

# THE BLACK PANTHERS

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**T**HE Black Panther Party is the people's party. We are fundamentally interested in one thing, that is, freeing all people from all forms of slavery in order that every man will be his own master.

At present men are engaged in a struggle for self-determination on both an ethnic and an international level. People everywhere want to eliminate the slave master in order to gain sacred freedom. People must be involved in this struggle so as to control the decisions that effect them. A basic tenet of this struggle and its object also, is the principle that things we all commonly use and commonly need should be commonly owned. In other words, the people should collectively decide exactly what they need and they should share fully in the wealth they produce. To this end the whole administration of the government should be subject to the dictates of the people, something that doesn't occur in present capitalistic society. If the needs of the people are neither being met by the present form of government administration nor by the present economic philosophy we call capitalism, both should be

ent government and its subsidiary institutions are illegitimate because they fail to relate to the people and they fail to meet the needs of the people. Therefore, they have no right to exist. The Black Panther Party feels that in the interest of the people's new institutions, both political and economic, should be established, and that the old institutions should disappear.

There is no excuse in our modern times, with the technology that exists in America, for people to be without the basic necessities of life, to say nothing of the psychological state man needs for day to day living.

Black people have been oppressed for so long that we have forgotten how to make decisions. We suffer from what psychology calls "fixation." We have done the same things over and over again. Even if no gratification whatsoever results from that activity, we still go along with the outmoded values, which are in strict contradiction to our very existence simply because we have been programmed, indoctrinated and totally stripped of our dignity. In America the true basis of creativity is suppressed. Returning to my basic premise, the value of man, the purpose of man is to be free and to engage in productive creativity. This is the freedom we are talking about; this is the freedom that makes life worth living.

The time has come for black people to start making decisions that affect their lives. While this may seem like an easy thing to do, it isn't. A man living in modern society is affected both by his relationship to production (and consumption), and his relationship to other men. Black people have largely been excluded from a significant relationship to production and have suffered from inadequate participation in consumption.

In addition, their relationship to other men has resulted in social, as well as economic, oppression. These external conditions have produced internal states. That is, the explanations offered by society for the external conditions have become internalized, thus preventing black people from exercising both physical and mental mobility. Freud realized that men become ill when they feel they have no control over their lives. So, to free man from these forces, he evolved psychoanalysis which attempts to make man aware of those internal states which influence his behavior. The assumption of psychoanalysis is that once man is aware of these subconscious forces, he can take the first steps toward controlling them, and these steps are the initial steps toward freedom. And it is this type of freedom the Black Panther Party is seeking.

The truth, the hard truth which all people, whether black or white, must understand is that the capitalistic system functions for the benefit of the owners of production, whether it be classical capitalism, state capitalism or monopoly capitalism. The function of production is to produce controlled distribution that produces profits. Whatever good comes from production is coincidental. In other words, production does not exist for the benefit of the people, but only for the producers. Thus, man is a tool; he is used to produce and he is used to dispose of the products of production. When he fails to produce or dispose, he is considered a counter-productive member of society. But a stigma attaches to those on welfare. It is as if they were enemies of the state.

The ultimate form of capitalism, which is what we have in America today, exists where a small group of men has another and larger group of men enslaved simply for profit. What is missing in this system is the production of

making purposes. Also, in this system, the masses of the people do not participate in the decisions as to what products shall be produced, what services offered, or where either are to be distributed. This makes for unequal distribution, which in turn makes for suffering and privation for millions of people.

Production of goods, and their consumption, forms the basis of modern social relations. He who controls production and consumption controls everyone in society. Because private ownership of the means of production has such a great effect upon all people it must be destroyed. Everyone has to live, and in order to live he has to produce. But in a capitalistic society he never produces for use. He always produces for profit, and this is a slave situation.

It is a historical fact that blacks were brought to this country for the profit of the ruling class which at the time were landowners. They needed someone to till the soil and grow profitable crops. Today we have shifted from an agrarian economy to a goods-production economy. But the same relationships exist between the private owner and the worker. Nothing has changed. Therefore, for the working people to be free, they must seize control of the means of production.

