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Pouncing on the Heartland: The Impact of the Black Panther Party on Kansas City and Des Moines

Introduction

Eldridge Cleaver, the Minister of Information for the Oakland Black Panther Party, in *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches,* a compilation of various writings by Cleaver and published in 1967 by Ramparts in New York, wrote about his first time meeting the Panthers during a Bay Area Grassroots Organizations Planning Committee meeting:

> Suddenly the room fell silent. The crackling undercurrent that for weeks had made it impossible to get one's point across when one had the floor was gone; there was only the sound of the lock clicking as the front door opened, and then the soft shuffle of feet moving quietly toward the circle…I spun around in my seat and saw the most beautiful sight I had ever seen: four black men wearing black berets, powder blue shirts, black leather jackets, black trousers, shiny black shoes—and each had a gun!... Roy Ballard jumped to his feet. Licking his lips, he said, "For those of you who've never met the brothers, these are the Oakland Panthers." "You're wrong," said Huey Newton "Were not the Oakland Panthers. We happen to live in Oakland. Our name is the Black Panther Party." (Cleaver 29-30)

From 1940-1950, because of the Great Migration at the turn of the century, Oakland, California's African American population grew from 8,462 to 47,562 according to Donna Murch in "The Campus and the Street: Race, Migration, and the Origins of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA" in 2007. Murch's article in *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society,* discusses the many reasons the Black Panther Party came into being. The first

generation of African Americans in the San Francisco Bay area, faced with economic opportunity from World War II, prospered with abundant jobs in ship yards, memberships in unions, and a state promise of higher quality education (Murch 336). Life for African Americans was better in the Bay Area in comparison to the South since they were less likely to work in agriculture where brutal physical repression was common. Additionally, Bay Area home ownership was the highest in the nation at the time (Murch 335). All of this was made possible, of course, by the need for workers in the industrial war industry. As Murch puts it, "Racial segregation functioned like a palimpsest whose layers grew denser with the passage of time" (335). Eventually the prosperity that this generation of African Americans had would be superseded by the social ills that the new generation in the Bay Area would face once the war ended.

"Five short years of boom were followed by long decades of bust" (Murch 336) where industrial decline had a major impact on the Bay Area African American population since most worked in the ship yards for World War II. Unemployment was rampant and racial discrimination resurfaced from a lack of industrial need for African Americans, and by 1959 "one quarter of the total population in Oakland lived under the poverty line and roughly ten percent earned less than $2000 per year" (Murch 336). To make matters worse, the Associated Agencies (AA) and the District Community Councils (DCA) in Oakland marked African American youth who acted out in criminal ways because of their social ills as "juvenile delinquents", having the police arrest many even without a prior record (Murch 337). The police had a reactive response too, hiring a white middle-class force that had no relation to the ghettos they patrolled or the African American youth they arrested (Murch 337).

This was all about to change. Education was always an important factor in the dreams of the Bay Area African American population, and by 1960 many of the youth were enrolled in secondary education and had the opportunity to go to junior colleges, where they would become politically active and the starting-ground for many grassroots organizations such as the Black Panther Party (Murch 342). In fact, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale got their start at Berkeley and Merritt College but quickly separated themselves from the schools to start the first chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (Murch 341). Newton and Seale eventually wrote a Ten Point Program in 1966 which laid out their beliefs and goals for the Black Panther Party.

Bobby Seale, during an interview in *All Power to the People* directed by Lee Lew Lee in 1996, a documentary about the history of the Black Panther Party from their rise to their destruction by the FBI, talks about writing the Ten Point Program with Newton and what they wanted to do:

> I found the Declaration of Independence piece that first two paragraphs that said 'when in the course of human events it becomes necessary for any one people to dissolve the political bondage… Well this kind of phrase in this kind of thinking and our understanding, particularly the way I was coming from in my decision to help, to create this organization was all about this need to change and alter the government, to evolve some community control, kinda political power back into the hands of African people in the black community (All Power to the People)

