readership, *Life* asserted, "in secret recesses of any ghetto in the U.S. there are dozens and hundreds of black men working resolutely toward an Armageddon in which Whitey is to be either destroyed or forced to his knees."[92] National media outlets counterposed Black Power "extremists" against "responsible leadership," thereby constructing a convenient binary through which readers were to understand the emergent Black radicalism. But many national-media news accounts also adopted the frame that the

Black Power movement in general — and the BPP in particular — were out to attack white people.

Yet the "anti-white frame" was almost non-existent in Oregon newspaper coverage of the Portland BPP. This was the case in part because the Panthers were not written about in the context of civil rights struggles. Also, the Portland Panthers worked in solidarity with numerous white groups, and the media made mention of these cross-race political coalitions.[93]

That local media did not depict the Portland chapter of the BPP as a strand of an ongoing struggle over civil rights points to another important aspect of media coverage: a pronounced preference for episodic rather than thematic framing. According to political scientist Shanto Iyengar, an episodic news frame "depicts issues in terms of specific instances," whereas a thematic frame "depicts political issues more broadly and abstractly by placing them in some appropriate context — historical, geographical, or otherwise." Relying on episodic framing has important effects, he asserts: "By reducing complex issues to the level of anecdotal cases, episodic framing leads viewers to attributions that shield society and government from responsibility."[94] By and large, the Oregon mainstream press depicted Panther-related events as a series of discrete episodes, slices of time divorced from the bigger picture of societal relations, social issues, and political problems. This allowed readers to blame the Panthers rather than the structural conditions that gave rise to both the BPP and the social problems.

Media frames shape our political attitudes by swaying the amount of importance we ascribe to particular beliefs. Thomas E. Nelson and Zoe M. Oxley explain, "through framing, communicators seek to establish a dominant definition or construction of an issue. In a way, issue framing is issue categorization: a declaration of what a policy dispute is really all about, and what it has nothing to do with. Like any social category, issue frames carry perceptual and inferential implications, guiding how their recipients ponder and resolve issue dilemmas." Political scientist Nicholas J.G. Winter adds, "Frames impose structure on political issues, and when that structure matches the cognitive representation, or schema, for a social category (such as race or gender), that schema will likely govern comprehension and evaluation of the issue."[95] In short, the way journalists frame news accounts matters, as it greatly influences how the general public perceives the whirl and swirl of social relations. Framing the same episode of contention either in terms of free speech or public order will color the way readers understand the political news.

In her assessment of media coverage of the Oakland chapter of the BPP, Rhodes found that "for the most part, the elite national media failed in their explanatory role, so badly needed in this story of race relations and racial

Courtesy of Pablo de Regil, photographer

In March 2008, Kent Ford took Pacific University students to see former Black Panther sites, a tour he leads once a year. Students, left to right: Ryan Turcott, Celeste Goulding, Jordan Osborn, Madeline Maldonado, Elias Gilman, Miriam Kramer.

protest. Instead of enabling meaningful conversation about the nation's problems, they fanned the flames of racial discord." In Portland, matters were not so clear-cut. While in Rhodes's estimation, media coverage of Bay Area Panthers "remained tied to certain narrow frames — threatening black males, criminals, deviants, terrorists, and celebrities," newspaper coverage of Portland Panthers regularly pressed beyond these "narrow frames" — as common as they were — to discuss the community-based survival programs Panthers were organizing and coordinating.[96]

Yet now, forty years later, it can be seen as a serious omission that both Portland dailies failed to recognize and record three important things: the black community's frustration with what they saw as routine police brutality, a frustration that directly led to the formation of the Black Panther Party chapter in Portland; the courage required for young African-American men and women to mount a campaign of self-defense; and the idealism that lay behind the Party's community programs for nutrition and health.

