

Silent Guns, Blazing Rhetoric

A Narrative History of the Black Panther Party of Boston

An honors thesis for the Department of History

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Introduction

On July 6, 1969, the Boston Black Panther Party held a rally in Franklin Park to speak to the community about police brutality. As a tribute to the community that had housed him, they proposed renaming the park after Malcolm X, one of Black Power's heroes. This was one of the Boston Panthers' first public events since May, when the group's leadership was purged and replaced. The event served as an opportunity to reengage with the community they sought to serve. Beginning at one in the afternoon, 300 people arrived for the rally, ate barbecue chicken, and potato salad, and received Malcolm X buttons while Panthers Douglas Miranda and Gene Jones gave speeches. The nascent organization in Boston spent much of its time speaking to the crowd about the Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party. That day the Panthers worked to build a base of support among the African American community in Boston by asking what they wanted and needed. In addition, they touted the already established Free Breakfast Program that served breakfast to children every weekday morning as the first in a line of programs designed to aid the community.¹

Boston, Massachusetts is a major metropolitan hub, not quite akin to New York City or Chicago, but important for New England, and historically for the United States. The segregation experienced by Boston's black community in the twentieth century was comparable to any other major urban center's black ghetto, such as Watts, the South Side, or Harlem. Like other major urban centers, Boston has a rich tradition of African American activism. Though in the nineteenth century the African American population of Boston was only 2% of the total, they

¹ Victor Chen, "Boston Panthers Stalk New Goal", *Boston Globe*, July 6, 1969; Victor Chen, "300 Hear Panthers' Speakers", *Boston Globe*, July 7, 1969; Eugene W. Jones, "From Boston Chapter", *Black Panther*, July 19, 1969; "Panthers Feed Kids", *Bay State Banner*, July 10, 1969.

were a vocal minority.² Massachusetts had some of the most liberal laws regarding African Americans in the middle of the nineteenth century, because there was no “clearly defined” citizenship for whites only.³ This legal equality meant that the language of freedom could be easily appealed to by the African American community. However, “black people found their public worlds governed by white people’s preferences,” and segregation and inequality persisted despite—and because—of the informal establishment of equality.⁴ The term “Cradle of Liberty” was often used to describe Boston in the nineteenth century, but, as pointed out by nineteenth century orator William Wells Brown, “The term Cradle of Liberty, as applied to Boston, was a mockery ... If it ever was the cradle of liberty, the child had been rocked to death.”⁵

The second wave of the Great Migration⁶ saw some increase in the number of African Americans entering Boston, growing from 5% of the total population in 1950 to 16% in 1970.⁷ The city of Boston became increasingly shaded by the increasing proportion of African Americans in the middle of the twentieth century. At the same time, the percentage of African American males employed in labor and service jobs in Boston dropped from 65% to 27% following World War II.⁸ In 1970, the black population of Boston was concentrated into a

² Stephen Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 8.

³ *Ibid*, 45.

⁴ *Ibidi*

⁵ *Ibid*, 45-46.

⁶ The Great Migration was an exodus of African Americans from the South during the twentieth century. The first wave was between approximately 1915 and 1930. The second wave was between approximately 1940 and 1970. For further information about the Great Migration see James Gregory’s *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*, Farah Jasmine Griffin’s “Who Set You Flowin’?”: *The African-American Migration Narrative*, James Grossman’s *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*, and Isabel Wilkerson’s *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*.

⁷ This, however, does not factor in the increase in the number of whites in Boston leaving for the suburbs at the same time. Though Boston still changed significantly from 1950 to 1970, the African American population was not so much rapidly growing in number as in proportion. Richard Alan Ballou, “Even in ‘Freedom’s Birthplace’: The Development of Boston’s Black Ghetto, 1900-1940” (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 1984), 72.

⁸ James Jennings, *et al.*, *Perspectives on Poverty in Boston’s Black Community* (Boston: The Boston Foundation, 1992), 9.

geographically small corridor in the South End, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, constituting a ghetto-situation.⁹ The segregation, compounded with the declining job opportunities for the African American community, created a situation where a slum emerged out of a previously prosperous community.

The area of the city most predominantly associated with the African American community in 1960s Boston was Roxbury.¹⁰ In the early twentieth century, it had been a middle, and upper-middle class, white neighborhood of Boston.¹¹ Between World War I and World War II, the time-worn and dilapidated apartments were rented to African Americans.¹² Upper and lower Roxbury developed out of a class divide among African American Bostonians.¹³ Upper Roxbury was more upper and middle class, while Lower Roxbury was a much poorer community.¹⁴ In the 1940s and 1950s, Lower Roxbury's population pushed "upward" past the demarcation of Dudley Station, eventually causing almost a total white flight of residents and businesses in the previously prosperous area.¹⁵ Neighboring Dorchester also began to attract more African Americans in the middle of the twentieth century, and Blue Hill Avenue began to compete with the Dudley Station area as a center of African American community and business life in Boston.¹⁶ By the 1960s, Blue Hill Avenue had become a commercial strip, a center for social gatherings, and a place for political and community activism.¹⁷ However,

No one with money or influence cared about Roxbury any more, and the suburb which had been pulled out of the nineteenth century countryside had become a twentieth century slum. The well-tended refuge of the upwardly mobile minority merchant and professional

⁹ Ballou, "Even in 'Freedom's Birthplace'", 98.

¹⁰ Robert Rosenthal, *et al.*, *Different Strokes: Pathways to Maturity in the Boston Ghetto* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), 15.

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*, 16.

¹³ *Ibid*, 19-20.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 20-21.

was now the neglected and confining black ghetto.¹⁸

The community became increasingly segregated, turning into a ghetto for the majority of African Americans in Boston. Social services and job opportunities left the neighborhoods and the community was ignored by the Boston power structure. The Black Panther Party of Boston emerged within this urban landscape.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

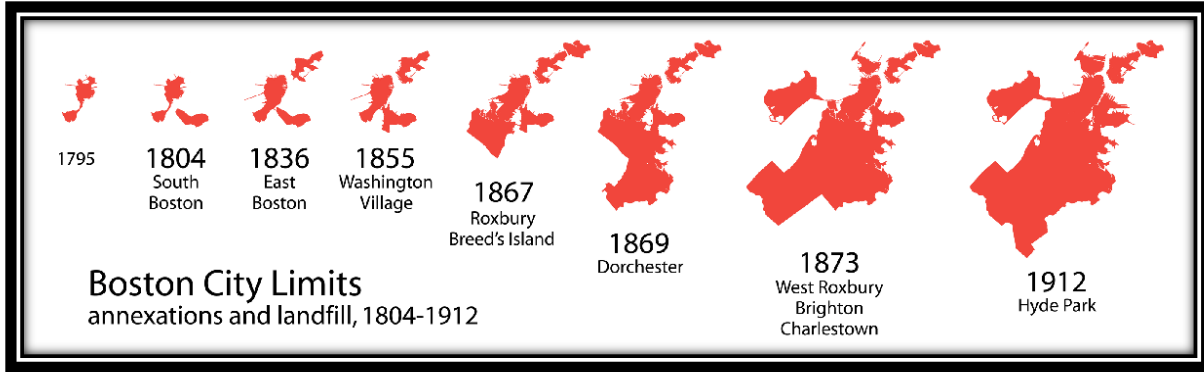


Figure 1: Boston City Limits, annexations and landfill, 1804-1912. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Boston_annexation_landfill.gif

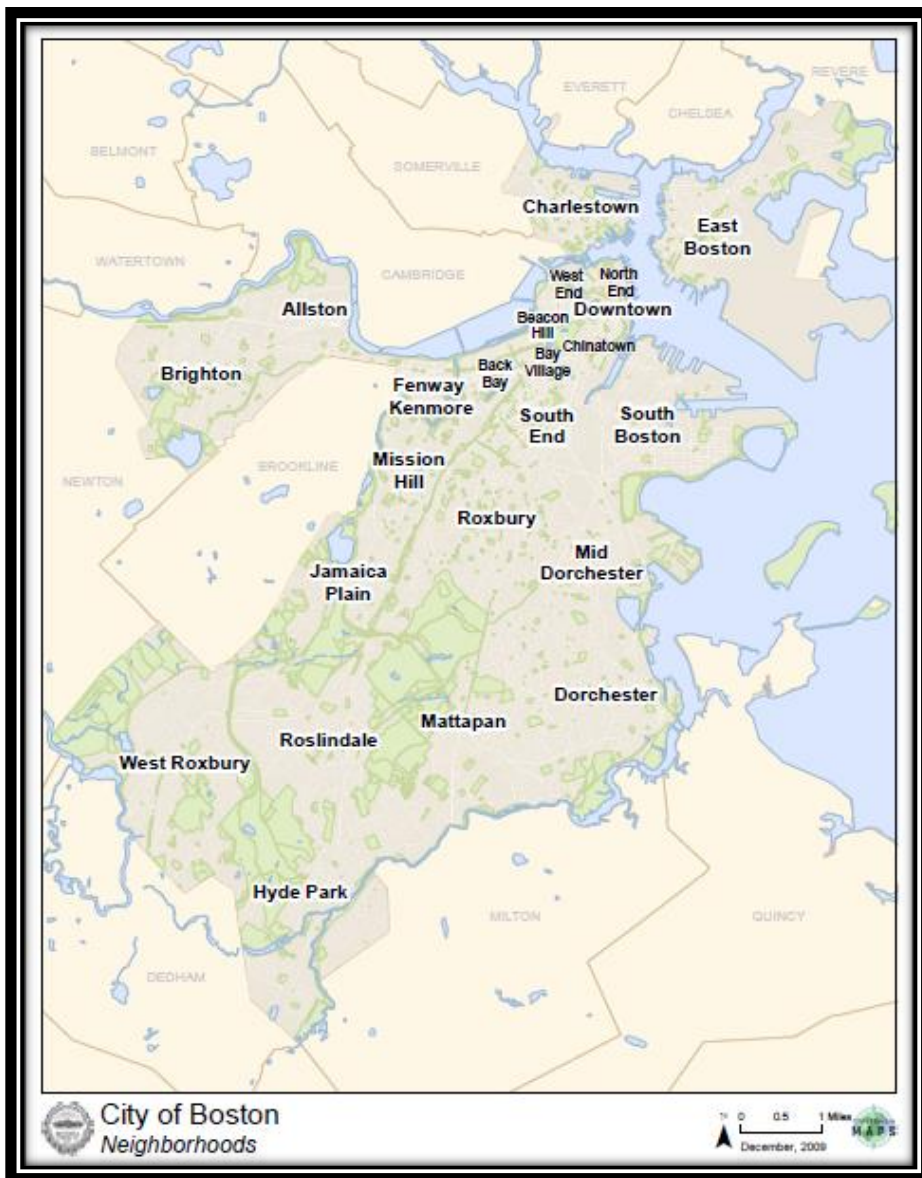


Figure 2: City of Boston, Neighborhoods. Source: cityofboston.gov

As will be discussed further in my historiography, the Black Panther Party has been conceptualized as a group born out of, and living through, violence and violent rhetoric. However, this telling of the Panthers' story does a disservice to the work of community building, organizing, and building a better world enacted by the Panthers. The scholarship surrounding the Black Panther Party is constricting in two ways: the focus on the Panthers as a monolithic, national force blinds scholars to the legacies of local history; and the conception of the Panthers as solely based on a structure of violence negates the positive legacies of Panther chapters all over the United States. This study is focused on Boston to ameliorate both of those issues. The Black Panther Party of Boston was a revolutionary social force in the city, leaving positive legacies on the community. They exemplified the survival programs of the Black Panther Party, building a socialistic system, devoted to the community care and control that they wanted to see in the world. The Boston Panthers are a case study and guide toward a new, better, and more nuanced understanding of the Panthers as a social movement.

Sociologist and activist Richard Flacks has written about the tensions between action involved in the “sustaining of everyday life” and action involved in the “making of history.”¹⁹ In this conception of how various people interact with the world, the Panthers in Boston gave up the former to take up the latter. The making of history, according to Flacks, is less about different action and more about the decision to enact history making.²⁰ The Panthers purposely redefined what it meant to hold power in the system, traditionally defined as belonging exclusively to the elite, to be more encompassing. They worked to build community services and structures which would allow the African American community of Boston to become history makers as opposed to sustainers of the everyday.

¹⁹ Richard Flacks, *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

My sophomore year of university I took a class on the Black Panther Party, and while I learned a great deal, I was surprised to leave the class with no mention of Boston as a location that Panthers called home. I wondered why Boston was not mentioned in any of the reading I had done, or in any of the historiography of the group. This was largely because research about the Boston Black Panthers was scarce. As I dug deeper into general Panther literature, I found glimpses into the Panthers' existence in Boston: mentions of Audrea Jones' leadership, the mention of Boston as an official chapter in the *Black Panther*²¹, and eventually, in Jama Lazerow's essay "The Black Panthers at the Water's Edge: Oakland, Boston, and the New Bedford 'Riots' of 1970" in *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party*. This essay is the longest scholarly work on the Boston chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the majority of the essay does not actually cover the Boston Panthers' history, focusing instead on the role that Boston Panthers played in the New Bedford, Massachusetts riots of July 1970. As Lazerow writes in the chapter,

The Panthers there [Boston] were remarkably successful at organizing and sustaining themselves and others in the region, but not at drawing the kind of fire from local authorities that brought national, even international fame—or infamy, depending on one's perspective—and, thus, they have drawn little attention from historians.²²

Surprised, I took it upon myself to discover what I could about the Boston chapter of the Black Panther Party and bring their story to light in the scholarship about the Party. This work is a culmination of that research over the last ten months in an archive, reading microfilm newspaper, and voraciously reading the Panther scholarship to bring to light the Panthers in Boston and their importance. Lazerow is correct: the Panthers in Boston were effective

²¹ The Black Panther Party's official, weekly newspaper, published from Oakland, California.

²² Jama Lazerow, "The Black Panthers at the Water's Edge: Oakland, Boston, and the New Bedford 'Riots' of 1970" in *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party*, eds. Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 87.

organizers. They empowered the African American community of Boston and built a solid base of support. Further, their style and substance point a way forward for Panther historiography.

This work is split into three chapters, each with a specific purpose. The first chapter briefly outlines a national history of the Black Panther Party to provide a base of knowledge on the Party for readers. Though not comprehensive, it provides a framework of the Black Panther Party as a national entity. The second chapter contains a historiography of the Black Panthers and where my work fits into current learning. It is highly critical of the past and current eras of Panther scholarship and seeks to redefine the way in which we, as historians of the Black Panther Party, look at the Panthers as an organization, and how we discuss them. The third chapter serves dual purposes. First and foremost, it is a narrative history of the Black Panther Party of Boston, focusing on those events most important to the themes of the Panthers that I outline in chapter two. However, it is also thematically focused on the Franklin Lynch People's Free Medical Center (PFMC) as a major source of the Boston chapter's importance. This focus on the PFMC is a deliberate attempt to refocus the Panther narrative away from guns and violence toward their more social programs that served African American communities. This chapter showcases my primary research, and serves as a truly first look into the important story of what the Panthers were doing in Boston. The concluding section of this work brings together the various streams: Panther historiography and the importance of the Black Panther Party of Boston. It is essential to understand how the Boston Panthers were revolutionaries who fought for social programs and simultaneously worked to bring about a caring community in Boston. This work makes those connections, and draws out the importance of Boston as a location where the Black Panther Party positively impacted the community.