The Black Panther Party (BPP) was a beautiful vision to many other African Americans besides Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Bobby Seale. Segregation, unemployment, poor education, and various other issues were brutal realities that African Americans still faced despite the changes being made by Dr. Martin Luther King and his non-violent ideology in the 1960s.The party spread across the country with chapters popping up on the East Coast and even

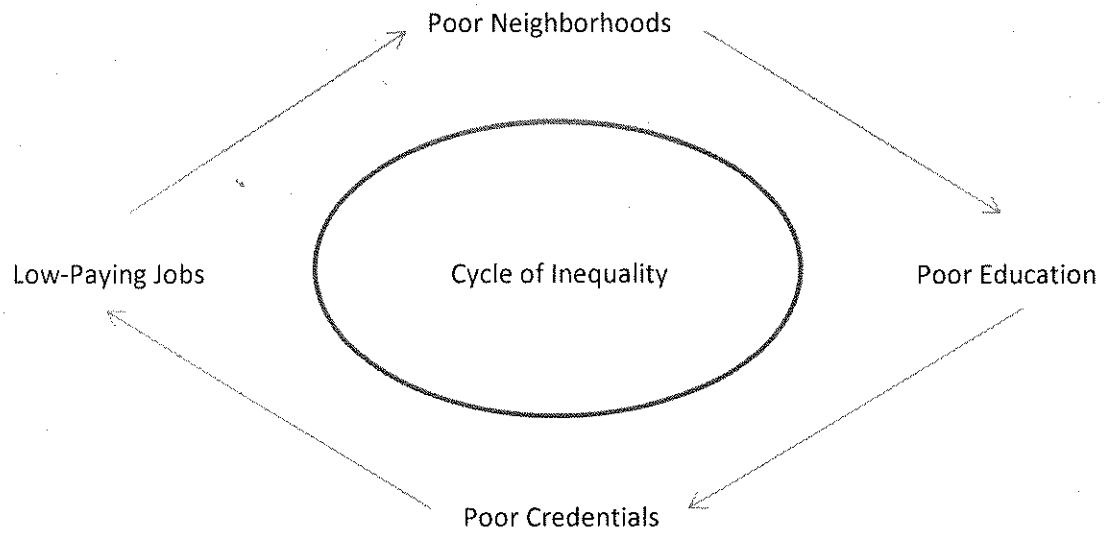
in the Mid-West despite being a feared militant group to many who didn't understand the group's intentions. The chapters in Kansas City, Missouri and Des Moines, Iowa initiated "survival programs" to help African Americans in their communities, all in an effort to erase many of the inequalities that existed during the BPP's existence under the banner of Black Nationalist ideology, or self-determination and independence for African Americans. This paper will attempt to evaluate and make a claim about whether or not the BPP was successful in ending the various inequalities faced by urban African Americans in these two cities, what programs they tried, and why they formed as an organization in the first place.

To make the most reasonable claim about the BPP's success, this paper will (1) introduce a key idea to better understand the conditions that African Americans were in before and during the Civil Rights Movement and to better judge whether the BPP was successful in Kansas City and Des Moines, (2) describe the history of the Kansas City and Des Moines chapters of the BPP including the catalysts that led to their existence, their "survival programs", and their eventual collapse, (3) look at modern data relative to issues that the African Americans faced in the two cities, testimonials of Black Nationalism in the two cities, and possible legacies and leadership left behind, (4) all to make an evaluation whether the BPP was successful with their "survival programs" to solve the inequalities that African Americans faced in these two cities.