NOTES

The authors would like to thank Nick Forgey and Sam Watanuki for research assistance and Pacific University for a Story-Dondero faculty development grant that helped fund this project. Thanks also to Brian Johnson, at Portland City Archives, for his enthusiastic assistance; the anonymous referees who offered insightful feedback; and Eliza Canty-Jones for her support and encouragement. The authors are also grateful to Eve Crane for the use of her work. Crane photographed the Oakland Panthers extensively in the period 1966–1969 and is one of only three people ever granted that access.

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3. Boykoff, *The Suppression of Dissent*, 61.

4. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6.

5. See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Melvin Small, *Covering Dissent: The Media and the Vietnam War Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Jules Boykoff, "Framing Dissent: Mass Media Coverage of the Global Justice Movement," *New Political Science* 28:2 (June 2006): 201–28.

6. Small, *Covering Dissent*, 113. For example, in the context of domestic resistance to the Vietnam War — which encompasses the timeframe adopted in this study — Daniel Hallin found the media "would frequently plug opponents of the war who chose to 'work within the system'," thereby creating "boundaries marking the limits of acceptable political activity." See Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 197.

7. Entman, "Framing," 55.

8. Ten Point Platform & Program, on It's About Time website, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/home/bpp_program_platform.html (accessed July 13, 2010.) See also Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 3.

9. Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the Sixties* (New York: Summit Books, 1989), 15, 12.

10. Charles E. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History: The Untold Story," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005 [1998]), 8.

11. Clayborne Carson, "Forward," in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), ix.

12. Billy X, email to Martha Gies, August 9, 2009: "I would say 51 chapters and branches and NCCF's. But not at the same time. From 1968 thru 1977." Newly formed groups used the name National Committee to Combat Fascism while awaiting permission from Oakland to call themselves Panthers.

13. Judson L. Jeffries and Ryan Nissim-Sabat, "Introduction: Painting a More Complete Portrait of the Black Panther Party," in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black*

Panther Party, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). Jeffries and Nissim-Sabat write: "The idea for this book was born out of the hope that it would inspire future rigorous examinations of less celebrated Panther branches like the ones discussed in this text," p. 8.

14. Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishers, 1994), 339; Michael E. Staub, "Black Panthers, New Journalism, and the Rewriting of the Sixties," *Representations* 57 (1997): 57 (Staub adds, "an examination of the media coverage of the Panthers reveals a discordant jumble of representations, a set of metaphoric images and associations that were both vigorously fearmongering *and* sniggeringly derisive," p. 59, emphasis in original); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 89; Judson L. Jeffries, "Local News Coverage of the Black Panther Party: An Analysis of the Baltimore, Cleveland, and New Orleans Press, *Journal of African American Studies* 7 (Spring 2004): 19–28. See also Rhodes, "Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord: The National Press and the Black Panther Party," *The Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics* 4 (1999): 95–118.

15. Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 74, 87.

16. Otto Rutherford quoted in *Local Color*, a documentary film reported and directed by Jon Tuttle for Oregon Public Broadcasting, 1991; K. Keith Richard, "Unwelcome Settlers: Black and Mulatto Oregon Pioneers," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 84:1 (Spring 1983): 31.

17. Quintard Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840–1860," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 83:2 (Summer 1982): 153–70.

18. Karen J. Gibson, "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940–2000," *Transforming Anthropology* 15:1 (2007): 6; Bosco-Milligan Foundation, *Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American History* (Portland, Ore.: Bosco-Milligan Foundation, rev. ed. 1998), 28.

19. Kimberly Mangun. "'As Citizens of Portland We Must Protest': Beatrice Morrow Cannady and the African American Response to D.W. Griffith's 'Masterpiece,'" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107:3 (Fall 2006): 393.

20. Bosco-Milligan, *Cornerstones of Community*, 66.

21. Edwin C. Berry, "Profiles: Portland," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 19:3, Race Relations on the Pacific Coast (November 1945): 162; Gibson, "Bleeding Albina," 9.

22. Portland Bureau of Planning, "The History of Portland's African American Community (1805 to the Present)" (Portland: February 1993), 76.