It is time for the study of the Black Panther Party to evolve. Away from the polemics and known faces, away from Oakland and the largest cities in the United States, away from the Huey Newton-Eldridge Cleaver factional split. Toward an encompassing narrative, that examines conditions in the grassroots. A study of the Party at the grassroots is essential to understanding the Black Power era's most celebrated and maligned group. This transformation of the Party historiography will come through multiple avenues. Focusing on more local history of branches of the Black Panther Party is first. Local history is able to discover and probe the intricacies of the Panthers at a micro level and provide historical validation to those men and women all over the United States who were deeply committed to the Party's revolutionary ideals. Second, is a shift in how historians—and in turn the public—speak about the Black Panther Party. We need to move from a language of violence to one of social programming and self-help. An excellent, recent example of this scholarship is Alondra Nelson's *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. In the book, Nelson explores the Black Panther Party as a revolutionary group in the field of medical activism. This nuanced look at the Party is insightful and shows the Party at its best, and least understood.

As I have discussed previously, the Black Panther Party is often characterized in the historiography through its association with violence, and the police and state repression which were brought to bear against it. This conception is too narrow. The Party was more than shootouts, and images of angry black men and women holding rifles and shotguns accompanied by slogans of "Off the Pigs" and "Power to the People." The Boston Panthers are an excellent case study into how this conception is necessarily flawed and constricted. Panthers in Boston were involved in no shootouts with the police, no raids on their offices, no public invasions of

legislative sessions. This should be remembered as a positive, not a negative, however. The Boston Panthers projected the image of the Party to the people and the community of Boston through the rhetoric of Third World revolutionary solidarity, their Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, and most importantly their service programs, such as the PFMC. This reimagining of the Black Panther Party can only happen through studies, such as this, that refocus and recalculate the important legacies and important programs that the Panthers instituted.

Chapter 1: Background on the Black Panther Party

Not since the Civil War almost a hundred and fifty years ago have so many people taken up arms in revolutionary struggle in the United States ... In the general absence of armed revolution in the United States since 1865, the thousands of Black Panthers—who dedicated their lives to a political program involving armed resistance to state authority—stand alone.¹

The Black Panther Party was created by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in the fall of 1966 in Oakland, California. This militant, black, socialist-oriented, Third world-revolutionary group was forged in the fires of the Black Power Movement. The group's early style was characterized by their militant opposition to the police. This opposition took the form of picking up arms to defend themselves, and the community, by patrolling the police. Panthers patrols involved driving behind police cruisers, armed with rifles, shotguns, and law books, to protect residents of Oakland's black community, and inform them of their rights when police made stops or arrests. Linking their struggle, as black men in the United States, with those of the Vietnamese in Southeast Asia, the Panthers developed a coalition of Black Power activists and white radicals. This support allowed the group to grow from local curiosity to regional phenomenon to international sensation in a few short years.

The ideas of Black Power were not new in the 1960s; they had been a part of the radical tradition in the long Black Liberation Struggle since Ida B. Wells and Marcus Garvey in the beginning of the twentieth century.² But the emergence of Black Power into the national

¹ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 3-4.

² Peniel Joseph, in *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, further traces the origins of Black Power to the inroads the Communist Party made in African American communities during the late 1920s and 1930s, the experiences for African Americans brought about by World War II overseas service, and the Bandung Non-Aligned Movement conference of 1955. For a further look at the historiography of Black Power see Joseph's "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field" in the December 2009 edition of the *Journal of American History*. Peniel E.

discourse--through the prophetic-seeming Malcolm X—harnessed a growing tension in the Civil Rights Movement within the larger Black Liberation Struggle. Pressure grew around the immediacy of results, dependency on the United States government, and a focus on the South and voting rights. The tensions between asking for, and taking, rights boiled through the 1960s, occasionally spilling over. These eruptions occurred with the Watts riot of 1965; the radical turn of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) electing Stokely Carmichael chairman on May 8, 1966; and with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s move away from voting rights to a focus on the “the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism” as those forces which most plague the United States.³ This was the context that African American activists, particularly students, encountered and navigated in the 1960s. The swirling of Black Power, Pan-Africanism, and Black Nationalism affected and crystalized in different students in different ways.

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were students at Merritt College in Oakland, California, in 1962, where they met for the first time at a rally against the United States' blockade of Cuba.⁴ Both Newton and Seale joined the school's Afro-American Association, an “all-black study group,” that provided space to discuss “books by black authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Booker T. Washington, and James Baldwin,” and was inspired by the teachings of Malcolm X.⁵ Though the group politicized and educated Newton and Seale, Newton sought a more active and revolutionary group: one that would help people and not offer “the community

Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: A Holt Paperback, 2006), 1, 2-3, 5-7.

³ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 130; “‘Beyond Vietnam,’ Address delivered to the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, at Riverside Church,” *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, accessed on April 16, 2013, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/publications/speeches/Beyond_Vietnam.pdf.

⁴ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 21.

⁵ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 22; Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 53.

solutions that solved nothing.”⁶ In 1964, Newton again joined forces with Seale when they joined the Soul Students Advisory Council in Oakland, a branch of the national Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), which was explicitly anti-imperialist and Marxist in outlook.⁷ The exposure, through RAM, to the writings of Frantz Fanon, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and Mao Zedong deeply touched Newton and Seale, expanding their ideological mentors to include Third world radicals espousing socialist revolution.⁸ Through their earnest reading, Newton and Seale developed a world view blending the socialism of revolutionaries with the black pride of African American intellectuals.

Although Newton and Seale were influenced by the teachings and politics of RAM, they were both dissatisfied with the failure of the group to reach African Americans Newton called “brothers on the block.”⁹ These “unemployed black men seen on every street of the ghetto, the black underclass” were exemplified by Newton’s own brother; and Newton and Seale saw revolutionary potential in them.¹⁰ Newton and Seale thought that the language of armed self-defense could be used to capture the attention of those “brothers on the block,” and to politicize and revolutionize them.¹¹ In the spring of 1966, Newton and Seale, after a dispute over the ideas of armed self-defense, left the Soul Student Advisory Council to seek their own path.

On June 16, 1966, Greenwood, Mississippi became famous when Stokely Carmichael made history by announcing outside of the town’s jail: “This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested. I ain’t going to jail no more. What we gonna start saying now is ‘Black Power.’”¹²

⁶ quoted in Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 23.

⁷ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 30-31.

⁸ *Ibid*, 32.

⁹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² quoted in Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 37; Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 141-142.

The cry for Black Power was a vocal demonstration of a feeling that had been percolating across the country for more than a year; a feeling that Newton and Seale were deeply tapped into in Oakland. Beginning in the winter of 1965, Carmichael had helped to organize the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama.¹³ This group registered African Americans to vote, militantly demanded their rights to the ballot, and used a black panther as the symbol on their literature and voting ballots. The symbol of the panther became an overnight success across the United States. Most importantly, it was adopted by Newton and Seale for their own organization. On October 15, 1966, Newton and Seale wrote up a manifesto of Black Power, their Ten Point Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.¹⁴ This manifesto, coupled with the fiery rhetoric that Carmichael had unleashed that summer, gave the nascent Panthers an avenue into the minds of those “brothers on the block” with whom Newton and Seale were interested in working.

Between October 1966, and February 1967, the Black Panther Party was composed of only a handful of members, drawn mostly from the local community. Newton, however, had a flair for out-witting police officers in legal-code-quote fencing during patrols of the police which won the group many admirers, if not immediate converts.¹⁵ The Panthers initially placed major emphasis on self-defense, incorporating themes of armed self-defense into their early programs.¹⁶ This emphasis on self-defense was a continuation of some minor threads running

¹³ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 127-128.

¹⁴ The group dropped the “Self-Defense” from their name by 1968 in a concerted shift toward “political revolution.” Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 208.

¹⁵ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 47, 48; Floyd W. Hayes, III, and Francis A. Kiene, III, “‘All Power to the People’: The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and The Black Panther Party” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 161.

¹⁶ Charles E. Jones and Judson L. Jeffries, “‘Don’t Believe the Hype’: Debunking the Panther Mythology” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 27.

through the Black Liberation Struggle,¹⁷ and was codified for the Panthers with the Marxism incorporated into the Party doctrine.¹⁸ The group's first brush with fame came on February 21, 1967,¹⁹ when eight members of the group escorted Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, from the San Francisco airport to the offices of *Ramparts* magazine.²⁰ Openly armed, and uniformed in their soon-to-become trademark outfit of "waist-length leather jackets, powder blue shirts, and black berets cocked to the right," the Panthers received police attention outside the *Ramparts* office.²¹ Huey Newton gave an impression of fearlessness and bravado during a tense confrontation with the police on the steps of the office; that impression surged through the crowd and the media gathered at *Ramparts*.²² From there, it was only an upward surge in media and popular attention for the Black Panther Party in the Bay Area. February 21st also saw the introduction of the soon-to-be famous Eldridge Cleaver²³ to the Black Panther Party. Soon after, Cleaver joined the Party and became the editor of the *Black Panther*, helping immensely, with his connections to *Ramparts* and writing skill.²⁴

¹⁷ Such as Martin Delany and Maria W. Stewart; David Walker's *Appeal* in 1830; the Universal Negro Improvement Association of Marcus Garvey and the African Blood Brotherhood of the 1920s; Robert Williams' organizing a North Carolina rifle club for African American self-defense in 1959, and then writing *Negroes with Guns* and founding the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Jones and Jeffries, "'Don't Believe the Hype'", 28.

¹⁸ "An editorial on political violence in the Party's newspaper declared, '[T]he Black Panther Party recognizes, as do all Marxist revolutionaries, that the only response to the violence of the ruling class is the revolutionary violence of the people.'" Jones and Jeffries, "'Don't Believe the Hype'", 28-29.

¹⁹ February 21, 1967 was the second anniversary of Malcolm X's assassination.

²⁰ *Ramparts* was a journal founded originally "for liberal Catholic intellectuals", that by 1967 had turned into a "glossy magazine with a reputation for high-profile muckraking that began to attract a sizable reading audience." The magazine had antiestablishment writers and purposes wrote to create controversy. Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 177-178; Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 49.

²¹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 49.

²² Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 50; Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 177.

²³ Cleaver published his first book, *Soul on Ice*, a collection of love letters to his lawyer while he was in prison as well as political essays, in 1968. *Soul on Ice* "proved enormously popular, selling over one million copies within two years", and established his fame as a "radical social critic and a premier voice of his generation." *Soul on Ice* is problematic for its "triumphant machismo" and "galloping sexism." Cleaver worked inside a world of stereotypes: "white men who envied black men's sexual prowess, black women robbed of their sensuality, and black men seeking to conquer white women as proof of their relevance in a racist society." Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 212-213.

²⁴ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 214; Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 79-80.

Bobby Seale strode into the California State Capitol, wearing the Black Panther Party's trademark black beret and leather jacket, armed with a loaded rifle and backed by thirty similarly attired Black Panthers on May 2, 1967. This dramatic protest, against the Mulford Act, a gun-control law being debated in the legislature and specifically targeted at the Panthers, was one of the first events that caught the attention of the national media. The national press, particularly East Coast giants like the *New York Times*, scrambled to find information about the Panthers, about their attire, their radical language, and their guns. Panthers, framed as angry black men who were to be feared, became the news story out of California for the next few days.²⁵ The *New York Times*' selected photograph for the coverage of the event was of "several stern-faced Panthers wearing black berets and holding rifles at attention in a corridor of the capital."²⁶ This visual introduction to the Black Panther Party for most Americans stirred fear and concern in "a populace already wracked by war and social unrest."²⁷ The display of force and power from the Panthers catapulted them into the national discourse, changing the face of the Black Power Movement in the United States. Adapting from Marxism the language of "colony" and "occupation force," the Panthers made national headlines by tapping into the Black Liberation Struggle, but differing radically from any nationally covered group that had come before them.²⁸ The Panthers' protest of the Mulford Act was not intended to halt the bill's passage; instead it was to "proclaim the power of their vision to the world."²⁹ They believed after making headlines "that many young blacks would join them. They were right."³⁰ But the Party's truly monumental growth came after the fall of 1967 when they, again, made national headlines.

²⁵ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 76.

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 61; Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 210.

²⁹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 61.

³⁰ *Ibid*

In the early morning hours of October 28, 1967, Huey Newton was engaged in an altercation leading to the death of Oakland police officer John Frey. Minutes after being pulled over by Frey's police car, Newton lay "sprawled on the ground, a bullet lodged in his stomach."³¹ When Newton arrived at the emergency room, he was immediately handcuffed to the operating table by waiting police before surgery was allowed to save his life.³² This was a blow to the young Black Panther Party. But, at the same time, it created the image of Newton as a revolutionary martyr.³³ This stuck with the Party for years, and drew new members from all around the world. The Black Panther Party leadership—and the tight-knit group that had amassed in the year since the Party's founding—saw Newton as the "leader of the vanguard of black revolution" and his imprisonment and trial for murder sent the organization into a frantic blur of activity to secure his release and prevent him being sent to the gas chamber.³⁴ Though honestly working to prevent his execution, Newton's trial became about more than Huey Percy Newton. The Panthers used the opportunity of the trial to turn the case around on the United States government, and "mobilize support and put America on trial" for the "long-perpetrated oppression of blacks by police."³⁵ This developed into the ideology behind the "Free Huey!" campaign which sprung up among Panthers, Panther allies, and New Left radicals all over the Bay Area—and soon, the country—and delineated the campaign as more of a "political project" than for "Newton's personal interests."³⁶ The trial and retrial took three years to complete, and

³¹ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 211.

³² *Ibid*

³³ I purposefully use "martyr" here because, while Newton was not killed by the state, the feeling among the Panthers was that he would be executed. This was a product of their—and many African Americans at the time generally—distrust of the penal system in the United States to provide Newton with a fair trial. This sense of Newton as a martyr was actually important to the branding of the Party, and Newton's eventual release from prison actually broke some of the image of the United States' justice system as inherently unjust for African Americans. This caused some Leftists to question the criticism groups like the Panthers laid out against the state.

³⁴ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 101.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 102.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 104-105.

the events took on a meaning beyond the specific charges against Newton: it allowed Newton's expert lawyer, Charles Gary, to pontificate about the Black Liberation Struggle and the validity of Black Power to a national audience. The length of the trial proceedings allowed the Panthers to continually galvanize and recruit support for the Party and helped it to grow from Bay Area origins to a national phenomenon.

The beginning of 1968 marked an important milestone for the Black Panther Party: their official merger with SNCC.³⁷ At a "Free Huey!" rally on February 17th, Newton's birthday, in an Oakland auditorium, this alliance became official.³⁸ This merger—though tenuous and short-lived—was important because it was an unofficial passing of the torch of Black Power. SNCC had previously been the most important Black Power group in the United States; after February 17, 1968 it was the Black Panther Party.³⁹

The spring and summer of 1968 marked the creation of new Black Panther chapters all over the United States. Chapters were started all over the country, from Los Angeles to Seattle to New York City.⁴⁰ The Black Panther Party of Boston opened at this time as well, building out of an existing SNCC framework that was becoming increasingly radicalized. Kathleen Cleaver, Communications Secretary on the Central Committee and wife of Eldridge Cleaver, credits the rapid expansion of the Party from coast to coast to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., saying "The murder of King changed the whole dynamic of the country."⁴¹ This shift in the way people, particularly African Americans, saw the Black Liberation Struggle was important because it radicalized people and pushed many toward a vision that was embraced and nurtured

³⁷ Stokely Carmichael had been "drafted" into the party in June of the previous year as Field Marshall by Newton's "Executive Mandate No. 2"; in 1968, at the February 17th rally, he was ordained as Prime Minister "of the Afro-American nation," along with other SNCC leaders becoming other honorary members. Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 204, 223.

³⁸ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 111; Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 223.