The Cycle of Inequality

Imagine living in a poor inner city ghetto your entire life. You went to underfunded public schools with a lack of technology, were given outdated textbooks, and taught by low-salaried teachers. Once you graduated high school you didn't have the money to go to college so you worked full time at some service industry with no opportunity to move up into higher paying

positions. Eventually you started a family, barely scraping by with the weekly pay checks that you and your spouse were earning. This money was going to necessities such as food and rent, so any improvements of neighborhoods such as community gardens or funds to improve schools were non-existent. Also you didn't have time to vote or go to city council meetings because most of your time was put into keeping a roof over your head and feeding your children. Therefore when it was time for your children to start school, they went to underfunded schools with a lack of technology, were given outdated textbooks, and taught by low-salaried teachers to start the whole process over again. This process is called the "cycle of inequality". Below is a diagram that demonstrates this:



This diagram, going from right to left, shows that a poor education leads to poor credentials such as not having a college degree. This leads to low-paying jobs like a service industry position with a less likely chance for income development and eventually transfers into poor neighborhoods since a surplus of income to improve the neighborhood is absent. All of this leads to a renewal of the process with a new generation. Most African Americans faced this

reality their whole life before and during the 1960s where segregation, unemployment, poor healthcare, and poor education were rampant in cities like we saw in Oakland, and we will see in Kansas City and Des Moines.

Kansas City and the Black Panther Party

Catalysts

The BPP had many reasons to come to Kansas City in the time that they did. According to a 1993 Bureau of the Census statistical brief about African Americans in 1967, African Americans nationally had a median income of $19,080, 58% behind white Americans median income, and 34% of them were considered poor. Since these statistics were relatable to African Americans all around the country, and Kansas City and Des Moines were not immune to them. Add on segregation, racist acts, and anger from failing non-violent action, and the BPP had a perfect recipe to step in to try to save the day.

"Just like the Garden of Eden: African-American Community Life in Kansas City's Leeds" by Gary R. Kremer, published in the *Missouri Historical Review* in 2004, looks at the segregated African American community of Leeds in Kansas City.

Kansas City faced a gigantic influx of African American migrating from the South in the 1890s with their population doubling in thirty years (Kremer 122). The reaction from the city was to round up the African American population and put them into segregated communities. According to Benjamin Looker in *Revisiting City and Race,* where Looker examines the precedents of inner cities that exist today, the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) was a major cause of segregation in Kansas City. Starting in 1910, real estate agents engaged a door-to-door campaign to scare whites and discourage African Americans from

integrating into neighborhoods. They used signs, excuses of decreasing property value, and even death threats (Looker 176). Despite being segregated and the blatant racism that surrounded them, African Americans found a way to thrive in several areas of Kansas City. One example is the Vine Street Corridor, a long strip of street where African Americans found a small amount of social and cultural independence. As the population kept growing in the area, schools such as two Crispus Attucks Schools, Lincoln High School, black churches popped up from 1893-1912 (Kremer 122-123), and in the 1920s, as African Americans looked for other places to live, an anomaly came into being known as Leeds.

Leeds was a small segregated, rural community that lay two miles outside of the Vine Street Corridor where African Americans could own a house and land, an enormous achievement for the population; 89% of the people that lived in Leeds owned their homes (Kremer 124). Also, since they were rural, residents owned livestock such as chickens, ducks, guineas, and sometimes cows while also planting large gardens to grow a variety of fruits and vegetables—mostly ones that they were familiar with in the South—and shared them with neighbors during harvest time (Kremer 126-127). This allowed for the community to be what Kremer called "semi-subsistent" (129), since the men still had to work in the city as laborers at factories or construction sites (Kremer 129). Leeds seemed like a dream come true to Kansas City's African Americans but since large numbers still had to travel in the city, they still faced discrimination on a daily basis, especially in the late 1950's when many moved out to find better homes (Kremer 143). In the city for work, African Americans from Leeds faced derogatory and racial comments from white citizens, and even were denied seating based on their skin color on public transportation (Kremer 130). Children from Leeds faced discrimination too when they eventually had to go to a segregated high school in the city. Living in a rural area made them seem backward and

primitive to children in the city. Leeds children would even change their muddy shoes before they got to school to avoid any discrimination from other students (Kremer 140). Nevertheless, the Vine Street Corridor and Leeds gave African Americans in Kansas City a taste of independence in a rough time period, and eventually wanted more. When the Black Panther Party rolled into town in 1968, the community knew which flavor of sovereignty they wanted: black power.