All members of the working classes must seize the means of production. This, naturally, includes black people. But as I said before, to do this we must become psychologically free so that we can be fully capable of meaningful self-determination. Capitalism deprives us all of self-determination. Only in the context of socialism can men practice the self-determination necessary to provide for their freedom. This is the ultimate objective of the Black Panther Party. We are attempting to transform an oppressive capitalistic society into a socialistic society in which each man shall participate in the decisions that affect his life, thus making him free.

There are steps that will lead to that society. The Black Panther Party recognizes that blacks are in a unique position in America. Because of our heritage, we are the one national minority that has always been deprived of all freedom in determining our destiny. We now demand to be free to structure our own communities so that we can determine the institutions of the community that will perpetuate our culture.

The Black Panther Party believes that in order for ethnic minorities to be free, we will have to have administrators who are responsive to the needs and desires of the people. They will be in office solely for the purpose of answering those needs, and the people will be in a position to make the final decision of what will be done.

In a capitalistic society, the capitalist is not interested in a national minority because it has no profit value to him. Black people can only begin to experience self-determination when the profit motive behind production disappears. That is why self-determination can only work in a socialistic context. We realize that not only are blacks kept in a slave condition, all persons in this country are essentially in that condition. In order for us to become free, all citizens will have to be free.

There are divisions in the black community that impede the path to self-determination and freedom. One of these divisions is between cultural nationalists and revolutionary nationalists.

The cultural nationalist seeks refuge by retreating to some ancient African behavior and culture, and he refuses to take into consideration those forces that are acting both on his own group and on the world as a whole. The revolutionary nationalist sees that there is no hope for cultural or individual expression, or even hope that his people can exist as a unique entity in a complex whole as long as the bureaucratic capitalist is in control.

The Black Panthers are revolutionary nationalists. We do not believe that it is necessary to go back to the culture of 11th century Africa. In reality, we must deal with the dynamic present in order to forge a progressive future. We feel no need to retreat to the past, although we respect our African heritage. The things that are useful in the African heritage we will use to deal with the

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forces that are working on us today. Those things that are outdated, that are antique, we will look upon with respect, and a fact of our heritage, but not as the basis for a pattern of behavior to follow in the present time.

The revolutionary nationalist respects people, particularly the oppressed people, everywhere and he realizes all men's common struggle for freedom. And this is what the Black Panther Party is primarily interested in.

There is another division among us, one that the new administration under Richard Nixon is trying to widen. It is a cruel division and a hoax perpetrated on many sincere but misguided black people who still believe they can find their freedom and security in the capitalist system. The talk today is for a type of black capitalism to parallel white capitalism. (Is this a return to separate but equal institutions?) A part of the black bourgeoisie seems to be committed to developing, or attempting to develop, a form of capitalism within the black community, or the black colony as we call it. As far as the masses are concerned it would merely be trading one master for another. A small group of blacks would control our destiny if this development came to pass.

Such a notion is reminiscent of our earlier history when we had black slave masters. A small percentage of the blacks owned slaves; they were our first black bourgeoisie. What we have today are their spiritual descendants. And just as the earlier black slave holders failed to alleviate the suffering of their slaves, so today the black capitalists (those few in existence) do nothing to alleviate the suffering of their oppressed black brothers.

But in a greater sense, black capitalism is a hoax. Black capitalism is represented as a great step toward black liberation. It isn't. It is a giant stride away from liberation. No black capitalist can function unless he plays the white man's game. Worse still, while the black capitalist wants to think he functions on his own terms, he doesn't. He is always subject to the whims of the white capitalist. The rules of black capitalism, and the limits of black



What black man wants to die in defense of a system that denies him justice? What black man wants to support an economic system that forces his black brother to go to distant lands to kill and be killed? It is literally a case of black men sending other black men to their deaths so that white men can have bigger profits.