³⁹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 112.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 143, 146-147, 149.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 159.

by the Panthers. By the end of 1968 the Black Panther Party had branch offices in at least twenty cities across the country.⁴² By 1969 there were more than forty five chapters located all around the United States.⁴³ This incredibly rapid expansion speaks to the power of Panther imagery and rhetoric. It also voices the desire by communities all across the United States for a model of a Black Power group which was focused on community control. Though some Panther chapters were started by Panthers, more often, African American radicals took it upon themselves to create a Panther chapter, and received recognition afterward. This created an incredible diversity of thought and ideology in the Black Panther Party – something that would directly affect many chapters, including Boston.

The Party grew quickly, and the rapid growth led to ideological jockeying on a national and international scale. In 1969 and 1970, the Black Panther central leadership purged members of the Party in chapters across the country.⁴⁴ This was an assertion of central authority, and to rid the Party of elements which were not in line with Party doctrine.⁴⁵ The merger with SNCC helped to cause ideological splits. Radical African Americans all over the country were drawn to competing visions of the Black Nationalism cum Pan-Africanism of Stokely Carmichael or the Black Third World Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology of Huey Newton and the Panthers. In Boston, the May 1969 purge was caused by the conflict over the ideology of the Party and what was acceptable as a Panther.⁴⁶ Furthering tensions in the Party rank-and-file was Newton's release from prison on August 5, 1970. By then, a majority of members of the Black Panther Party had joined while Newton was imprisoned, and joined because of the fame and prestige the

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*, 344.

⁴⁴ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 242.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ "Boston Purge", *Black Panther*, July 19, 1969.

“Free Huey!” campaign had brought the Party.⁴⁷ They hoped that he “would resolve the challenges the Party faced and lead them successfully to revolution.”⁴⁸ Instead, Newton’s release created rifts with the white Left, and within the Party, as many members pushed for an armed revolution immediately, which Newton, against their expectations, pushed back against.⁴⁹ The conflict came to a head in March 1971, when the International Section⁵⁰ of the Party was purged by the Central Committee in Oakland after bitter debate, and the deaths of multiple members of the Party through internecine conflict.⁵¹ Though not many local chapters actively rebelled against the Central Committee, the rift was part of “the basis of a catastrophic ideological split.”⁵² In 1971, the Party nationally moved away from the advocacy of “revolution now” and insurrectionary violence toward more “social democratic rhetoric.”⁵³

This rhetorical shift did not mean that all the Party’s problems were solved. The society the Panthers created and espoused was far from perfect: there was a double standard for women who joined the Party. The milieu of Black Power was one dominated by masculine rhetoric and misogyny, most exemplified by Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*. But women continued to join the Black Panther Party because it was, according to Panther Regina Jennings, “the only organization that faced White America forthrightly without begging or carrying signs for equality and justice.”⁵⁴ Jennings comments though, that, “There were women who came through the Party and would immediately leave because of the vulgar male behavior. There were women

⁴⁷ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 353.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ After a shootout with the police on April 8, 1968, Cleaver, fearing going to prison again, fled the country, resurfacing in Algeria. There he was joined by other Panthers, notably his wife Kathleen Cleaver. There they set up the International Section of the Black Panther Party.

⁵¹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 364.

⁵² *Ibid*, 364-365.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 369.

⁵⁴ Regina Jennings, “Why I Joined the Party: An African Womanist Reflection” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 257.

in the Party like me who tried to hold on because we understood the power, the significance, and the need for our organization.”⁵⁵ Publicly, the Panthers were opposed to the “male chauvinists” in other Black Power organizations, but this was often a way to deflect criticism away from the Panthers themselves.⁵⁶ Much of the early Panther recruitment literature emphasized that the group was a way to regain “Black manhood,” and place African American men into positions as “protectors of women and children.”⁵⁷ The first female Panther, Tarika Lewis, recounted that she often had to prove herself as equal to her male counterparts by working “just as hard or harder than they did.”⁵⁸ Many members of the Party, however, men and women, worked to define “the struggle for women’s liberation [as] a part of the struggle against capitalism,” explicitly connecting gender issues to the Marxist ideology of the Black Panther Party.⁵⁹ By 1968, according to Bobby Seale’s autobiography, *A Lonely Rage*, women made up sixty percent of the active Panther membership, and women took on more and more Party duties.⁶⁰ Though there were more women in the Party than men, at times sexism and a perpetuation of traditional gender roles burst forth. Women were often confined to cooking and cleaning duties, on top of their other roles, while male Panthers were waited upon.⁶¹ Ultimately, the amount of sexism, both official and unofficial, within the Party largely depended on location.⁶² Many female Panthers were important leaders, but faced gendered complaints against their privileged positions, and

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 263.

⁵⁶ quoted in Tracye Matthews, “‘No One Ever Asks, What a Man’s Place in the Revolution Is’: Gender and the Politics of The Black Panther Party 1966-1971” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 273.

⁵⁷ Matthews, “Gender and Politics of The Black Panther Party”, 278; Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, “‘The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job’: Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982”, in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 307.

⁵⁸ quoted in LeBlanc-Ernest, “Black Panther Party Women”, 307-308.

⁵⁹ Matthews, “Gender and Politics of The Black Panther Party”, 274.

⁶⁰ LeBlanc-Ernest, “Black Panther Party Women”, 309.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 311.

⁶² Matthews, “Gender and Politics of The Black Panther Party”, 287.

many other women in the Party worked tirelessly to carve out a space for themselves as they worked to redefine the world through their revolutionary activism.

The largest transformation in the makeup of the Black Panther Party came in July 1972. Newton ordered all local branches of the Party to close, and bring their resources to Oakland to transform it into a “base of operations” to “win electoral political power” in the city.⁶³ Bobby Seale ran for mayor of Oakland and Elaine Brown⁶⁴ ran a campaign for Oakland City Council.⁶⁵ Both lost their political bids in the 1973 election, though by surprisingly close margins for radical, third party candidates.⁶⁶ The official closing of local chapters, and Seale and Brown losing the elections in 1973, meant the unraveling of the Party: first, as a national force, and second, as the most renowned and important Black Power organization.⁶⁷ Though the Party had again gained importance in Oakland, ultimately, the consolidation of the Party “diminished the Panthers’ national profile.”⁶⁸ Following the loss at the polls, many people linked with the Party gave up their associations for various reasons: the Party was no longer revolutionary in the way they desired, it was too localized in Oakland, or it was too much of a cult-of-personality around Newton. These tensions in the Party created a slow fizzle through the 1970s, with only small victories throughout the nine years between 1973 and 1982 when the Black Panther Party officially closed its last vestige of the organization.⁶⁹

⁶³ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 380.

⁶⁴ Elaine Brown was recruited into the Los Angeles chapter of the Party in 1968. After traveling to China in the summer of 1970 Brown rose to national leadership in the Panther Central Committee, becoming the editor of the *Black Panther*. In 1973, Brown became Chairwoman. She took leadership of the Party, from 1974-1977, while Newton was in exile in Cuba. Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 140, 383.

⁶⁵ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 380-381.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 381.

⁶⁸ Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 286.

⁶⁹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 389.

Chapter 2: Historiography

In *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*, Paul Alkebulan identifies a new framework for thinking about the Panthers. He asks fundamental questions of Black Panther Party historiography: why is there a paucity of information on regional and local branches of the Party, and what is impeding the scholarship in these areas?¹ Alkebulan called for “specialized regional studies of the chapters or the activities of the [P]arty’s artists and musicians” in a “new wave of scholarship.”² This call to expand scholarship on the Panthers is one that I take up in this current work.

In the past eight years, the scholarship on the Black Panther Party has slowly changed, from literature focused on Oakland and the largest Black Panther chapters, to a more all-encompassing view that looks at smaller branches of the BPP. This recent scholarship, spearheaded by Judson Jeffries’ edited volume, *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, in 2007, and his follow up, *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America*, in 2011, are invaluable in understanding the Black Panther Party as an organization comprised of many parts and many people. Adding to this scholarship, in 2008, Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow edited *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party*, which illuminated additional local Panther chapters. In 2000, Yohuru Williams published his book *Black Politics / White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* which seems to be a first stab at producing scholarly work about the Panthers in the context of a single chapter, and a single local area that is not Oakland.³ This

¹ Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), xii.

² *Ibid*

³ Though Williams wrote the first local history of the Black Panther Party the field did not expand to begin to meet his scholarship until much later, with Jeffries’ work compiling historians’ studies.

book is an example of the scholarship on local aspects of the Black Panther Party, which point a way forward for future research.

The study of individual Panther chapters by Jeffries, Williams, and Lazerow, and the multitude of contributing writers to their edited volumes, has enabled a more complete picture of the Panthers than historians—and the general public—has had before. The differences between the Philadelphia branch of the Party and the Detroit branch, or the Winston-Salem branch and the New York branch, are important to remember and identify as we move into the new era of Panther scholarship. As Alkebulan examines in *Survival Pending Revolution*, it is a “false dichotomy of portraying the Panther Party as a selfless community service organization or a group of criminal anarchists with political pretensions.”⁴ Local studies of the Party can help mend this diametrical thinking. However, local histories of the Black Panther Party, as explained above, have only recently become a part of Panther historiography.

More than just a lack of attention by historians has relegated local Panther histories to a minor place in the historiography. Peniel Joseph, in an essay on Black Power, follows the example of Alkebulan in *Survival Pending Revolution*, and divides the Panthers into an organization composed of three time periods: 1966 to 1971, the violent revolution phase; 1971 to 1974, the election campaign of Bobby Seale phase; and from 1974 to 1982, the decline from a powerful local Oakland group to insignificance.⁵ This division, though, is one which only works as a skeletal outline for the Party. And then only when it is viewed through the lens of the elite Panthers: Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Elaine Brown, David Hilliard. The focus remains on Oakland, the national branch of the Party, and what leadership was doing and advocating. When not viewed through the lens of Oakland, this model immediately breaks down.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁵ Peniel E. Joseph, “The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field”, *The Journal of American History*, December 2009, 762; Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, xii.

Between 1967 and 1972, local chapters of the Black Panther Party sprung up around the United States and this rapid growth both encouraged, and frightened the Party leadership. Local chapters were created out of the raw passion and energy of African American communities around the United States. The attempt to encompass every single local chapter in a set phase of the national organization—particularly one defined as “violent”—erases the autonomy of the people involved. It also narrows the purview of Panther historiography. Though the Party can be spoken of as Oakland-centered between October of 1966 and the end of 1967, and then again after 1973, in the six intervening years the variety of local chapters made the Black Panther Party a multifaceted and complex organization. The Panthers, nationwide, rallied thousands for the cause of black self-determination and freedom, while providing essential services to the underserved of the United States. Panther regional and local chapters are essential to understanding the Black Panther Party as a whole.

It is within this context that I place this study. Like any other local chapter, the Boston branch of the BPP has a rich history. In many of the studies of local branches, research has been centered on a particularly violent event in the history of that city. Unlike those studies, this work largely divorces the Black Panther Party of Boston from the violence of the group. Studies of the Detroit branch of the Party, for example, while containing valuable information, focus on violence as a defining characteristic and natural part of the Black Panther Party.⁶ Similarly, one of the only studies of a northeastern branch of the Black Panther Party, Jama Lazerow’s chapter in *Liberated Territory*, “The Black Panther Party on the Water’s Edge,” places emphasis on the

⁶ Ahmad A. Rahman, “Marching Blind: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party in Detroit” in *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party*, eds. Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); and Joel P. Rhodes and Judson L. Jeffries, “Motor City Panthers” in *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

riots in New Bedford, Massachusetts as the pivotal event of the local Panthers. The Black Panther Party should not be remembered exclusively for their violent rhetoric or the police brutality exhibited against them. This historical crutch—events which receive the most press billed as the most important—blinds the audience to the diversity of tactics and opinions within the Black Panther Party, and helps to reinforce the image of the Party as gun-toting black men.

Curtis Austin, in his 2006 *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*, argues that violence was the *raison d'être* of the Panthers which fueled their meteoric rise, and their spectacular fall.⁷ Austin is correct in linking a large part of the history of the Panthers to the violence enacted against and by the Panthers, but it is a mistaken conclusion to believe that violence was the only thing driving members and programs. Austin argues that because the government's use of force was superior, and the government of the United States survived beyond the Black Panther Party, government actors are able to dictate that the Panthers are classified by their violence.⁸ I argue that, in fact, this is a counterfactual reading of history, and denies the Panthers agency in their revolutionary struggle. Though the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO)⁹ is immensely important to understanding the time period, the BPP's difficulties with law enforcement, and government repression, the Panthers were about much more than stockpiling rifles for the revolution. The study of the Panthers should reflect this fact. This is not to say that individual Panthers, or even entire branches, were not more focused on armed revolution than others. They existed, and are a part of Panther history as well. The Black Panther Party of Detroit provides an

⁷ Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), xxi.

⁸ *Ibid*, 338.

⁹ For further information on COINTELPRO and the impact on the Panthers, see Ward Churchill, and Jim Vander Wall's *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, Jeffrey Haas's *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther*, and Winston A. Grady-Willis's "The Black Panther Party: State Repression and Political Prisoners" in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*.

example of this particular milieu. However, this relative minority should not dictate what the Black Panther Party achieved, or limit the way we remember and write about the Party.

The Boston Black Panther Party is an excellent case study, because there was no mass arrest event, no police raid on Party offices, no shoot outs with the police.¹⁰ For five years the Black Panther Party were a revolutionary force in Boston, defying the odds stacked against them. They organized, rallied, sold the *Black Panther*, gave away free breakfasts, opened a free medical clinic, and partnered with other African American organizations in the city. Their members were no less radical in their motivations and ideologies than Huey Newton or any other Panther, but the Boston Panthers were intensely focused on the welfare of the community and providing services to that community. The Panthers in Boston worked to make African Americans in Boston makers of their own history, rather than perpetrators of an oppressive system, to again use the model of Richard Flacks.¹¹ This focus was not tempered by the violent clashes with law enforcement that other chapters experienced. Instead, the Boston chapter of the BPP was able to work for the people of Boston's black community and institute revolutionary programs such as the Franklin Lynch People's Free Health Center.

The Black Panther Party was never a monolithic organization, unaffected by local conditions or desires. In fact, this is entirely the opposite of what the Party was about. Individual Panther chapters had latitude in how they carried out mandated programs, such as the Free Breakfast Program or the People's Free Medical Centers, and in how daily operations ran. The

¹⁰ In "The Black Panther Party on the Water's Edge", Lazerow argues that the New Bedford raid on July 31, 1970 constituted a raid on the Boston Panthers. I disagree. This ties the two branches too closely together, and melds the unique situation of each community. The Panthers in Boston tapped into the situation in New Bedford, committed themselves to aiding in the trials, and were deeply invested in the actual events of the raid. However, this was not like the New Haven trial or Chicago raid where the event became the defining characteristic of the branch.

¹¹ Flacks, *Making History*.

growth of the Panthers as a national organization was facilitated not by the hardline, doctrinal Marxism of the leadership, but the idea of a self-sufficient group of black men and women working to better their communities through collective action and empowerment. That very idea, let alone the language and ideological underpinnings, was and is, revolutionary.

This work seeks to cross pollinate those two strands of Panther historiography. I set my study in a relatively unknown and little researched location, while focusing on the importance of the People's Free Medical Center in Boston as a way to understand the Party's actions and value to the community. This study moves away from the violence and bravado of Panther leaders, away from the ideological tangles of Newton's "Intercommunalism." It moves toward a grassroots understanding of the people involved with the Party and the benefits the Party had on the local communities in which they were planted.