On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America in 2010, edited by J.L. Jefferies, is a collection of various articles about Black Panther Party chapters all over the United States. The article in the book, "The Kansas City Black Panther Party and the Repression of the Black Revolution" by Reynaldo Anderson discusses the origins of the Black Panther Party in Kansas City, including their "survival programs" and eventual end. Anderson focuses on the reason for the decline of the Black Panther Party. Besides past neighborhoods that gave African Americans in Kansas City a sense of independence, and blatant racism from white citizens, other factors added to the need and development of the BPP in Kansas City.

One was the failure of other organizations to solve the issues of segregation, police brutality, and employment discrimination. Freedom Inc. was an attempt in 1962 to start a power base for African Americans, specifically "to organize black voters more effectively and nurture the growth of future black leaders" ("Kansas City…" 99). Overall, Freedom Inc. was successful at increasing African American voter organization because in 1963 they got a public accommodations ordinance passed and in 1964 supported several candidates that got elected ("Kansas City…" 99). These of course were hollow victories for the African American community because Freedom Inc. failed to end major issues like segregation, police brutality, and any negative economic circumstances. Anderson does point out a key idea, however, that

Freedom Inc. could have done much more for the community if its president hadn't been assassinated ("Kansas City…"99).

Another reason for the BPP forming in Kansas City was the lack of faith in the non-violent integrationist practices of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "The Ghettos Erupt" in *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement*—a book giving a broad historical viewpoint of the Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1968—by Robert Weisbrot, discusses the revolts and Civil Right Actions in urban areas across the United States. Weisbrot writes this about what African Americans thought about King's movement in the North and why it wouldn't work:

> Integration as a means to full citizenship meant little to Northern blacks, who already had the ballot and exercised a multitude of other civil rights for which Southern Negroes were still struggling…Integration into the larger economic system had a greater potential appeal, but it remained a remote abstraction for most ghetto dwellers… Unsurprisingly, then, among the black urban poor the term "integration" often stirred greater suspicion of middle-class Negroes than faith in reform-minded whites. (169)

It's important to note that this doesn't mean that urban African Americans, including in Kansas City, didn't respect King. In fact the opposite true; when King was assassinated in 1968, and Kansas City High School refused to close school for the day in his honor, students protested and a riot was started later that night until the National Guard was called in ("Kansas City…" 99). King was seen as a Messiah, a man who stood up for all African Americans, and it didn't matter whether his tactics were looked down or praised, when you disrespected King you disrespected every African American.

The riots and protests of African American youth expressed deep anger in a time of great change. The generation in the 1960s could look back on their parents' generation and the current events of their time, and easily see great injustices being performed in their own communities. This viewpoint created sufficient anger that the Youth of Kansas City were willing to go to lengths beyond non-violence and integration to make a change. The failure of organizations like Freedom Inc., King's tactics, and the overall anger felt by these failures and the current condition of their community, both created the BPP chapter in Kansas City and helped fuel its members into action.

Survival Programs

In 1969, the BPP was formed in Kansas City by Pete O'Neal. The group was originally known as the Black Vigilantes until they got accepted into the Party which was made up of many members, such as past members of other organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) ("Kansas City…" 99-100). The newly formed chapter initiated a variety of "survival programs" like legal services, voter registration drives, black caucuses in Unions, and free clothing programs, though most of their effort and success was put into free breakfast programs, free health clinics, and education programs ("Kansas City…" 101).