23. Bosco-Milligan, *Cornerstones of Community*, 99–100.

24. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, May 6, 2004.

25. Ibid., August 29, 2004. Ford was later acquitted.

26. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, November 19, 2009.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. COINTELPRO was a covert set of programs carried out by the FBI from 1956 through 1971 in order to disrupt and dismantle — or in Bureau parlance, "neutralize" — activity it deemed a threat to domestic security. The program had five branches that focused on specific groups and movements: the Communist Party (1956–1971); the Socialist Workers Party (1961–1969); White Hate Groups (1964–1971); "Black Nationalist-Hate Groups" (1967–1971); and the New Left (1968–1971). In the view of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, the Black Panther Party was a "Black Nationalist-Hate Group." The FBI also slotted Martin Luther King, Jr. under the "Black Nationalist-Hate Group" rubric.

30. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, November 10, 2009; Percy Hampton, interviewed by Martha Gies, November 11, 2004, and June 27, 2009.

31. Ford interview, August 29, 2004.

32. The FBI also played a key role in Fred Hampton's murder. See Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009). Fred Hampton of Chicago and Percy Hampton, interviewed for this article, were not related.

33. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, March 12, 2010. To this day, OHSU continues to operate a dental clinic for low-income patients at that address.

34. Ibid., June 20, 2009.

35. Percy Hampton, interviewed by Martha Gies, November 11, 2004.

36. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, September 26, 2004.

37. Ibid., September 7, 2008. For fuller discussion of the founding of the Panther clinics, see Martha Gies, "Radical Treatment," *Reed Magazine* (Winter 2009): 29–33.

38. After five years of not covering Panther programs, both newspapers ran 1978 articles on the documents, some of them explicating FBI harassment of the BPP in Portland, that were declassified in the wake of the Church Committee investigations. The Church Committee was a Senate Select Committee established in January 1975 to investigate covert governmental malfeasance. The committee issued a three-book report in April 1976 that outlined an array of disquieting — and often illegal — activity the FBI was carrying out in order to suppress dissent in the United States.

39. The *Oregonian* Newspaper Index was digitized by University of Oregon. We obtained hard copies of the articles from microfiche at Pacific University and Lewis & Clark College.

40. Columbia Journalism Review, "Resources: Who Owns What," available online: http://www.cjr.org/resources/company_data/advance.html (accessed September 15, 2009).

41. Circulation statistics for both papers from *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (Doubleday, 1970), 175.

42. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History: The Untold Story," 1.

43. We originally had 98 articles in our dataset for this six-year timeframe, but we excluded articles in which the Black Panther Party was only mentioned peripherally or that focused only on national figures with Panther ties who were not local (such as Angela Davis and Eldridge Cleaver). This led to the exclusion of five articles (three from the *Oregonian* and two from the *Oregon Journal*). To measure the validity of the coding structure, a research assistant and one author tested inter-coder reliability by separately coding a random sample of twenty-five articles (spanning across the years under consideration) from both newspapers. Our reliability test achieved 89.5 percent coder agreement, well within the acceptable range of reliability coefficients synthesized and explained by Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage 2002), 142–43.

44. We came to these frames inductively, with each author reading all the articles in search of predominant themes. We also used the aforementioned findings of scholarly research to formulate hypotheses. For the sake of parsimony, we compacted certain themes, ending up with three dominant frames.

45. Albert Williams was not a member of the Black Panther Party, but he ducked into the BPP headquarters, where he was shot by Portland policeman Stanley Harmon.

46. "Black Panther Faces Hearing," *Oregonian*, September 10, 1968, p. 12; "Jury Raps Panther in Eugene," *Oregon Journal*, March 9, 1970, p. 2; "UO Student Stirs Probe: Police Impound State-owned Car," *Oregonian*, September 4, 1970, p. 27. All three were former Panthers, none from Portland.