This transfer away from a study of the Panthers as a hierarchal organization, toward a study of them as a mass movement, will complicate the historical narrative and broaden our scholarly understanding of one of the most pivotal groups in the Black Power Movement. At the same time it opens up the field of Black Power Studies to encompass more groups, and a broader conception of what it meant to be a part of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

As Joseph has eloquently written,

The best of the new black power scholarship is already forcing scholars to reassess conventional wisdom by focusing on the impact of community organizing; examining the participation of low-income black women; expanding the movement's geographical contours into the South and assessing its southern character; exploring the roles of, and coalitions with, white radicals; exposing the relationship between militants and civil rights activists; and emphasizing the multiple ways black power was as much about politics as culture.¹²

¹² Joseph, "A State of the Field", 774.

Though studies such as Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin's *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* serve to enlighten the neophyte Black Panther student to the vast expanse of their history, *Body and Soul* is the more important work. I say this not to discredit the work of Bloom and Martin in *Black Against Empire*, but to suggest that our current model of scholarship on the Black Panther Party is incomplete. Nelson delves into an unexplored aspect of the Black Panthers, looking at their promotion of radical health care as a main component of their activism. In contrast, *Black Against Empire* provides a detailed account of the more fully explored aspects of the Panthers. Though Bloom and Martin do this political and social analysis better than any scholars before them, their focus on the Black Panther Party is not new—unlike Nelson's. I argue that this refocusing, rather than just a rehashing of similar information and situations, is imperative for the field of Panther study to evolve and mature.

As more in depth analysis is required for a historical study, it is increasingly important to move away from a picture of the Panthers as a monolithic group, a movement symbol. We must move to an understanding of the Panthers as more than rifles and leather jackets. Paramilitary garb was the uniform for many Panthers, but actions speak louder than sartorial choice. The understanding must move to the ground level work of this type of study—focusing on the actions of local Panther chapters and local Panthers—to broaden the image of who made up the Black Panther Party, what they stood for, and why the Panthers are vitally important even to this day.

Chapter 3: A Narrative History of the Black Panther Party of Boston

On May 31, 1970, the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Medical Center (PFMC) opened its doors to the African American community of Boston, beginning the cornerstone program of the Boston chapter of the Black Panther Party.¹ This free health clinic was part of the radical tradition of health activism that the Panthers tapped into and developed. Though a mandated program by the Panther Central Committee, the PFMC in Boston served as a distinctive part of the Black Panther Party of Boston’s revolutionary accomplishments. This radical health activism was central to the Boston chapter’s understanding of serving the people and what the Panthers as an organization were all about.

1968

The Black Panther Party of Boston was founded in the late spring/early summer of 1968,² largely remaining “hidden behind the heavy curtains of its storefront office at 375 Blue Hill av[enue],” according to the *Boston Globe*.³ It was not until August 9, 1968, however, when the Party made its first public appearance in Boston with a “Service for Oppressed Peoples” in support of Huey Newton.⁴ This event was held at the Philip’s Church in Boston in conjunction with other radical groups such as the United Farm Workers and the Massachusetts Catholic Peace Committee.⁵ At the service, Panthers Chico Neblett, the Deputy Minister of Culture, and

¹ “The Black Panther Party Peoples’ Free Health Center”, *Black Panther*, June 13, 1970; Lorraine Baber, “Panther clinic opening delayed”, *Bay State Banner*, May 21, 1970.

² The sources are split on the exact month of the founding of the Panthers, which likely also shows a difference in who news reporters spoke to about this. *The Bay State Banner*, in December of 1968, puts the founding in July of 1968, while the *Boston Globe*, in July of 1969, puts the founding in June of 1968.

³ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goal”; Queen, “Who Are The Black Panthers”.

⁴ “Service Held for Oppressed People”, *Bay State Banner*, August 22, 1968.

⁵ *Ibid*

Jerry Verone spoke to the congregation about Huey Newton and the Free Huey movement.⁶

As summer faded into fall, the Boston Panthers were organizing for the national boycott of non-union grown California grapes, teaching political education classes for adults and youth, and forming connections to other leftist groups in the Boston area.⁷ The Boston Panther's participation in the grape boycott is not surprising, considering the California connection and the explicitly sunny connections between the Panther and the United Farm Workers in helping each other with boycott organization in Oakland.⁸ In California, the "willingness and ability to find class-based commonalities across racial lines ... enabled the [United Farm Workers] and the [Black Panther Party] to form a successful, mutually beneficial alliance."⁹ In Boston, the Panthers were part of a boycott coalition made up of "white housewives, [Students for a Democratic Society groups], peace groups and hawks, Resisters [sic] and politicians, professors and dropouts, old and young."¹⁰ These connections formed through the boycott of certain California grapes likely strengthened ties between the activist communities in Boston. This led to the Panthers' invitation to speak at a rally to end the Vietnam War: the "Massachusetts Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam," on Saturday November 9, 1968.¹¹

As in Panther chapters across the country, political education classes were a mandatory part of being a full-fledged Panther. The Boston Panthers were required to read from *The Wretched of the Earth*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Kwame Nkrumah's *I Speak of*

⁶ "Service Held for Oppressed People"; "Northern Racism", *Black Panther*, January 25, 1969.

⁷ Arthur Lyons, "The grape-pickers' story: Behind the Boycott", *Boston Globe*, October 27th, 1968; Queen, "Who Are the Black Panthers"; Dan Queen, "Panthers Try to Reach All Black People", *Bay State Banner*, December 12, 1968.

⁸ Lauren Araiza, "'In Common Struggle against a Common Oppression': The United Farm Workers and the Black Panther Party, 1968-1973", *The Journal of African American History*, 94: 2 (2009), 200-223.

⁹ Araiza, "'In Common Struggle against a Common Oppression'", 200.

¹⁰ Lyons, "The grape-picker's story".

¹¹ "Drizzle Dampens Viet Rally", *Boston Globe*, November 10, 1968.

Freedom, LeRoi Jones' *Blues People*, E.D. Cronin's *Black Moses*, Lerone Bennett Jr.'s *Before the Mayflower*, and W.E.B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction in America* and *Souls of Black Folk*.¹² The Panthers also formed a "Junior Black Panther Party" for young boys, which Delano Farrar, the Deputy Minister of Defense, explained to *The Bay State Banner* as, "teach[ing] culture, economics and politics to youngsters as a means of providing a positive male image, especially for fatherless kids."¹³ These classes were held in Northeastern University's Ell Center and at "Operation Black" at 366 Blue Hill Avenue during a couple of days each week.¹⁴ They were taught by Wendell Bourne, the Boston Deputy Minister of Education, and Boston Deputy Chairman Frank Hughes.¹⁵

Though most of these books taught in the Boston Panther political education classes were classics of the African American radical literary canon, the list does contain some interesting omissions. The missing Socialist- and Marxist-inspired literature, works by Mao Zedong and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, speaks to tensions in the ideology of the national leaders versus those of local Boston Panthers. Some of this ideological dueling likely came about because of the SNCC and Stokely Carmichael connections the founders—people like Chico Neblett—of the Boston chapter held. SNCC had become, through the leadership of Carmichael, a Black Nationalist group focused on identity and blackness as the most important hallmarks of radicalism. The Panthers, though influenced by Black Nationalism were much more focused on a struggle based around class consciousness. The Panthers identified the intersectionality of race and class through an emphasis on Third World revolutionary socialism, most strongly identified with Mao Zedong and the "Little Red Book." As recounted briefly in chapter one, the Black Panthers and

¹² Queen, "Who Are The Black Panthers".

¹³ Queen, "Panthers Try to Reach All Black People"; "Off the Pigs: More Panther Harassment", *Black Panther*, February 2, 1969.

¹⁴ Queen, "Panthers Try to Reach All Black People".

¹⁵ *Ibid*

SNCC, after a brief merger, split over this exact ideological difference. The Boston Panthers seem to have been in a similar position: adhering to SNCC ideology¹⁶ while calling themselves Black Panthers.

Nineteen sixty eight was a year of changes for Boston, and for the United States. As explored in chapter one, the Black Panther Party grew nationally in the spring, summer, and fall of 1968, and the Boston Panthers were a part of this rapid growth. The deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Hutton,¹⁷ along with the arrest of Eldridge Cleaver; plus, the newly explosive political force of the “Free Huey!” campaign; and the alliance between the Panthers and SNCC created a national imperative for Panther chapters to form. Boston’s black activist community readily created and accepted the Black Panther Party as a new actor in the radical tradition of the city. But the ways that the Boston chapter was founded, and the people who founded it, eventually caused tensions in the ranks, sparking a revolt and a purge—one of the many purges which occurred in the spring and summer of 1969¹⁸—that changed the shape and impetus of the Party in Boston.

1969

The New Year did not immediately bring change to the Panthers in Boston. They continued to support black student groups, with educational support for Brandeis students in their

¹⁶ Or at least revolutionary Pan-Africanism, as brought into the Panthers in Boston by one of its founders, Chico Neblett, previously a SNCC worker and confidant of Stokely Carmichael.

¹⁷ Bobby Hutton joined the Panthers as a 15 year old in 1966 and was the Oakland group’s first treasurer. He was killed by Oakland police on April 8, 1968 during a shootout with the police that Cleaver, another participant, described as a “planned [Panther] ‘ambush’ against police officers that went awry.” Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 209, 228.

¹⁸ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 345-346.

takeover of Ford and Sydemans Halls demanding “better minority representation on campus.”¹⁹ The *Globe* reported that six days into the occupation, the Panthers had “made frequent trips to Ford Hall to help operate workshops on politics, political tactics, [and] black pride.”²⁰ The first records of the Black Panther Party as an official part of the Boston Black United Front (BBUF) come on February 17th, from meeting notes when Delano Farrar, the Panther representative on the BBUF Steering Committee, was selected as the “Communication” chair for the committee.²¹ The Panthers seemed to continue their role as communications chair for the Steering Committee in April, when they were delegated to be in charge of communications for Operation STOP.²²

The first reported harassment of Panthers by the Boston Police Department occurred January 21, 1969, when Delano Farrar, and another Panther, Michael Atkins, were arrested by the Boston police inside of a pizza shop for allegedly stealing a woman’s pocketbook.²³ In his write up of the incident to the *Black Panther* national newspaper, Wendell Bourne emphasized that the charges of “purse-snatching, possession of marijuana, and receiving stolen goods” were ridiculous for a variety of reasons.²⁴ These falsified charges were a common police tactic to intimidate dissents, like the Panthers, and attempt to get them off the streets. Additionally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation also targeted the Boston Panthers by denying them access to the

¹⁹ “The Student Occupation of Ford Hall, January 1969”, *Remembering Ford & Sydemans Halls, Brandeis University*, <http://lts.brandeis.edu/research/archives-speccoll/exhibits/ford/occupation/index.html>; “City’s Blacks Rally Behind Students”, *Boston Globe*, January 14, 1969.

²⁰ “City’s Blacks Rally Behind Students”.

²¹ “United Front Steering Committee”, February 17, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library, 1234 Columbus Avenue, Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120.

²² Operation STOP was a BBUF initiative designed to stop construction of a proposed highway through Roxbury that would have devastated the community. The group forced the Boston Redevelopment Authority to undergo a two year study of the effects of the proposed highway and to eventually fully halt the construction. In the meantime, BBUF groups used the land for various community projects. “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, April 14, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library, 1234 Columbus Avenue, Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120; “Appendix 2: Comments from Elected Officials”, [http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/pdf/PlanningPublications/Northeastern University IMP Scoping Determination Appendix 2 \(Comments from Elected Officials\).pdf](http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/pdf/PlanningPublications/Northeastern%20University%20IMP%20Scoping%20Determination%20Appendix%20(Comments%20from%20Elected%20Officials).pdf).

²³ “Off the Pigs: More Panther Harassment”.

²⁴ “Off the Pigs”; Dan Queen, “Panthers Charge Party Slandered”, *Bay State Banner*, April 24, 1969.

Black Panther newspaper—which was also part of COINTELPRO’s systematic attack on local chapters of the Black Panther Party over a number of years.²⁵ The Panthers in Boston had a similar experience over a year later. On August 6, 1970, only seventeen of twenty two boxes of the *Black Panther* newspaper were received by the Panthers in Boston.²⁶ Of those seventeen, three of the boxes were soaked in kerosene, “in order to have the print run.”²⁷

Much of this repression may have come about because of the face the Boston Panthers presented to both the community and the state apparatus in Boston; the Panthers in Boston were no strangers to the fiery rhetoric of the national Party. In January, T.D. Pauley, the Assistant Field Marshal of the Boston Panthers, told a group of Nasson College students in Springfield, Massachusetts, to, “leave us [the “black ghetto areas”] alone and either do missionary work in your own community or commit suicide.”²⁸ Pauley is an interesting study in who the Panthers attracted in Boston, as he was a graduate of both Harvard University and Boston College Law School.²⁹ It is likely that Pauley’s education allowed him to tailor his speeches to different communities and touch nerves and push boundaries in the ways that were most advantageous to the mission of the Boston Panthers. As Jane Rhodes explores in *Framing the Black Panthers*, the rhetoric and media presence of the Panthers were consciously used to catch the attention of, and anger, the established power structure of the United States while appealing to the militant fervor of the radical communities in the country.³⁰

But the Panthers in Boston were not just firebrands; they were politically conscious and interacted with much more moderate strains of the Black Liberation Struggle. On April 4, 1969,

²⁵ “Repression of the Black Panther Newspaper”, *Black Panther*, August 8, 1970.

²⁶ Michael Fultz, “The Voice of the Panther Shall be Heard Throughout the Land”, *Black Panther*, September 5, 1970.

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ quoted in “Black Panther Warns Liberals: ‘Leave Us Alone’”, *Boston Globe*, January 26, 1969.

²⁹ “Black Panther Warns Liberals: ‘Leave Us Alone’”.

³⁰ Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 91.

the one-year anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., a Good Friday memorial march was held through Roxbury.³¹ One of the stops on the march was in front of the Panther office on Blue Hill Avenue, where Delano Farrar read a eulogy for King as well as for several slain Panthers.³² Connecting themselves with the community in Boston, as well as with the popular image of Martin Luther King, Jr., allowed the Panthers in Boston to attract more supporters than would have simply come to a rally focused on freeing Huey Newton from prison. This adaptability and tailoring of message depending on the context were important for the Panthers as they gained supporters and members.

But, the Panthers in Boston also continued to support their imprisoned leader. On May 1, 1969, the Black Panther Party organized rallies around the world to support the imprisoned Newton.³³ Rallies at federal courthouses were organized in San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Des Moines, Kansas City, Denver, Detroit, and Boston.³⁴ The Boston Panthers seemingly worked with, and along the same ideological streams, as the national leadership of the Party.

But, later that month, the tensions between the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party and the national leadership exploded. The *Black Panther* ran a statement in the July 19, 1969, issue that declared, “As of May 24, 1969 these renegade, cultural nationalist opportunists are no longer members of the Black Panther Party.”³⁵ Continuing, the article states that the seventeen listed Party members were purged for the following reasons:

³¹ Ann-Mary Currier, “Holy Thursday Begins Passion”, *Boston Globe*, April 3, 1969.

³² Robert A. Jordan, “Parade, Rally In Roxbury Honors King”, *Boston Globe*, April 5, 1969; Dan Queen, “Roxbury Honors Slain Black Leaders”, *Bay State Banner*, April 10, 1969.

³³ “Nationwide Rallies to Free Huey”, *Black Panther*, May 5, 1969.

³⁴ *Ibid*

³⁵ “Boston Purge”, *Black Panther*, July 19, 1969.