The idea of the free breakfast program was that "children could not learn without proper nutrients, and breakfast was the most important meal of the day" ("Kansas City…" 101). In other words, a proper diet would help African American children learn better and one day break out of the "cycle of inequality" by adding to the solution for poor education in the diagram on page

five. Peter O'Neal, in an interview with Jeremy O'Kasick in 2003 for *African Affairs,* has this to say about the chapter's breakfast program:

> For one, we were feeding children. We were the forerunners of the breakfast-for-schoolchildren programme. In Kansas City we were feeding some 700 poor children a day. It was for a short time, but we did it. The government was doing nothing like this at the time. After a while they came in and said that they could do it. And then they couldn't find a way to implement the plan. (632)

The free health clinics' goal was to bring about awareness of certain health issues like sickle cell anemia, unique to African Americans. The chapter teamed up health professionals to carry out this project, and this was important because it helped grow trust between African Americans who were skeptical of the chapter's actions ("Kansas City…" 101-102). With good health, an African American has a better chance of breaking out of the "cycle of inequality" in comparison to an individual who is sick so a job or even college is impossible.

Education for the BPP in Kansas City took on many forms. For one, members handed out copies of the *Black Panther*, the national party's newspaper, and political education classes were just a few of many ways that they educated the community and spread the BPP message ("Kansas City…" 108). A better education is a main strategy to end poor education in the "cycle of inequality" and the empowerment that it will help development would only help the individual.

When these programs were started, they had great promise in eventually breaking the "cycle of inequality" but the eventual change that they were supposed to create, or at least initiate, would not continue as soon as the BPP disappeared.

The Downfall

The BPP in Kansas City had a few reasons for disappearing. One of the major reasons was outside oppression both at a local and state level. As Anderson puts it, "The local enmity of the Kansas City Police Department was intense. Local new media worked in conjunction with the police to destroy the image of the party and limit its popularity with law abiding citizens" ("Kansas City…" 107).

Another reason was that the chapter lost much of its support from other organizations, and even the BPP Central Committee itself. The rhetoric of the Party against the police, calling them "pigs" and the approval of their deaths caused organizations such as the NAACP to withdraw support ("Kansas City…" 111). Despite the Kansas City chapter's good standing with the BPP in Oakland, they couldn't survive the schism that was created with Huey Newton continuing his time in prison and his split with Eldridge Cleaver ("Kansas City…" 106).

One of the biggest reasons, according to Anderson is the "Carrot and Stick approach" where incentives by the government were offered to middle and upper-class blacks to support their own programs ("Kansas City…" 111). These programs included Affirmative Action (employment support), education support, free breakfast programs (anti-hunger programs), and others. This sounds like a good initiative from the government of course, but these offerings were used to draw community support away from the BPP who claimed that the government was the African American's enemy an oppressor. This effectively destroyed the radicalism that the BPP was spreading across Kansas City.

By 1970, the BPP chapter in Kansas City was effectively gone after only two years and the founder, Peter O'Neal, was on the run to Africa with his family ("Kansas City…" 112). The remaining group then defected from the Central Committee and named themselves the Heirs of Malcolm. They continued some of the "survival programs" but with limited support. It was nothing like it had been when they were a part of the BPP ("Kansas City…" 115). With the BPP gone in Kansas City and the city government taking over, life had to continue for the African American community, for better or worse.

Des Moines and the Black Panther Party

Catalysts

Just like in Kansas City, Des Moines was part of the national statistics for African Americans in terms of income and poverty, but Iowa was much worse in terms of income. Burt Hubbard, in an article called "Gains by blacks have slipped since Civil Rights Movement" which discusses the decline of social progress for African Americans, says that Iowa was among the top four states to have the widest income gap between African Americans and white Americans by 2010 (Hubbard par. 27). It's reasonable to see then that income, the failure of organizations before the BPP, and a loss of independence might have triggered the BPP to form in Des Moines.

"The Des Moines, Iowa, African American Community and the Emergence and Impact of the Black Panther Party, 1948–1973" by Bruce Fehn and Robert Jefferson discusses the origins of the BPP in Des Moines including their "survival programs" and eventual end. Fehn and Jefferson focus on the legacy of the Des Moines chapter despite its decline. Just like in Kansas City, African Americans in Des Moines, Iowa encountered similar issues of segregation, police brutality, and numerous economic issues and also found a way to acquire independence in

an area called Center Street. Center Street resembled Vine Street in Kansas City and had a semi-subsistence lifestyle like Leeds. Center Street in Des Moines was the "focal point of black economic, social, and cultural life" ("Des Moines…" 192). This was the case for more than 20 years until the City initiated freeway building and renovation of the area, abruptly ending the African Americans' independent lifestyle.