47. Bill Keller, "Breakfast, Clinic Programs Belie Militant Panther Image," *Oregonian*, November 12, 1971, p. 23.

48. Jeffrey Walker, "The Body of Persuasion: A Theory of the Enthymeme," *College English* 56:1 (January 1994): 46–65.

49. "Picketed Hamburger Stand Here

Bombed," *Oregon Journal*, August 22, 1970, p. 1.

50. "Blast Shatters Glass at McDonald's," *Oregonian*, August 23, 1970, p. 43.

51. Early Deane, "Hearing to Examine Panther Picket Ban," *Oregonian*, August 15, 1970, p. 12, and Early Deane, "Judge Requires Mutual Concessions in McDonald's Picketing," *Oregonian*, August 16, 1970, p. 39.

52. City of Portland Bureau of Public Safety Officer's Report, Subject: Possible Extortion, June 30, 1970, City of Portland Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Black Panther Party file.

53. City of Portland Bureau of Public Safety Officer's Report, Subject: Info Trespass Possible Extortion, August 12, 1970, City of Portland Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Black Panther Party file.

54. "2nd Charge Faces Ford," *Oregonian*, September 18, 1970, p. 19; "Complaint Dismissed," *Oregonian*, March 24, 1971, p. 21.

55. Ford interview, November 19, 2009; "Firm to Aid Panther Project," *Oregonian*, September 19, 1970, p. 5.

56. Ford interview, November 19, 2009.

57. Dennis Rome, *Black Demons: The African-American Male Criminal Stereotype* (London: Praeger, 2004), 4, 115, 46.

58. Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson, "Black Militants Split on Violence," *Oregon Journal*, November 4, 1968.

59. Jeffries and Nissim-Sabat, "Introduction," 4, emphasis in original; "What We Want, What We Believe," in *The Black Panthers Speak*, 3.

60. "Ford Albina Arrest Termed Police Plot," *Oregon Journal*, February 5, 1970, p. 7; Joe Berger, "Policemen Says Ford Led Mob," *Oregon Journal*, February 6, 1970, p. 4; Berger, "State Rests in Ford Riot Trial," *Oregon Journal*, February 7, 1970, p. 4.

61. Ford interview, November 10, 2009. Lieutenant Brown, who was relief commander that night and claimed to have his badge torn from his uniform, was not one of the plainclothes arresting officers.

62. Kent Ford, interviewed by Martha Gies, July 1, 2009.

63. Ibid. After the shooting incident, Kent Ford was convinced that Freddy Whitlow actually brought Albert Williams to the Panther office at the bidding of the police, with whom Whitlow was frequently in trouble. A young ex-convict, Whitlow sometimes tagged along behind the Panthers.

64. Hampton interview, June 27, 2009.

65. "Defense Attorney Asks Mistrial In Panther HQ Shooting Hearing," *Oregonian*, July 7, 1970, p. 13. The original *Oregonian* stories about the shooting were accompanied by photographs sold to the paper by freelancer Raymond Johnston, who was interviewed by Martha Gies on November 15, 2009. Since Johnston made an exclusive sale, the *Oregon Journal* ran no photos.

66. "Police Shoot Youth at Black Panther Office," *Oregonian*, February 19, 1970, p. 1.

67. Ford interview, November 10, 2009.

68. Ford interview, July 1, 2009.

69. "Come See About Albert," a flyer produced to draw a crowd to the June 30, 1970, trial of Albert Williams for Assault with Intent to Kill, states ". . . the only warrent [sic] ever produced by the police was dated after Feb. 18th" (the day of the shooting). See City of Portland Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Black Panther Party file.

70. Joe Berger, "Black Panther Office Shooting Investigated By Grand Jury," *Oregon Journal*, February 20, 1970, p. 1 ; "Bad Scene," *Oregonian*, February 21, 1970, p. 18.

71. John Painter, Jr., "Jury Acquits Panther Tried on Riot Charge," *Oregonian*, February 14, 1970, p. 1; "Judge Awards $6,000 Judgment To Black Panther from Police," *Oregonian*, August 28, 1970, p. 41.