1. Failure to follow the teachings of Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton.
2. For complete disregard for the discipline of the Party.
3. Subjectivism.
4. Opportunism against the people.
5. Propagating cultural nationalist madness inside the Party instead of class struggle.
6. Racism.
7. Individualism.³⁶

The purge impacted the entire leadership of the Boston branch. Chico Neblett, Field Marshall; T.D. Pauley, Assistant Field Marshall; Delano Farrar, Area Captain; Frank Hughes, Lieutenant of Information; Karen Flippen, Lieutenant of Finance; Kay Glaspy, Communications Secretary; Rene Neblett, Lieutenant of Culture; Yazid Nzinga, section leader; and Mike Claytor, sub-section leader, were all expelled from the Party. The story, as told by the *Black Panther*, is one of internal rebellion and an attempted coup led by Chico Neblett. But Neblett was previously one of the leadership of the Boston branch, and it is more likely that those members who “affirmed anew [sic] the discipline of the Party and [have] purged these fools from the Party ranks” were the usurpers.³⁷ Called, “Young Turks”, by Jama Lazerow, Douglas Miranda, Audrea Jones, Gene Jones, Greg Jones, and Floyd Hardwick, with the aid of Oakland Field Marshall Don Cox, were the cadre who expelled the previous Panther leadership in Boston.³⁸ As Miranda recalled, the new cadre of Panthers had outgrown the previous leadership, and took the opportunity to assert their authority and shape the Panthers in Boston as they saw fit.³⁹ The split was also ideological in terms of the old leadership versus the new. Greg Jones recalled that the split was between those Panthers who read and internalized “The Little Red Book,” and those in the Party who carried around the book but did not read it.⁴⁰ Jones remembered, “We were talking socialistic ideas” when “they were always cleaning their guns” and “thought it was a black

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 100.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 101.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 102.

struggle,” not a class struggle.⁴¹

The expulsion of Chico Neblett was also tied into the dynamics between the Black Panther Party and SNCC. The *Black Panther* claims that Neblett “joined the party with the other boot-licker Stokely Carmichael.”⁴² Carmichael resigned officially from his post as Prime Minister of the Black Panther Party on July 3, 1969, because of his disagreement with the Panthers’ “willingness to ally with whites.”⁴³ This ideological split occurred in Panther chapters across the country, with Boston just one poignant example of this.

This hostile takeover of the Boston branch was to reaffirm the alignment between the East and West coasts. The placement of Douglas Miranda, only 20 years old in 1969, into leadership shows a distinct pivot westward. Miranda became involved with the Black Panther Party through his involvement in a push for “Ethnic Studies” at San Francisco State College, and he was seen as an extremely effective organizer for someone so young.⁴⁴ Audrea Jones, one of the original Boston Panthers, handpicked Miranda for leadership in the new Boston branch after the purge, according to David Hilliard.⁴⁵ This was an inspired choice because he was able to use his talents incredibly effectively on the East Coast.⁴⁶ Miranda was able to deal with both privileged elite students at Harvard or Yale – by engaging with them or “trouncing a representative of [SNCC] in a public debate on Marxism” – while gaining the respect of elements of the Party that desired a firm hand in discipline.⁴⁷

Following the purge of the “cultural nationalists” from the Boston Party in May, the new

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² “Boston Purge”.

⁴³ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goal”.

⁴⁴ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 253.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 304.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 253.

leadership of the Panthers in Boston took it upon themselves to reach out to the community more than the previous cadre had. The Panthers began a Free Breakfast for School Children Program, sold the *Black Panther* in the community, taught political education classes, rallied around the community to support families in danger and a grieving mother, and organized meetings and outreach events like a rally to promote the image of the Panthers in Boston and raise community awareness.

The Panthers in Oakland had originated themselves as a group dedicated to protection of the African American community, and as the Boston Panthers reinvented themselves they also followed this model of community outreach through protection. On June 28, 1969, they worked with the community to provide support and protection for a black family which moved into an all-white neighborhood in Dorchester.⁴⁸ Joseph Fontes, a father of three, was injured with a brick, and his apartment door had been kicked in and windows smashed by a “gang of [white] youths.”⁴⁹ After calling the police, and getting no response for more than an hour, Fontes called the Black Panther Party, who sent members immediately.⁵⁰ Gregory Jones was arrested by the police when the Panthers arrived on the scene, for carrying a rifle openly on the street.⁵¹ On June 30th, the Panthers pledged to continue to protect the Fontes family as long as was required.⁵² However, their presence was not welcomed by all in the Dorchester community: the *Boston Globe* reported that a “[white] kid” stated that, “everyone is scared” because the Black Panther Party are going to come to their neighborhood.⁵³ This focus on community protection continued into the summer. On Sunday July 20, 1969, at one in the morning, Panther Bob Jackson received

⁴⁸ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goals”; “Youth Attack Black Family In Dorchester”, *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1969.

⁴⁹ “Youth Attack Black Family In Dorchester”, *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1969.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² Alan Lupo, “Dorchester Area Quiet After Attack”, *Boston Globe*, June 30, 1969.

⁵³ *Ibid*

a phone call from the daughter of Marion Alston, who had been arrested.⁵⁴ Though it does not seem that the Panthers intervened in the situation—Alston’s husband was able to cover bail—the calling of the Black Panther Party itself was seen as a dangerous political act by the police, who apparently threatened that “if any Panthers came over to protect her, they would shoot them.”⁵⁵ In a similar act of community protection, the Boston Panthers were reportedly called to a riot-like situation brewing in the Maverick housing project in East Boston on September 6, 1969.⁵⁶

The Panthers in Boston also stood up for the legal rights of the African American community of Boston, with acts of community solidarity and support in addition to physical protection. Ruby Ransom was the mother of an 11 year old who drowned at a Metropolitan District Commission pool in Dorchester on Sunday July 6, 1969.⁵⁷ The Panthers held a press conference on July 12th, in front of their office at 375 Blue Hill Avenue to distribute pamphlets and place blame for Ransom’s son’s death on the Metropolitan District Commission for their lack of upkeep of the pool.⁵⁸ The Panthers claimed that the pool was, “filthy at the time of the drowning ... [and that] it was over-crowded, preventing proper supervision.”⁵⁹ These actions led to an investigation of the pool which vindicated the accusations.⁶⁰

By July, the Boston Panthers had initiated a Free Breakfast Program which fed somewhere between 35 and 50 children every weekday morning at the Tremont Street Methodist

⁵⁴ Bob Jackson, “Boston Pigs Mace and Brutalize Mother”, *Black Panther*, August 2, 1969.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁶ Lupo, “Dorchester Area Quiet After Attack”.

⁵⁷ “Boy’s Drowning In MDC Pool Raises Dispute”, *Boston Globe*, July 12, 1969; Robert A. Jordan, “Mother’s Battle Resulted in Pool Study”, *Boston Globe*, August 13, 1969.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ Jordan, “Mother’s Battle Resulted in Pool Study”.

Church with a meal of “orange juice, cereal and pancakes.”⁶¹ Breakfast programs, one of the mainstays of Black Panther chapters across the country, are essential to understanding the Panthers beyond the rhetoric and firearms. The program was created to fill a need in the African American community, to feed malnourished school children. The Boston Panthers served food to children who would “not otherwise be fed in the morning and have to settle for the inadequate lunches that are prepared at the public schools.”⁶² Though the Panthers were successful with their Free Breakfast Program, they faced push back from businesses they requested support from according to an article in the *Black Panther* from July 1969.⁶³ The Panthers in Boston also faced some pushback against their efforts to hold “liberation classes” following breakfast in the morning where Panthers would help to create a situation where, “little brothers and sisters can become revolutionaries,” according to Douglas Miranda.⁶⁴ The church the Breakfast Program was originally held in pushed back against the establishment of liberation classes because, while most members of the community—black or white, revolutionary or conservative—agreed that feeding breakfast to hungry children was a good thing, many could not agree with the implied propaganda that the Panthers fed to these children along with cereal and juice. J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was staunchly against the Panther Breakfast Programs specifically because of the threat that he saw of indoctrination into revolutionary thought. Of course, this was part of the Panther model, and they desired to build community support, including school children. But, the breakfast program was also just a service that benefited those most in need: hungry children who previously had to go to school on an empty stomach.

⁶¹ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goal”; Eugene W. Jones, “From Boston Chapter”, *Black Panther*, July 19, 1969; “Panthers Feed Kids”, *Bay State Banner*, July 10, 1969.

⁶² “Panthers Feed Kids”.

⁶³ “Boston Breakfast”, *Black Panther*, July 19, 1969.

⁶⁴ “Panthers Feed Kids”.

To help reestablish themselves as a legitimate group after the purge, the Boston Panthers began a public outreach campaign. They received more Panther promotional material, put posters up all around Roxbury, and began to regularly sell the *Black Panther* newspaper.⁶⁵ Eugene Jones claimed that at the Newport Jazz Festival in July, 1969, the Panthers were able to sell 4000 copies of the *Black Panther* to the community.⁶⁶ Douglas Miranda and Floyd Hardwick attended the United Front Against Fascism Conference in Oakland, organized by the Black Panther Party Central Committee, on July 18th, 19th, and 20th, to build connections with other local chapters across the country, build interracial and intersectional coalitions, and to keep the Boston branch orientated toward Oakland. Through the Boston Black United Front, Miranda was able to secure \$500 for his trip to California.⁶⁷

The Panthers organized a couple of public meetings during the summer of 1969, with the intention of increasing community response and activity with the Party. Boston Panthers were interviewed on the WEZE radio station in July; and at the Blue Hill Christian Center on Blue Hill Avenue, they held a “People’s meeting” on the night of July 1st, to discuss the newly created National Committee to Combat Fascism in Boston⁶⁸, an affiliate of the Black Panther Party.⁶⁹ On the evening of Tuesday, July 3rd, the Black Panther Party of Boston met at the Cambridge YWCA in Central Square to talk about the “goals and tactics ... plus [explain the] new breakfast

⁶⁵ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goals”.

⁶⁶ Jones, “From Boston Chapter”.

⁶⁷ “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, July 14, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library; “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, August 11, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library; “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, September 8, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

⁶⁸ The Boston National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF) received little to no attention in the historical record of the Boston Panthers (as evidenced in my research in newspaper and archives).

⁶⁹ “TV changes, radio notes”, *Boston Globe*, July 20, 1969; “Panthers to Meet”, *Bay State Banner*, July 1, 1969.

program for children.”⁷⁰ The Panthers in Boston were attempting to reach out to a wide Boston audience to promote their programs and services.

On July 6th, the Panthers organized a rally at Franklin Park to convene the African American community in Boston and begin working with and for the community.⁷¹ Three hundred people, adults and children, gathered for the picnic-like atmosphere of the rally, which demanded “community control of the police” and the renaming of Franklin Park to Malcolm X Memorial Park.⁷² At the rally, the Panthers set out the Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party.⁷³ In addition, Douglas Miranda called on the community to, “Tell us what you want. Tell us what you need.”⁷⁴ The Panther speakers discussed the Free Breakfast Program, a desire for liberation classes, and the need for community control of the police.⁷⁵ Eugene Jones, the Lieutenant of Information for the Boston chapter, explained community control as, “‘a separate and autonomous’ police force, to be controlled by ‘the working class—not the bourgeoisie, not the ruling class, not the bootlickers they call ‘community spokesmen.’”⁷⁶ The Panthers, partnering with other community organizations also brought a speaker from the Black Student Federation and a speaker from the Parents for Justice in Welfare Rights to discuss their own programs and ideologies.⁷⁷

In addition to reaching out to the Boston community through radio interviews and meetings, the Boston Panthers worked in solidarity with other activist groups in the city to build support among other radical activists. At a rally in support of Cuba in the South End, the Panthers spoke about the Party’s endorsement of “the ‘people’s struggle’ against the [Boston

⁷⁰ “Metropolitan Calendar”, *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1969.

⁷¹ Chen, “Boston Panthers Stalk New Goals”.

⁷² Chen, “300 Hear Panthers’ Speakers”; Jones, “From Boston Chapter”; “Panthers Feed Kids”.

⁷³ Chen, “300 Hear Panthers’ Speakers”.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

Redevelopment Authority],” showing their alignment with more leftist organizing already going on in the city.⁷⁸ On August 9th, the Panthers took part in a march organized by a variety of radical leftist organizations on the Freedom Trail with 300 other people to protest the Vietnam War.⁷⁹ These appearances were ways to cement their involvement with radical politics in the city, and to make their presence known in Boston.

While the Panthers in Boston were furthering their goals of community control of social services, the police and FBI were furthering their antagonisms against the Panthers. On August 7th, Douglas Miranda, John Cheatham, William Jackson, David Quick, and Ida Walston were arrested on the Connecticut highway, driving back from a rally in New Haven to support those accused of the murder of Alex Rackley.⁸⁰ Miranda, Cheatham, Jackson, Quick, and Walston were all charged with “conspiracy and actual transportation of a stolen vehicle across state lines”—the car that the Panthers had rented to drive to New Haven had apparently been “taken from a Seattle, [Washington] rental agency June 13th, by use of a stolen credit card.”⁸¹ The Panthers’ lawyer said that the charges lacked certain seriousness, and seemed to be more of a tactic to harass the Panthers than actually imprison them in any permanent manner.⁸² In response

⁷⁸ Viola Osgood and Robert Jordan, “Balloting Is Heavy In So. End Election”, *Boston Globe*, July 27, 1969.

⁷⁹ “300 Trek Hub’s Freedom Trail to Protest War”, *Boston Globe*, August 10, 1969.

⁸⁰ Alex Rackley was a 24 year old Panther from the Harlem chapter who was in New Haven with George Sams, a likely police informant and pariah in the Party. Once in New Haven Sams turned the table on Rackley by denouncing him as a police informant and holding him hostage in the basement of the Panther offices. On May 20th Sams took Rackley and two other New Haven Panthers, Lonnie McLucas and Warren Kimbro, to a swampy area up the interstate from the city. There Sams convinced Kimbro and McLucas to shoot the defenseless Rackley on “orders from national.” The murder swirled into a national controversy which implicated Bobby Seale and meant a massive manhunt and the trial of The New Haven Eight plus Seale. The arrests and trial severely depleted the New Haven Panther’s strength, hence the heavy involvement from Boston, and the eventual transfer of Douglas Miranda to New Haven as an organizer. Zayd, “Conn. Fascist Pigs Vamp On Panthers”, *Black Panther*, August 23, 1969; “5 of Hub Area Arrested in Ct.”, *Boston Globe*, August 10, 1969; “Boston Panthers Arrested in Conn.”, *Bay State Banner*, August 14, 1969; Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (St. James, NY: Brandywine Press, 2000), 139-140, 141, 142.

⁸¹ “5 of Hub Area Arrested in Ct.”; “Boston Panthers Arrested in Conn.”.

⁸² “Boston Panthers Arrested in Conn.”.

to this incident, and to raise bail money, the Boston Panthers were involved in a film festival during the weekend of August 15th through 17th in Boston.⁸³

Miranda was again targeted by the police, this time in Boston, on August 17th, when, along with Eugene Jones, they were accused of a motor violation.⁸⁴ Miranda and Jones were on their way home on the final night of the film festival, when the Boston Police Department “brought 10-12 car loads of pigs with guns drawn within 2 minutes” of the initial stop.⁸⁵ As in many cases of police harassment of the Black Panthers across the country, the actual charges were factual—in this case Miranda pled guilty to driving without a license—however, the methods employed to carry out arrests or stops contained overwhelming force in an attempt to intimidate and break the spirit of the Panthers.⁸⁶ The excessive show of force by the Boston Police Department against two Panthers shows the threat that was felt in the Boston power structure.