The highway project had many negative effects. One was the destruction of African American businesses, leading to underground and illegal activity like prostitution and liquor sales, all for white Americans to fill the gap, and heavy police involvement and eventual harassment, as a means to solve the problem ("Des Moines…" 192). Another issue was the freeways took away land for affordable housing which realtors took advantage of by constantly keeping African Americans from moving into more expensive white neighborhoods ("Des Moines…" 193). The loss of Center Street's independence in the 1950s was devastating for the African American condition in Des Moines. Just like in Kansas City though, they knew independence and the BPP would be the life-line for this feeling in the 1960s.

Before the BPP came to Des Moines, efforts were being made in the city to bring equality and end the various struggles that African Americans were dealing with. To fight segregation, the Concerned Citizens Committee was created. To end the struggle with police, the Citizens Committee to End Police Brutality was started, and to help with the right to welfare, the Welfare Rights Organization was created. These efforts of course were non-violent, integrationist, and more political than social, and just like we saw in Kansas City, the African American community in Des Moines had little faith in any of these beliefs. As with Freedom Inc. in Kansas City, these various organizations failed to put any dent in segregation, police brutality, or welfare and grave discontent grew (Des Moines 194), leading to cries for help by more violent means.

In 1966, during a Fourth of July celebration at Good Park—the last segregated area where African American youth found independence—police tried to disperse the gathering and a riot was started (Des Moines 194). Two years later, there was a march to the state capital building down Locust Street to honor Martin Luther King's death. At the Capital, police and African American youth faced off starting another riot (Des Moines 197-198). These incidents represent the growing anger, frustration, and cry of militancy that African Americans in Des Moines were feeling at the time. Fehn and Jefferson sum it up this way:

> [The riots] occurred at a time when blacks in many cities expressed violent discontent often sparked by instances of what they perceived as police brutality directed at African Americans. African Americans, many stuck in northern urban ghettos with few economic opportunities, grew impatient with the progress of the mainstream civil rights movement. ("Des Moines…" 194)

The BPP in Des Moines would be the entity to express these troubles in "survival programs," more productive forms of action.

Survival Programs

The BPP chapter in Des Moines, Iowa lasted from 1968-1971 and had more than 100 members ("Des Moines…" 201-202). The chapter was started by Mary Rhem (eventually Sister Haadasha), a woman who wanted to help women with welfare rights, and Charles Knox, a former Volunteers in Service to America (Vista) member where he worked with the working poor of Des Moines in 1967 ("Des Moines…" 202). The BPP party started "survival programs" such as cultural projects, breakfast programs for children, health programs for adults, welfare support, and political education classes.

The main goal of the chapter was to "'promote and develop black power in the community which means the economic, political and cultural control of the black community by black people'" ("Des Moines…" 204) and therefore much of their effort went into breakfast programs, welfare support, and education programs.

The BPP in Des Moines operated their free breakfast program for children in the basement of Forest Avenue Baptist Church, whose congregation was mostly white, and along with giving 75 to 100 children a hearty breakfast daily, they educated the children on politics ("Des Moines…" 209). This combination of nutrition and direct education would help break the "cycle of inequality" that the children would face for the future and also promote the party's ideology of anti-capitalism.

In 1969, the party led a "camp-in" at statehouse grounds to gain attention for welfare rights for women in Iowa and across the country ("Des Moines…" 214). This act was supported by the Welfare Rights Organization, but its success beyond gaining immediate attention is unknown.