72. Hampton interview, June 27, 2009.

73. "Picketing Resumes at Hamburger Stand," *Oregon Journal*, August 17, 1970, p. 2; "'Nigger Pig'," *Oregonian*, June 12, 1970, p. 34.

74. Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 144.

75. Jeffries and Nissim-Sabat, "Introduc-

tion," 2.

76. "Volunteer Doctors, Agencies Help People's Health Clinic Open," *Oregon Journal*, January 12, 1970, p. 9. The *Oregonian* ran a shorter, less-substantive article on the opening of the clinic, including a large photograph of clinic staff and volunteers. See: "New Medical Clinic Opens in Albina To Provide Neighborhood Health Care," *Oregonian*, January 13, 1970, p. 7. For a profile of Jon Moscow, who helped found the Portland BPP clinics, see Gies, "Radical Treatment."

77. "Ballot Seeks Police Split," *Oregonian*, January 15, 1970; "Ballot Title Approved for Black Police Vote," *Oregon Journal*, January 15, 1970.

78. "Parents Pack Meeting to Protest Panther Talks," *Oregonian*, May 18, 1970.

79. "Church Votes Black Studies," *Oregonian*, November 21, 1969, p. 15. "Liberation school" always appeared in quotation marks, subtly denoting spuriousness.

80. This conforms to Daniel Hallin's research on anti-war protesters from the same era. Hallin found that "dissenters appeared in stories primarily about dissent itself." See Daniel Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics* 46 (1984): 14.

81. Twila Harris, "Something Good," *Oregonian*, May 30, 1970, p. 10; Twila Harris, "Black Panthers — Heroes or Criminals? Whichever, They Stand for the 'Now' Negro," *Oregonian*, November 26, 1970, p. 55.

82. Bill Keller, "Breakfast, Clinic Programs Belie Militant Panther Image," *Oregonian*, November 12, 1971, p. 23.

83. Ford interview, November 19, 2009.

84. Bill Keller, "Portland Said 1970 Target of the Anti-Panther Effort," *Oregonian*, February 26, 1978, p. A1; Peter Grant, "FBI Harassment of Panther Clinic Here Alleged," *Oregon Journal*, February 27, 1978, p. 6.

85. See, for example, "People's Health Clinic Turned Down in Bid to Solicit Funds," *Oregonian*, January 7, 1971, p. 18.

86. "Clinic Spurs Debate, No Decision," *Oregonian*, February 4, 1971, p. 15.

87. "City Council Relents, Gives 30-Day Fund Solicitation Permit to Health Clinic," *Oregonian*, January 15, 1971, p. 8.

88. "Solicitations Permit for Clinic Backed," *Oregonian*, February 23, 1971, p. 10.

89. Simon Wendt, "The Roots of Black Power?: Armed Resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement," in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 162–63.

90. See Maxwell T. Boykoff and Jules M. Boykoff, "Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case Study of U.S. Mass-Media Coverage," *Geoforum* 38:6 (November 2007): 1190–1204; and W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2002), 45–48.

91. "Clinic Permit Spurs Debate, No Decision," *Oregonian*, February 4, 1971, p. 15.

92. Russell Sackett, "Plotting a War on 'Whitey': If Negro Leadership Fails, Extremists Are Set and Eager for Violence," *Life* (June 10, 1966), 100.

93. See, for example, "Protesters Plan New Session," *Oregon Journal*, February 20, 1970, p. 8. For a detailed look at cross-race political solidarity involving the Panthers, see Gies, "Radical Treatment."

94. Shanto Iyengar, "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 546 (1996): 62, 70. Iyengar also notes, "Racial cues in the news proved significant in shaping [media] viewers' responses to crime and poverty."

95. Thomas E. Nelson and Zoe M. Oxley, "Issue Framing Effects on Belief Importance and Opinion," *Journal of Politics* 61:4 (November 1999): 1059; Nicholas J.G. Winter, *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas about Race & Gender Shape Public Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 141.

96. Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 88, 233.