One of the most important Panthers in Boston, both as an organizer and as a symbol of the Party was Robert “Big Bob” Heard. He was an imposing figure on the Boston streets: “Bob stands 6’7” and weighs 390 pounds,” and he was willing “to lay down his life to achieve our goal of liberation.”⁸⁷ However, this only conveys half of the story. Heard was imposing physically, and he was also an active organizer and valuable teacher, making him doubly dangerous for the Boston Police Department. For the Panthers, Heard was a symbol of the Party’s best, as showcased by his valorization in the *Black Panther* for his numerous arrests and police

⁸³ *Ibid*

⁸⁴ Eugene Jones, “Boston Pigs Rampage”, *Black Panther*, September 13, 1969; “Panthers Arrested in Roxbury”, *Bay State Banner*, August 21, 1969.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ “Panthers Arrested in Roxbury”.

⁸⁷ “Continued Harassment”, *Black Panther*, January 31, 1970.

harassment. On August 20, 1969, Heard was arrested for “taking scraps of metal from an open field”—a seemingly ridiculous charge that, if true, could only have been used as a pretense to detain Heard for intimidation reasons.⁸⁸ On October 23, 1969, Heard was arrested, and taken to Boston Police Department station ten, where he was confronted with Marilyn Taart⁸⁹—someone the *Black Panther* called a traitor to her race and an agent of the police—who identified Heard as one of the two men who had stolen her pocketbook at gunpoint on October 21st.⁹⁰ A rally was held on November 12th, to protest the imprisonment of Heard and other “political prisoners” in the United States.⁹¹ The Boston Panthers gathered supporters against the police brutality and harassment exhibited in cases like the imprisonment of Bobby Seale in Chicago, Huey Newton in Oakland, Erica Huggins in New Haven, and Heard in Boston.⁹² Eugene Jones, in the immediate aftermath of the event, accused the police of executing an obvious set up, showing meticulous planning to take Heard off the streets.⁹³ The police were able to do this with an outrageously high bail fee.⁹⁴ Jones’ view that the case was a clear frame-up of Heard was confirmed by his first trial—which resulted in a hung jury—and during his second trial when the prosecution fell apart under the strain of various members of the plot breaking their story.⁹⁵

On August 31, 1969, the Black Panther Party sponsored a “People’s Rally to Combat the

⁸⁸ “Continued Harassment”; “Repression Ad – Preliminary Draft: Section #2: Case of Robert Herd [sic]”, March 25, 1970, Boston Black United Front records, Box 13, Folder 9, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

⁸⁹ Or possibly Tartt, as spelled in the *Bay State Banner*.

⁹⁰ Floyd, “Another Pig Plot To Frame Panther ‘Big Bob’”, *Black Panther*, June 13, 1970.

⁹¹ “Panther rally for prisoners”, *Bay State Banner*, November 20, 1969.

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ Eugene W. Jones, “Frame Up”, *Black Panther*, November 8, 1969; Floyd, “Another Pig Plot To Frame Panther ‘Big Bob’”.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁵ Floyd, “Another Pig Plot To Frame Panther ‘Big Bob’”; “Panther rally for prisoners”; Lorraine Baber, “Panther acquitted on robbery charge”, *Bay State Banner*, May 21, 1970.

Construction of Dudley Police Station.”⁹⁶ This was a protest of the construction of a new “pig station”—as they called it—instead of “better schools, health centers and housing” which they cited as sorely lacking in Roxbury.⁹⁷ In a Steering Committee Meeting of the Boston Black United Front, Floyd Hardwick, the Panther representative at the meeting, reiterated to the group that they desired “decentralization of the police station,” meaning control by the community.⁹⁸ In October, the Panthers organized a committee made up of community members to collectively protest the construction of the Dudley Street station.⁹⁹ As part of the ongoing picketing effort to stop the construction, six members of the Party were arrested on September 3rd, when they were protesting the construction site and selling the *Black Panther* at the nearby Dudley Street MBTA station.¹⁰⁰ The Panthers claimed that the group of them was attempting to stop students “being pushed around” by the police during the protest, which escalated into a physical confrontation between the police and Panthers, and led to the arrests of Winfield Chambers, Heard, Gregory Jackson, Eugene Jones, Russel Murchison, and Robert Rogers.¹⁰¹ Chambers was injured in a scuffle with the police, and had to be hospitalized.¹⁰² On September 9th, the Panthers were back in force at the construction site, where, again, they were harassed by police.¹⁰³ Heard was handing out leaflets, when he was arrested for “assault and battery on a pig, ... loitering, ... idle and disorderly conduct, and ... trespassing [sic].”¹⁰⁴ Fortunately for Heard, the findings were

⁹⁶ “Black Panthers Arrested at Dudley; Protest against Police Continues”, *Bay State Banner*, September 11, 1969.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁸ “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, September 15, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

⁹⁹ “Panthers form Committee”, *Bay State Banner*, October 16, 1969.

¹⁰⁰ “6 Panthers Arrested”, *Boston Globe*, September 4, 1969; “Rally against Police Station”, *Bay State Banner*, August 28, 1969.

¹⁰¹ “6 Panthers Arrested”; “Rally Against Police Station”; “Black Panthers Arrested at Dudley; Protest against Police Continues”.

¹⁰² “Black Panthers Arrested at Dudley; Protest against Police Continues”.

¹⁰³ “Continued Harassment”; “Repression Ad – Preliminary Draft: Section #2: Case of Robert Herd [sic]”, March 25, 1970, Boston Black United Front records, Box 13, Folder 9, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

inconclusive and his charges were dropped.¹⁰⁵ At a September 15th meeting of the Boston Black United Front Steering Committee, Floyd Hardwick reported that the Panthers would continue to picket the police station and were hoping to hold a rally to get more community spokespeople vocal about their opposition to the new Dudley station.¹⁰⁶

During the winter of 1969-1970, the Panthers continued to be involved in Boston area radical leftist organizing, particularly with the November Action Coalition (NAC), an organization formed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.¹⁰⁷ Along with the Panthers, the NAC was made up of “the Committee of Returned Volunteers (former Peace Corpsmen), ... several Students for a Democratic Society chapters, the Massachusetts Liberation Front ..., the Old Mole ..., Bread and Roses ..., and November Action Committees on 25 local campuses.”¹⁰⁸ The Panthers were organizing with black student groups at MIT and other schools, to stage “separate militant protest ... in conjunction with the main NAC action.”¹⁰⁹ On November 4th, the Panthers took part in the NAC demonstration at MIT that rallied between 400 and 800 people and drew more than 100 non-college reporters.¹¹⁰ The event was successful in its size and ability to draw attention to the anti-Vietnam War movement.

In August, the Black Panther Party national leadership had moved Douglas Miranda from his leadership role in Boston to Connecticut to help organize the group there.¹¹¹ The Rackley murder trial severely injured the chapter in New Haven, and Miranda was tasked with getting the

¹⁰⁵ “Continued Harassment”.

¹⁰⁶ “United Front Steering Committee Meeting”, September 15, 1969, Boston Black United Front records, Box 2, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

¹⁰⁷ Parker Donham, “MIT Sides Square for Takeover”, *Boston Globe*, October 30, 1969.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ Crocker Snow, Jr., “800 in Antiwar March at MIT”, *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1969.

¹¹¹ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 253.

group back into shape. Miranda used his continuing Boston connections – particularly because after the New Haven trial began, Boston became an important organizing center for the Black Panthers on the East Coast—to bring Boston Panthers to New Haven to rally activists, students, and Panthers. On November 22, 1969, over 5000 people gathered in New Haven to protest the imprisonment of the New Haven Panthers.¹¹² Audrea Jones, who had become “acting Area Captain of the Black Panther Party in Boston” after Miranda left, was at the rally, and spoke on “the nature of fascism, its use of racism, and the necessity for proletarian internationalism.”¹¹³

The promotion of Jones to leader of the Boston Panthers seems to have been uncontroversial, with Miranda recounting that she was the most qualified person to assume leadership because of her impressive skillset.¹¹⁴ She was “energetic, tough, and sometimes abrasive” in her command of the chapter, but these qualities only brought her respect from her peers in the Party.¹¹⁵ However, the Boston Chapter was pushing the envelope in terms of gender politics—whether they felt this or not—when Jones took command of the chapter. Jones joined a small group of Panther women who achieved fame and national importance through their direct leadership.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Jones did not see her leadership in the Party as particularly special. She did not feel that the political education classes which were held in Boston needed periods of reflection on female experience within the organization.¹¹⁷ She recounted that there was more focus on politics than the personal—something that could have prevented many woman in the Boston group from voicing their complaints with the gender dynamics of the Boston Party. At the same time, Jones recalled that the Party developed over time, and they “engaged in this

¹¹² Cappy Pinderhughes, “Free Our Sisters”, *Black Panther*, December 6, 1969; Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 254-255.

¹¹³ *Ibid*

¹¹⁴ LeBlanc-Ernest, “Black Panther Party Women”, 311.

¹¹⁵ Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 100.

¹¹⁶ LeBlanc-Ernest, “Black Panther Party Women”, 310-311; Jones and Jeffries, ““Don’t Believe the Hype””, 34-35.

¹¹⁷ Robert S. Oden and Thomas A. Casey, “Power to the People: Service Learning and Social Justice,” *Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education*, 8:2 (2006), 11.

struggle because of internal contradictions as well as external.”¹¹⁸ Apparently a positive environment for women was encouraged in Boston, where the absence of gender discrimination was plain for many Panther women compared to other chapters.¹¹⁹ In addition, she was not blind to gendered issues within the organization. In 1972, in a paper to the national leadership, Jones argued that the Party needed to encourage male and female Panthers to use birth control so that costs associated with children could be kept down.¹²⁰ Though the greater gender politics of the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party are unclear, it seems plain that Audrea Jones was a strong willed, capable leader, and a valuable Panther.¹²¹

In Chicago on the morning of December 4th, Fred Hampton, the leader of the Chicago branch of the Black Panther Party, and Mark Clark, another leader in the Illinois Party, were murdered by the Chicago Police Department. Hampton and Clark instantly became martyrs for the Party. To honor their memories, rallies denouncing the Chicago Police took place all over the country. Two days after the assassination, the Black Panther Party of Boston organized a rally to protest the deaths at City Hall Plaza.¹²² Though few Panthers attended the rally, there were hundreds of white students, mainly from Students for a Democratic Society groups.¹²³ Audrea Jones was there to speak for the Party, and “unleashed a string of vulgar obscenities at the police” in an understandable rage at the assassination of her counterpart in the Chicago

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

¹¹⁹ LeBlanc-Ernest, “Black Panther Party Women”, 312.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 319-320.

¹²¹ Though this study does not devote time—or have the resources to effectively study—the gender dynamics of the Boston branch in depth, it should be noted that many women appear in the various newspaper sources on the Panthers in Boston. Women like Donna Howell were essential to the functioning of the Party in Boston and further study in this area is needed to more deeply explore the gender politics in the Boston branch.

¹²² Gordon D. Hall, “Blazing rhetoric or cold week-end”, *Boston Globe*, December 12, 1969; Parker Donham, “BU denies student demands, SDS votes Monday takeover”, *Boston Globe*, December 5, 1969; “Panther rally for slain leader”, *Bay State Banner*, December 11, 1969.

¹²³ Hall, “Blazing rhetoric or cold week-end”.

branch.¹²⁴ Tapping into the legacy of Hampton, who was a brilliant orator, she incorporated the call, “I am a...”, and response of, “a revolutionary!”, into her speech—a mainstay of Hampton’s most famous invocations—involving the crowd and firing them up in the cold December air.¹²⁵ According to the *Bay State Banner*, the crowd responded to a demand by Jones to “pick up the gun and intensify the struggle” instead of mourning the deaths, with cries of, “right on” and “power to the people.”¹²⁶

The last year in the decade, brought enormous changes to the Black Panther Party of Boston. The purge of the original leadership and the establishment of Party programs like the Free Breakfast Program were some notable changes. The Party also reached out to its radical allies around issues such as Third World revolutionary solidarity, the construction of a new police station in Roxbury, the New Haven murder trial, and the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. The Panthers in Boston became more involved with the community of Boston—both white and African American radicals—through organizations like the November Action Committee and Students for a Democratic Society. The shift away from a pre-purge focus on cultural nationalism, allowed the Panthers to broaden their base and seek aid from “mother country revolutionaries” – white allies – as well as refine their message to the grassroots as one focused on socialist revolution and community welfare. In the next year, the Panthers in Boston would further their involvement in community welfare programs with the establishment of their most important program: the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Medical Center.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ “Panther rally for slain leader”.

1970

In January 1970, the Black Panther Party of Boston instituted new programs for the African American community of Boston. After more than two months of work, a Free Clothing Program was opened in Mission Hill, at 81 Parker Street on January 9, 1970.¹²⁷ The first day, about 100 people came to the basement of the Mission Hill project to receive free clothing provided by the Panthers.¹²⁸ This program developed out of a need, according to Robert Heard, that was demanded by the “welfare mothers” of the Boston community, and that was able to be provided.¹²⁹ The idea of the program, similar to other survival programs, was as an alternative to the aid given by the United States government. The clothes were donated by local businesses, and individuals, and the Panthers hoped that eventually the program would be able to run every week to provide for the people.¹³⁰ As James Young, one of the coordinators of the program explained, “These programs have a two-fold meaning: (1) meeting the basic material needs of our people and (2) raising the political consciousness of our people.”¹³¹ Tying the Free Clothing Program to the other survival programs of the Panthers, Young clarified that, “[The Panthers] believe people are entitled to the best technology can produce” and that can be provided by “free breakfast programs, liberation schools, free medical clinics and other socialist programs to serve the people.”¹³² Continuing, Young stated that, “Food, shelter and clothing are central things to people’s needs; these three factors determine one’s health. Black people in Roxbury suffer under all of these conditions.”¹³³

¹²⁷ James Young, “Boston Free Clothing Program”, *Black Panther*, January 31, 1970; “Panthers begin free clothing program”, *Bay State Banner*, January 15, 1970.

¹²⁸ “Panthers begin free clothing program”.

¹²⁹ Big Bob, “On the Necks of the Greedy Businessmen”, *Black Panther*, May 19, 1970.

¹³⁰ “Panthers begin free clothing program”.

¹³¹ Young, “Boston Free Clothing Program”.

¹³² “Panthers begin free clothing program”.