One of the more major focuses of the Des Moines BPP was the emphasis on education. They required all recruits to attend political education classes, Mao's *Little Red Book* and similar texts were required readings, and if you didn't know how to read then they would teach you from these readings. For the community, they held political education classes weekly and even wrote out their own 16 point education program ("Des Moines…" 207-208). To the chapter, these lessons must be learned to, as Fehn and Jefferson put it, "solve, and not just understand, problems of poor housing, health, inadequate public services, and the poverty that beset their community" ("Des Moines…" 208). This process, in theory, would break the "cycle of

inequality" faced by African Americans. Tony Brown, a former member of the Des Moines BPP, in an interview with FasTrac of the African American Museum of Iowa, said this about what the BPP was trying to accomplish:

> ...We were all focusing on making the community, the black communities, more secure, more educated, and more self-reliant on education and inner strength within our communities. We were trying to organize people to realize the power that we had in numbers versus the power we had from, from an economic state, we didn't have too much power, but we had a lot of people who all shared the same issues; the same social/political issues...(Brown par.14)

Although the "survival programs" were seen as successful at the time, they faced setbacks. The BPP was under constant harassment from police and judicial harassment that took time and effort away from their program such as the bombing of the chapter's headquarters in 1969 and the Des Moines police station which were blamed on the chapter and its militant ideology ("Des Moines..." 208). Another incident was the Jewet fire and the "Des Moines 3" where Charles Knox, Joeanna Cheatom, and her son were arrested and eventually aquitted for burning down the Jewet Lumber Company factory in 1968 ("Des Moines..." 206-207). These incidents made the BPP on guard 24/7, weakening their focus on helping the community just to defend themselves. This, of course, was only the beginning; the BPP would eventually fall apart from the constant struggle.

Downfall

Unlike the Kansas City chapter, the Des Moines BPP was not on good terms with the BPP Central Committee. By this time in the early 1970s, the national organization was slowly disintegrating and the only way to make money was through the sales of their *Black Panther*

magazines: The Des Moines BPP didn't sell the quantity the Central Committee wanted. The group was kicked out of the BPP for lack of sales and they become the Black Revolutionary Communist Youth ("Des Moines…" 215). Soon though, the harassment from government authorities became too much, culminating an Internal Security hearing against the group that existed to "promote revolution" ("Des Moines…" 216). Each member of the former Des Moines chapter was tried for contempt, received sentences, and the group crumbled in 1971 ("Des Moines…" 217). As with Kansas City, the end of the Des Moines BPP meant an end to their "survival programs" and life continued for the African American Community. Was their life better? This next section will finally evaluate the BPP's success in Kansas City and Des Moines in modern times to answer this question.

Legacy and Accomplishments?

Marcus D. Pohlmann, in the chapter, "Blacks in American Society" from his book *Black Politics In Conservative America,* published by Plume in 2008, describes the current conditions of African Americans across the country. In a broad scale African Americans have made some progress in breaking the "cycle of inequality" but they are still far behind their white counterparts. In the realm of education, "the dropout rate for inner city black males exceeds 50%" (Pohlmann 46) and college attendance is 25% lower than whites (Pohlmann 47). Other fields such as poverty, housing, and healthcare far no better. With half living before the poverty line (Pohlmann 50), the black-white segregation index doubling (Pohlmann 51), and a more likely chance to contract diseases (Pohlmann 52), it seems like the BPP was unsuccessful in making any change in African American conditions or breaking the "cycle of inequality". We should just claim them as a failure right? No; when we look at the specific areas of Kansas City and Des Moines the picture becomes much greyer.

In Kansas City, according to data published with the State Data Center at the Library of Kansas in 2010, the graduation rate for African Americans was 83.2%, much different from the national dropout rate that Pohlmann presents. Thirty-two point eight percent of African Americans in Kansas are in college as of 2010 while 19.5% hold a degree; this of course is still behind the rest of Kansas (Kansas African).

Poverty is still high according to State Data Center at the Library of Kansas the median income for African Americans was $29,127 to $47,817 for the rest of the state and 18.8% don't have healthcare compared to the rest of the state with 13.2%(Kansas African).