The Panther Community Program is attempting to spur the community into action, creative action, to regain the dignity of the people. We join the struggle of any and all oppressed people all over the world, as well as in this country, regardless of color, who are attempting to gain freedom and dignity. These are the rights of man, and not of any particular group. In some ways, the Panthers are like the psychotherapist in that we are trying to make the people well again. The people have been made ill by the forces of oppressive capitalism that have kept them in a position of servitude. The first thing we have to do is make the people aware of these forces that for so long seemed beyond their reach, or control, or understanding. The ruling class has indoctrinated us for so long that we have internalized certain behavior patterns



which they want us to have and which we mistakenly think are part of our natural selves. They are not. If we are to be free from economic and social slavery, we must first gain control of our inner selves before we can begin to change the external circumstances of our lives.

The Panther's educational program in the community tries to expose the forces that have shaped our past and our present. On the sociological level we agree with Marx that outside forces control man's behavior patterns, and that he will be oppressed until he can control them and can act in his own best interest.

We are not alone in our struggle for freedom. Young whites are beginning to realize more and more each day that they are not free. They have become very angry because the ideas with which they have been indoctrinated have turned out to be lies. They are told that they are free, yet when they try to create and manifest a new form of decision-making on the college campuses they are arrested and some are even shot down.

The capitalist ruling class cannot tolerate any challenge from the people. If the people once discover that they are not truly free, they will seek the freedom they lack, thus threatening the existence of the ruling class. In reprisal the ruling class will use any means to put down the people.

Today in some white communities people are suffering from the same repression that we in the black community suffer. The same forces are there—the police, the National Guard and sometimes even the Regular Army. This will continue to happen time and again in the coming years, thus forming a basis for unity between the peoples of both the black and white communities. Not only are we coming together in unity in this country, we are all part of the international brotherhood of oppressed people.

People all over the world see that their enemy is American imperialism. In Vietnam, one example among many, the people, that is, the National Liberation Front, insist on determining their own destiny. In the pursuit of that goal they will give up their lives rather than forgo the pursuit of freedom that every man deserves. The Panthers stand with the Vietnamese people, and people everywhere, who are attempting to determine their own destinies.

The Panthers are being harassed, persecuted and killed across the country because we know the truth of our society and we are trying to pass the truth on to the people. Once the people grasp the reality of what we are saying, the ruling class will no longer be able to resist the uprising of the oppressed people. The people of the world are no longer willing to be slaves. The ruling class, of course, is fighting desperately to remain in control.

Until we achieve the freedom we all want, this country will be in a state of chaos. It will suffer revolts and eventually revolution. But the peoples' needs are greater than those of the ruling class. And their will is stronger than that of the ruling class. Man, once awakened to the truth that freedom from oppression and freedom to engage in productive creativity are within his grasp, will never remain content to be a slave.



capitalism are set by the white power structure.

As a matter of fact, there can be no real black capitalism because no blacks control the means of production. All blacks can do is have illusions. They can dream of the day when they might share ownership of the means of production. But there is no free enterprise in America. We have monopoly capitalism which is a closed society of white industrialists and their protectors, white politicians in Washington.

While strictly speaking there can be no black capitalism, there is a black bourgeoisie made up primarily of black professionals and small business operators. All, regardless of wealth or accomplishment, are subject to and controlled by the industrialists.

Still, within the black community there is something of a close relationship between all black people, regardless of class or position, because of racism in this country. It would be in the interest of the black bourgeoisie to eliminate racism in order to enhance their prospects, but racism cannot be eliminated until capitalism is eliminated. Historically racism, in the context of developing capitalism, provided the surplus capital that allowed American capitalism to become the monster it is today. Racism is still believed to be a profitable and essential ingredient of capitalism. In our society racism is linked to capitalism. Only by eliminating capitalism and substituting for it socialism will black people, all black people, be able to practice self-determination and thus achieve freedom. Freedom means the end of exploitation, something we have suffered from for centuries. And when the Black Panther Party calls for freedom, it means freedom now!

A capitalistic society can exist only on the basis of a war economy, with its built-in obsolescence and artificially stimulated demands for greater production. The victims of this capitalistic necessity are the black people. Our people are the most drafted and the most killed; it is our contribution toward the preservation of capitalism. In peace we are capitalism's victims, and in war we are its victims. Could anything be more harmful to us as a people and as individuals than to strive for the success of capitalism?