¹³³ *Ibid*

On February 11th, the Panthers held a rally at Pemberton Square, in front of the Boston Federal Court Building, to support Huey Newton on his bail hearing that day in California.¹³⁴ Though only attended by about fifty people, the rally was filled with “revolutionary songs and chants.”¹³⁵ Gene Jones, spoke about the commonality of police repression in the United States, and how it was something to which anyone could relate.¹³⁶ The Panthers also announced another rally on for March 1st, at the Roxbury Boys Club, which would include both Panther speakers Douglas Miranda and Audrea Jones, and Virgil Wood, a Roxbury clergyman.¹³⁷

Honoring the fifth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, the Boston Panthers opened their new offices at 23 Winthrop Street on February 21, 1970.¹³⁸ They moved into one part of the larger Malcolm X Community Information Center.¹³⁹ This move was both a symbolic breaking from the past of the Party—the pre-purge leadership chose the location on Blue Hill Avenue—and an attempt to integrate the Party into the community in a more constructive manner. The move to the Community Information Center was important as a way to connect with the community, serving as a “place where black people can meet and hold community meetings and other political and social functions,” according to Gene Jones.¹⁴⁰ The Center was also able to serve as a new, centralized location for Panther programs such as the Free Breakfast Program, the Free Clothing Program, and the Liberation School.¹⁴¹ It also contained a library of books “relating to the conditions of black people and the struggle for liberation, especially in the

¹³⁴ “Panthers rally for Huey Newton”, *Bay State Banner*, February 19, 1970.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*

¹³⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

¹³⁸ Lorraine Baber, “Panthers open new headquarters”, *Bay State Banner*, March 12, 1970.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

Boston community.”¹⁴² Jones explained that the move from an office to a community center, where people were encouraged to use the resources “for whatever purpose they need,” was important to create a more personal and intimate atmosphere of the Black Panther Party in the community.¹⁴³

In 1970, similar to the previous year, the Panthers in Boston continued to aid community members against police brutality and other injustices. On the morning of Tuesday March 24th, Gregory Daniels called the Party for assistance against the Development Corporation of America, who were planning on evicting Daniels’ mother and other family members from their apartment.¹⁴⁴ After a tense, stand-off situation, the Panthers were able to help Mrs. Daniels by lending her money to, “pay off these pigs,” and catch up on her rent.¹⁴⁵ Similar to how the Panthers viewed the Free Clothing Program, aiding those unable to pay rent, while working to stop evictions, was not just an issue of community control, but of exposing corrupt and racist landlords within an inequitable field.¹⁴⁶ The Panthers proclaimed that, “if Mrs. Daniels consistently had trouble paying her rent, that the landlord was charging her too much for the apartment.”¹⁴⁷ This radical shift in the discourse was vital to the image of the Panthers. They were strong advocates for the African American community in Boston, and for a fundamental change in the system which oppressed African Americans and other people of color in Boston. Though the Boston Panthers were unable to stop the brutal beating of Flozell Johnson, in his own apartment, on June 14, 1970, they were the first called after the incident occurred.¹⁴⁸ The

¹⁴² *Ibid*

¹⁴³ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁴ “Landlordism”, *Black Panther*, April 18, 1970.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁸ Bob, “Boston ... Pigs Beat Mr. Johnson in His Home”, *Black Panther*, July 18, 1970.

community saw the Panthers as a protective force that was there for them, as opposed to the Boston Police Department. Another example of this trust occurred on September 7, 1970, when Ali Muhammed came into the Panther offices to discuss problems with the school system.¹⁴⁹ Muhammed's son had been "ridiculed and even beaten" for not saluting the American flag.¹⁵⁰ Community members as young as fifteen also sought out the Party to provide them aid. Chip Fitzgerald ran away from his school in Dorchester, and came to the Panthers because of the horribly racist climate of the school, and the abusive treatment he received there.¹⁵¹

Though the Panthers were receiving aid from the Boston community, the Free Breakfast Program faced serious challenges. The attempts by the FBI to vilify the Breakfast Program seem to have seeped into the mindset of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) who, "changed the locks on the doors of the breakfast room at the Mission Hill project and refused to give the [Party] new keys."¹⁵² The *Black Panther* newspaper claimed that over 250 school children a week were being fed by the original Mission Hill Free Breakfast Program when it was shut down.¹⁵³ The Party attempted to move to the Orchard Park housing project, but was similarly rebuffed by the BHA.¹⁵⁴ At Orchard Park, the Panthers received the approval of the community and solicited wide support for a Free Breakfast Program to begin on June 1st, but Sidney Holloway, the director of the Orchard Park Day Care Center—where the Panthers wanted the breakfasts to take place—refused to allow the Panthers access until the BHA approved the set

¹⁴⁹ Roland Chambers, "11 Year Old Brother Beaten for not Saluting 'The Symbol of Fascism, the American Flag'", *Black Panther*, September 26, 1970.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁵¹ Mike Ellis, "15 Year Old Brother Escapes Racist School", *Black Panther*, October 24, 1970.

¹⁵² Robert A. Jordan, "'You can jail a revolutionary but not a revolution' — Black Panther", *Boston Globe*, July 26, 1970.

¹⁵³ "Life in Concentration Camps — Boston", *Black Panther*, March 27, 1971.

¹⁵⁴ Jordan, "'You can jail a revolutionary but not a revolution' — Black Panther"; Diana Roberson, "Determining Our Destiny", *Black Panther*, July 3, 1970.

up.¹⁵⁵ Finally, the Boston Panthers were able to find a location to reestablish the Free Breakfast for Children Program—the Bromley Heath housing project.¹⁵⁶ According to the *Black Panther*, the program had been running since the beginning of November 1970, and had “already served close to 700 school children.”¹⁵⁷

As a prelude a massive rally on April 15th, encompassing large number of radical activists in Boston, the Panthers held a rally at Kenmore Square on April 14, 1970.¹⁵⁸ This rally involved a speech from Douglas Miranda, visiting from New Haven, that called on white radical supporters to “pick up a gun to kill the pigs or you’ll have to pick up a gun to defend yourselves.”¹⁵⁹ However, a similar refrain by Miranda the next day got him shouted down by chants of “Peace Now!”¹⁶⁰ This shows a sentiment among Bostonians leaning toward peace activism of a more moderate stance, over the fiery militancy of the Black Panther Party.¹⁶¹ On April 15th, the rally of somewhere between 45,000 and 100,000 people on the Boston Common involved peace advocates calling for an end to the war in Vietnam, and Black Panthers demanding the release of the New Haven Eight.¹⁶² Audrea Jones spoke alongside Howard Zinn, a Boston University professor, and Artie Seale, the wife of the currently-on-trial-in-New-Haven Bobby Seale.¹⁶³

More massive rallies followed in 1970, mainly focused on the Vietnam War, allowing

¹⁵⁵ Roberson, “Determining Our Destiny”.

¹⁵⁶ Michael Fultz, “Pigs Attempt to Sabotage Free Breakfast Program”, *Black Panther*, November 21, 1970.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁸ “Hub probe of police brutality charge delayed”, *Boston Globe*, May 2, 1970; Parker Donham, “Panther Posture At New Haven”, *Boston Globe*, April 26, 1970.

¹⁵⁹ quoted in Donham, “Panther Posture At New Haven”.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Kenney, “Thousands Pack Common for Vietnam Moratorium”, *Boston Globe*, April 16, 1970.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*

¹⁶² Parker Donham, “War protest week begins in Boston”, *Boston Globe*, April 14, 1970; Kenney, “Thousands Pack Common for Vietnam Moratorium”.

¹⁶³ Donham, “War protest week begins in Boston”; Parker Donham, “War Protest Due Today On Common”, *Boston Globe*, April 15, 1970.

space for the Panthers to connect the United States' imperialism in Southeast Asia with its racism at home. Identified as the "East Coast defense captain of the Black Panther Party", Douglas Miranda declared that, "the black people are the vanguard of that war movement [in the United States]" while speaking at a rally on Soldier's Field in Cambridge on May 8th.¹⁶⁴ There were between 30,000 and 50,000 people gathered to hear Miranda and other radical Leftists speak about Cambodia, Kent States, and the Panthers.¹⁶⁵ A Boston University freshman lauded Miranda as, "too radical for me, but I can appreciate how he feels because the government is trying to wipe out the Panthers who were the vanguard of this whole movement."¹⁶⁶ Echoing the sentiment of peace protestors when they shouted down Miranda's rhetoric of armed militancy on April 15th, it seems that Boston Leftists began to move away from embracing the militancy of the Black Panther Party by the middle of 1970. Though the Boston University student participated in rallies with the Panthers, the accusations of "too radical," are indicative of a changing mindset among liberal white allies. The Boston Panthers would need to focus more on their popular survival programs and community support if they were to keep white, student radicals engaged.

The Panthers organized a rally at Boston University's Nickerson Field on May 10th that was attended by over 7000 people who listened to music and speeches.¹⁶⁷ This fund-raising event for the legal defense fund of the New Haven Panthers was very popular.¹⁶⁸ Panther Donna Howell kicked off the afternoon by defining what it was that the Black Panther Party was fighting for: the right and ability for "each person to stand up for himself [sic] and fight for his [sic] rights as promised 'by this so-called democracy.'"¹⁶⁹ Though still militant in style and

¹⁶⁴ Michael Kenney, "30,000 Gather in Quiet Demonstration", *Boston Globe*, May 9, 1970.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁶ quoted in Ken O. Botwright, "Pre-med student marches, vows to work for changes", *Boston Globe*, May 9, 1970.

¹⁶⁷ Arthur Jones, "7000 rock in sun for Panthers' defense fund", *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1970.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

approach, the speech by Howell is very different from Miranda's earlier speeches. Howell identified the problem as systemic, and arising from a fault in American democracy, a problem which could impact white students who felt dissatisfied with politics, as well as communities of color that have been historically marginalized. This move away from the call to pick up the gun, toward one of fixing the democratic structures of the country, was a way that the Boston Panthers were able to angle their rhetoric toward their audience and build allied communities.

On May 31, 1970, the most important Panther service in Boston officially opened its doors: the Franklin Lynch¹⁷⁰ Peoples' Free Medical Center.¹⁷¹ Located at the intersection of Ruggles and Tremont streets, the trailer that housed the health center was placed on land that was to be part of a highway that was scheduled to cleave through the Roxbury area and damage the community irreconcilably. The land the PFMC was housed on was reclaimed land, and this occupation of land was a radical act which helped to increase Panther solidarity with the community.¹⁷² This use of the land was also a way to provide the African American community of Boston with a model for productive use of underutilized resources. The Boston Panthers' were providing a social service to the community that the city's government did not provide, while doing so on land that the city's government did not use.¹⁷³ The Center was opened at first only four days a week because of staffing concerns, but Party members wanted to build a truly

¹⁷⁰ Franklin Lynch was a black singer who was shot while in the Boston City Hospital by a Boston policeman who was supposedly guarding him in March 1970. The PFMC was dedicated to Lynch "to show that even though they murder one of us, the people are going to keep on fighting," according to Donna Howe. The Panthers had been involved in the community response to the shooting – a People's Trial to be held in Roxbury through the Boston Black United Front. Floyd Hardwick, a Boston Panther, was one of the organizers with the BBUF for the People's Trial held earlier that spring. Lorraine Baber, "Panther clinic opening delayed", *Bay State Banner*, May 21, 1970; "Police Trial Committee", March 11, 1970, Boston Black United Front records, Box 13, Folder 8, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

¹⁷¹ "The Black Panther Party Peoples' Free Health Center"; Baber, "Panther clinic opening delayed".

¹⁷² *Ibid*

¹⁷³ "Roxbury intern plan provides 'black adult examples'".

revolutionary medical clinic open to everyone in the community at any hour.¹⁷⁴

The health clinic set up in Boston was more than a Boston invention; by 1970 the central leadership of the Black Panther Party mandated that each local branch set up a People's Free Medical Clinic (PFMC).¹⁷⁵ Though mandated to be set up, the Panther central authority did not provide supplies or funding to build or staff clinics in cities all across the country which forced Panthers to rely on ingenuity, entrepreneurial talent, and luck to secure funding, supplies, and trained doctors and nurses.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, the idea of a PFMC was more than an invention of the Panthers. The idea of free health care for the poor was a long tradition of the Civil Rights Movement, and helps to tie the Black Panthers into the larger Black Liberation Struggle.¹⁷⁷ As Alondra Nelson argues, the Panthers consciously, and unconsciously, drew on the tactics and language of the "medical civil rights movement" to argue for the necessity of health care for the African American community, and to unite their own struggle with those of the past.¹⁷⁸

This attempt to create a true alternative to other medical options was part of how the Boston Panthers saw the existing health care options in Boston: as broken and in need of an alternative.¹⁷⁹ The PFMC primarily focused on preventative medicine to increase the health and wellness of the Roxbury community.¹⁸⁰ But, it also provided more immediate services such as "checkups, immunizations, [and] blood tests."¹⁸¹ In addition to providing actual medical care, the Center provided "people's advocates, and drivers" for those who needed to go to a hospital, but

¹⁷⁴ "The Black Panther Party Peoples' Free Health Center".

¹⁷⁵ Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁹ Lorraine Baber, "Black Panther Health Clinic opens in Roxbury", *Bay State Banner*, June 4, 1970.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

also needed transportation there and an advocate for their medical rights upon arrival.¹⁸²

The training of lay medical experts was critical to the Panther's mission in Boston, because, of the approximately 100,000 African Americans in the city, there were only "nine black physicians whose median age is 62 years [old] ... and only four health clinics providing average health services — nothing like comprehensive health services."¹⁸³ And one of these clinics was the PFMC.¹⁸⁴ As a result, the Panthers had to "rely heavily on white doctors" for the clinic to function effectively.¹⁸⁵ The Boston Panthers attempted to work around this problem by encouraging community involvement. Donna Howe, the organizer of the Center, commented that, "This is a black community project ... so we need black people working here. If you really identify with the struggle for black people this is one way you can help."¹⁸⁶ An example of the type of lay medical experts in action was the coordination of the Franklin Lynch PFMC and "a group of welfare moms" in conducting "a series of lead-poisoning test[s] for approximately 300 kids."¹⁸⁷ The Health Center also provided classes in first aid and with technical lab equipment to aid the community in becoming lay-experts.¹⁸⁸ This dire situation was not solvable by the Panthers alone, but the impact of a community health center focused on the needs of the people and working for the benefit of the African American community cannot be understated.

This radical approach to medical care aligned the Panthers with the writings of Mao Zedong and Ernesto "Che" Guevara in "conceptualizing how health and medicine fit with broad political aims."¹⁸⁹ Further building on the Panther canon, the writings of Frantz Fanon showed

¹⁸² "The Black Panther Party Peoples' Free Health Center".

¹⁸³ "Roxbury intern plan provides 'black adult examples'", *Boston Globe*, August 23, 1970.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁵ "Community health care centers — a two-page report: Dim prognosis for new health care efforts", *Boston Globe*, October 11, 1970.

¹⁸⁶ Baber, "Panther clinic opening delayed".

¹⁸⁷ Diana, "People Unite to Deal with the Slumlords", *Black Panther*, September 26, 1970.

¹⁸⁸ "The Black Panther Party Peoples' Free Health Center".

¹⁸⁹ Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 73.

the potential dangers of medicine in the hands of an untrustworthy state.¹⁹⁰ The writings of these three men were particularly important to the Panthers as they were part of their literary canon, taught and read at all political education classes, and integral to the original conceptions of the Party by Newton and Seale. Guevara—a medical man by training, before becoming a revolutionary—stressed the necessity of the revolutionary group taking up the institutions which supported the community; health and wellness centers for example.¹⁹¹ Maoist thought on the importance of the people as a mass, and not specifically those with specialized training, influenced the Panthers’ insistence on the training of lay people in their PFMCs, and the expansion of health care to all, rather than just the elite who had the resources to receive effective care.¹⁹² The direct impact of the Maoist medical practices were seen by Panthers in two different trips to China in 1970 and 1971, where Party members were exposed to the “deprofessionalization of medicine” in China through their “Barefoot Doctors” program.¹⁹³

Ultimately, the Panthers’ free medical clinics were operations which were, in some ways, an extension of the policing of the police programs. In a place like Boston, where policing the police directly was untenable, this service program, was a revolutionary alternative.¹⁹⁴ The Panthers “policed the medical sphere” for poor, black communities by providing an alternative to the often coercive, authoritarian, and racist treatment given to African Americans by the medical establishment.¹⁹⁵ The PFMCs empowered people, who were otherwise seen by the medical community as non-experts. It gave them a say in their health care, and trained lay people to be experts on simple health related topics. The health centers run by the Panthers were not just

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 70-71.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 187.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

medical clinics, but sites of social change that “attended to more than just narrowly defined health needs.”¹⁹⁶

By the middle of the fall, the Franklin Lynch Center was much better staffed and available at all times, meeting the desires of the Party when it first opened. The Panthers who ran the PFMC, the doctors, nurses, and lay helpers who staffed the clinic, were also responsive to the needs of the community; they did not just wait in the Center for people to come to them. On September 29th, at 6:30 in the evening, a group of Boston Panthers were walking home and found a man lying on the ground “motionless, and rigid,” who had a “weak pulse and did not answer to his name.”¹⁹⁷ These Panthers took the man to the PFMC and aided him as best the doctor on duty could.¹⁹⁸ On Sunday November 15th, in the late afternoon there was a car crash outside the People’s Free Health Center.¹⁹⁹ The doctors and nurses in the PFMC rushed outside to help and took a 72 year old man into the clinic to make sure he was unhurt.²⁰⁰ Soon after, the police arrived and attempted to take the injured man out of the PFMC to question him, which the Panthers prevented.²⁰¹ The Panthers in the building acted as gatekeepers and allowed this man to make his own decisions regarding interacting with the police; leveling the power relationship between this man and the police.²⁰² This inverse of the power dynamic normally observed, particularly in health care matters, provided the black community with a model of how the Panthers desired to equalize the relationship between the white power structure and the African American community.