An article in *USA TODAY* by Haya El Nasser in 2007 shows a glimpse of hope that segregation is declining in the Kansas City area. Despite a growing African American population, they are being able to integrate into white suburban neighborhoods. It's important to note, for the purpose of this paper that this is a new phenomenon since "black-white residential segregation plummeted from 2000 to 2010 in the Kansas City metropolitan area after rising during each of the previous three decades" (El Nasser, *Cities Moving*) so the involvement from the BPP isn't possible since the Kansas City Black Panther Party disappeared in 1970, thirty years before this change started happening.

In comparison to Kansas City and the rest of the nation, Des Moines has some similarities and differences. According to data published in February of 2013 by The State Data Center of Iowa and The Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans, 82.4% of African Americans held a high school diploma in comparison to the rest of Iowa with 90.2% (Iowa Commission). This is once again higher than Pohlmann's national data and not too far behind the state average though 16.5% of them are in college (Iowa Commission).

As for poverty and healthcare, 41% of African Americans are in poverty compared to the rest of the state with 12.8% and the death rate was 5.1 per 1000 compared to 9.2 per 1000 for the state of Iowa. Segregation, according to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission in the 1990s, released data that showed segregation declining from 1960-1970 in Des Moines, but gradually increasing past 1990 (Iowa Civil) for whatever reasons.

Before we make any evaluation, it's important to realize that the BPP lasted only a couple years in both Kansas City and Des Moines, and that their "survival programs" to address the challenges of African Americans in these communities lasted just as long. Therefore, we may only judge the successes based *partially* on the BPP since various other organizations that may or may not have spawned from BPP actions had just as much significance as the BPP itself. We can still evaluate whether the BPP was successful in their goals for change because they were *partially* involved with any progressive results.

Based on the information above and the lack of change from the BPP "survival programs," it is reasonable to assume that the Black Panther Party was unsuccessful in bringing lasting overall economic change and breaking the "cycle of inequality" in Kansas City and Des Moines despite the increase the education, a main goal of both chapters. This isn't all we must evaluate though; another goal of the Black Panther Party was empowerment of African Americans. We can also look at lasting legacies they left behind such as programs and leadership.

In Kansas City, the "Carrot and Stick approach" actually turned out to be a good move despite the loss of radicalism. The need to eliminate the radicalism in the city forced the state and eventually the United States government to take responsibility for the lives of African Americans

with programs such as Affirmative Action. This came at a small sacrifice though, because the establishment's control over the programs took away some of the power and independence the African community had over the programs. Nevertheless, the sacrifice was made and programs resembling the "survival programs" of the BPP survive to this day making it at least a partial success.

Bruce Fehn and Robert Jefferson support the idea that the BPP left the psychological impact of a "voice" ("Des Moines…" 217) quoting historian Ralph Crowder for support that the BPP in Des Moines challenged the authority, something unheard of before, and inspired the youth of the day to take action ("Des Moines…" 217). Programs like KUBC—now KJMC— a Pre-Trial Support Program, students taking black courses at Des Moines High School, and a whole new Fredrick Douglas School was opened to serve those with learning needs ("Des Moines…" 217-218) are lasting programs that were directly caused by the BPP in Des Moines.

The BPP in both Kansas City and Des Moines also created leadership in individuals too. Peter O'Neal fled the country and continued his work in communities in Tanzania, while Charles Knox founded KUBC and Sister Haadasha was member of the board of directors ("Des Moines…" 217). Joeanna Cheatom had a park dedicated after her and started the Pre-Trial Support Program before her death.

Conclusion

The Kansas City and Des Moines Black Panther Parties had many catalysts for their origins, initiated many survival programs, and went through rough patches that led to their downfall after a of couple years, yet we can still see the BPP's work today despite their failure to make any longer term changes to the African American condition and break the "cycle of

inequality". The BPP therefore was both successful in empowering the African American community in both Kansas City and Des Moines but was not successful in long term economic change with their "survival programs".

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