Though expertly administered by the Panthers, the money for the PFMC was often hard

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁹⁷ Lydia, “People Save Brother Near Death from Drugs”, *Black Panther*, October 24, 1970.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁹ “Pig Harasses Brother at People’s Free Health Center”, *Black Panther*, December 26, 1970.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*

²⁰¹ *Ibid*

²⁰² *Ibid*

to come by. Large amounts of money for the Panthers nationally came from wealthy white allies, and this was no different in Boston. One of the best examples of this in Boston was Harvard Medical School professor Jonathon Beckwith donating \$500 of a \$1000 research prize to the Panther's medical center to help pay for the PFMC first opening.²⁰³ There was also general positive support for the PFMC in Boston from both black and white Bostonians.²⁰⁴ People like Reginald Eaves, the director of the Mayor's Office of Human Rights; Ellen Jackson of Operation Exodus; and Leon Nelson, president of the Boston chapter of the NAACP all supported the social programs of the Panthers in Boston, particularly the Franklin Lynch Free Medical Center, because of its importance for the community.²⁰⁵ The Boston Black United Front also helped to financially support the Center and its programs.²⁰⁶

The Boston Police Department was adamantly opposed to the revolutionary potential of the Boston PFMC, and took out their anger against the empty trailer in the early morning hours of July 5, 1970.²⁰⁷ The Boston Panthers accused the police of the drive-by shooting based on the bullets recovered from the scene: the same type as used in the Boston Police Department handguns.²⁰⁸ But, despite the damage to the building, the Center was open the following day and provided for the community.²⁰⁹ The Panthers promised to continue to operate for the community and not back down from the intimidation attempt.²¹⁰ Though the Boston Police Department allegedly attacked the PFMC, the government of Boston did not attempt to remove the Center in any other way, which would have been legally justified since the land the trailer was on was

²⁰³ Richard Knox, "Scientist donates award to Panthers", *Boston Globe*, April 28, 1970.

²⁰⁴ Robert A. Jordan, "Reaction to Panthers varied", *Boston Globe*, September 27, 1970.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*

²⁰⁶ "Leonard A. Durant to Sister Donna Howell", September 15, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 5, Folder 4, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²⁰⁷ "Racist Bandits Attack Peoples Free Health Center", *Black Panther*, July 18, 1970.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*

²¹⁰ *Ibid*

being occupied by the Boston Black United Front and the Panthers. Donna Howe, before the official opening of the Center, was worried about exactly that eventuality, saying, “They’ll just try and take the clinic away.”²¹¹ Part of the stability of the Center was likely due to its mass appeal, and its positive impact on the community, which made it hard for the Boston government to condemn it publicly. While the Boston Police Department was not thrilled about the PFMC in Roxbury they did not vow to destroy the Panthers like the Detroit Police Department did.²¹² Though this difference has as much to do with the city as with the actual police forces, the Boston People’s Free Health Center was able to galvanize support, white and black, in Boston, which prevented it becoming too much of a target for the Boston administration.

On July 31, 1970, during the aftermath of the New Bedford riots, an occupied building, re-purposed to be a Panther-affiliated National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF) office, was raided by the New Bedford police and twenty people were arrested, three of them members of the Black Panther Party of Boston. Boston Panthers had been in New Bedford since the middle of July, organizing the NCCF, spurred by local action desiring a Panther presence.²¹³ During the beginning of the disturbances, New Bedford natives had requested the Boston Panthers help them set up a NCCF.²¹⁴ During the police raid, the New Bedford group was connected by telephone to Boston and Audrea Jones, who, in turn, was on the line with David Hilliard²¹⁵ in Oakland.²¹⁶ The Panthers placed great importance on the New Bedford NCCF and

²¹¹ quoted in Baber, “Panther clinic opening delayed”.

²¹² Rahman, “Marching Blind”, 189-191.

²¹³ Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 92.

²¹⁴ Roland Chambers, “Concerning the New Bedford N.C.C.F.”, *Black Panther*, September 5, 1970; Joseph Harvey, “Wouldn’t tell Bristol County jury about night with Panthers: Supreme Court hears case of reporter who refused to testify”, *Boston Globe*, Jan 6, 1971; “The New Bedford 20”, *Black Panther*, September 5, 1970.

²¹⁵ At this time, Hilliard was the highest ranking Panther on the Central Committee because Newton and Seale were both involved in trials that took their time away from leading the Panthers. Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 111.

saw the possibility of a fire-fight breaking out between Panthers and police that night, hence the telephone chain to central headquarters. According to Johnny Viera, one of those in the NCCF office, Jones ordered the surrender—as relayed to her from Oakland—and told the Panthers defending the building to stand down.²¹⁷ The next day, Audrea Jones herself was in New Bedford denouncing the raid at a rally as “‘a blatant conspiracy’ against ‘anyone working for the salvation of black people.’”²¹⁸ After the raid, the Boston Panthers became increasingly interested in New Bedford; they provided support and resources, and inflated the importance of the raid and trial for the Panthers.²¹⁹

In the late fall and early winter of 1970, the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party saw a need to provide transportation for people from Boston to their loved ones in prisons.²²⁰ The Panthers were able to get support from other community organizations, and began the program by busing people to visit prisoners at the Norfolk State Prison.²²¹ They also sought to expand the program to Walpole and Concord State Prisons and the Women’s Reformatory in Framingham.²²² In addition to just busing the relatives and friends of the prisoners, the Boston Panthers set up a program to provide free Christmas food to the prisoners in Norfolk Prison.²²³ The program was a runaway success for both the prisoners and the community, and bringing the two together met the goal of linking “‘oppressed communities in the struggle to transform society.’”²²⁴ The Panthers also had connections with at least one prisoner at Deer Island prison,

²¹⁶ Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 110.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 111.

²¹⁸ Robert A. Jordan, “New Bedford blacks object to police ‘occupying us’”, *Boston Globe*, August 2, 1970.

²¹⁹ Lazerow, “The Black Panthers at the Water’s Edge”, 111.

²²⁰ “Free Prison Busing Program in Boston”, *Black Panther*, November 21, 1970.

²²¹ *Ibid*

²²² *Ibid*

²²³ “An Open Letter of Thanks to the Black Community of Boston”, *Black Panther*, January 16, 1971.

²²⁴ *Ibid*

Robert Jackson, who was apparently a Panther before being imprisoned for carrying a concealed weapon.²²⁵

The revolutionary activism of the Franklin Lynch People's Free Medical Center tapped into the medical civil rights movement identified by Alondra Nelson, and modeled a world the Panthers wished to see created. The PFMC developed into a community cornerstone, transforming the way that the African American community of Boston thought about their health care. The PFMC provided an immediately tangible product of the Black Panther Party of Boston's survival programs. During the first full year of the new leadership, power was juggled as Douglas Miranda was moved to New Haven, and Audrea Jones stepped into the leadership.²²⁶ The trial in New Haven drew the attention of Boston Panthers from Massachusetts to Connecticut, and the raid on the NCCF office in New Bedford moved that attention to New Bedford. The raid on the NCCF office engaged the Boston Panthers with a violent situation, and a political trial, something that they had not experienced before. This drew the Boston and New Bedford communities closer together as Panthers traveled back and forth between the cities to support one another.

1971

By February 25, 1971, the Boston Panthers' People's Free Medical Center was both

²²⁵ "United Front Meeting", August 12, 1970, Boston Black United Front records, Box 6, Folder 2, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²²⁶ Jones was essential the Boston Panthers, and took over the leadership after Miranda was transferred to New Haven because of her "impressive skills, which made her the most qualified person to assume the captain's position." In her chapter in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest continually praises Jones for her leadership capacity and skill and heavily implies her importance to the strength and functioning of the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party. Jama Lazerow, in his chapter in *Liberated Territory* also emphasizes Jones' importance to the Boston Panthers, and that she was a very strong leader. LeBlanc-Ernest, "Black Panther Party Women", 305-334; Lazerow, "The Black Panthers at the Water's Edge", 94, 100.

established enough in the community in terms of trust, and able to liaise with a skilled enough doctor, to perform an operation on the fourteen month old Stacey Burston.²²⁷ Burston received a corrective operation on her eyes relating to a birth defect.²²⁸ When Burston was six months old, the doctors at Boston Children’s Hospital simply told her to get glasses, which did nothing to correct the problem.²²⁹ Her parents were not informed that “a series of simple operations could straighten-out her eyes.”²³⁰ When she was brought to the Franklin Lynch Medical Center she received an appointment with an eye specialist who arranged the operations to allow Burston to have normal vision.²³¹ This shows the amount of effort the Panthers went to on behalf of the community in Boston to make the Medical Center a real option in receiving care for the African American community in Boston. As the *Black Panther* article about this explains,

[W]ithout the people, the Free Health Center would not be accomplished and would also lose the reason for its existence, that being to serve the people ... hundreds upon hundreds of other community people will receive the fruits of life that they deserve. Only through survival programs such as this can we survive the racist oppression of American society.²³²

In the spring of 1971, the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party was still involved with issues of housing in the community. An apartment, where the Parrigo family lived, was destroyed by a fire.²³³ The Parrigo family, whose children took part in the Free Breakfast Program, sought help from the BHA after the fire destroyed their home—but the BHA refused to provide any temporary housing, which effectively left the family out in the cold.²³⁴ The

²²⁷ “People’s Free Health Center Aids in Correcting Child’s Eyesight”, *Black Panther*, March 20, 1971.

²²⁸ *Ibid*

²²⁹ *Ibid*

²³⁰ *Ibid*

²³¹ *Ibid*

²³² *Ibid*

²³³ “Another Family Evicted”, *Black Panther*, May 22, 1971.

²³⁴ *Ibid*

Panthers were able to secure temporary, and eventually permanent, housing for the Parrigos.²³⁵ The PFMC also “treated [the family] for the effects of the fire and smoke.”²³⁶ The Boston Panthers also continued to be attuned to the needs due to the suffering from police brutality in people’s everyday lives. For example on June 22nd, Philomena Brewer, 16 years old, and her sister Andrea, 14 years old, were accused to stealing in a department store and “Philomena [was dragged] toward the security office.”²³⁷ The Panthers were called in by a bystander at the department store, and they acted as advocates at the police station for Brewer and two other women who were caught in the ensuing fight that broke out between police and these women.²³⁸ The Boston Black United Front also took part in a boycott of the specific store, Zayres, which “the Urban League, Panther Party, Teen Center, Multi-Service center, and Black Student Federation” committed to boycotting.²³⁹ This coalition also worked to get the security guard who was involved fired.²⁴⁰

At the end of July, the Boston Black United Front decided that a centralized hotline was needed for community members to be able to call if they needed assistance, specifically regarding police brutality and harassment.²⁴¹ The Black Panther Party’s office phone at 23 Winthrop Street was chosen as the designated hotline.²⁴² This was because of the positive work the group had done in the community over the past couple of years in regards to police harassment and brutality. For the Boston Panthers, this was a way to engage with the community along the issue which first defined the Panthers in Oakland—police brutality—but remain

²³⁵ *Ibid*

²³⁶ *Ibid*

²³⁷ “Black Shoppers Beaten and Robber”, *Black Panther*, July 10, 1971.

²³⁸ *Ibid*

²³⁹ “General Body Meeting”, July 14, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 6, Folder 2, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*

²⁴¹ “General Body Meeting”, July 28, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 6, Folder 2, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²⁴² *Ibid*

within the legal limits of Massachusetts.

On Sunday May 30, 1971, the Boston Panthers celebrated the one year anniversary of the opening of the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Health Center.²⁴³ The celebration included dinner, political discussion, and advertisement of the Party’s other community survival programs.²⁴⁴ The *Black Panther* newspaper claimed that,

[H]undreds of people have received treatment, health counseling, and preventative medical education by the staff of our health center. The People’s Free Health Center has also enabled many people of our community to be trained as technicians, medical secretaries, and nursing assistants.²⁴⁵

The Boston PFMC also provided pregnancy tests, immunization shots, tuberculosis tests, and gynecology services.²⁴⁶ This is all exactly in line with the mission of radical health care that the Panthers were tapping into with their PFMC. It was a way to “transform the society,” to get to a place where “all the power belongs to the people.”²⁴⁷

The Franklin Lynch PFMC also began an Out-Reach Program in 1971 that brought the health care of the PFMC to the community directly.²⁴⁸ Beginning June 12, 1971, the Boston Black Panthers began to administer free sickle cell anemia²⁴⁹ tests to the public at the Franklin

²⁴³ “Boston Celebrates First Anniversary [sic] of People’s Free Health Center”, *Black Panther*, June 12, 1971.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*

²⁴⁶ “The Boston People’s Free Health Center Will Come to You”, *Black Panther*, October 4, 1971.

²⁴⁷ “Boston Celebrates First Anniversary [sic] of People’s Free Health Center”.

²⁴⁸ “The Boston People’s Free Health Center Will Come to You”; Walter Haynes, “Panthers conduct Sickle cell testing”, *Bay State Banner*, October 21, 1971.

²⁴⁹ Sickle cell anemia is a genetic disease that predominately appears in people of African descent; Alondra Nelson describes it as, “an incurable and ultimately fatal genetic disease that causes typically round red blood cells to take a sickle shape, depleting their ability to circulate oxygen through the body.” The sickle cell anemia testing campaign was about both testing members of the community for a disease that was relatively unknown – and not tested for – and a way to educate the community and provide them with information that they otherwise would not have. The Panthers were also interested in testing for the disease because they saw the medical community in the United States as ignoring African American citizens on purpose and because of a “history of racial slavery, contemporary racism, and the inadequacies of profit-driven healthcare. Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 4, 19, 115, 123.

Lynch PFMC as part of a nationally organized drive to test for sickle cell anemia.²⁵⁰ The Panthers also sent trained medical teams to visit community organizations, community functions, and make house calls to test for the sickle cell anemia trait, conducting free tests.²⁵¹ According to the *Black Panther*, more than 1000 community members had been tested for sickle cell anemia by the beginning of October.²⁵² The *Boston Globe* and the *Bay State Banner* put the numbers even higher, between 1300 and 2000 people tested for sickle cell anemia, with about 120 found to carry the trait.²⁵³ In 1970, and 1971, there were many groups in Boston taking part in sickle cell anemia testing, with the Panthers as one of seven supported by the Boston City Hospital.²⁵⁴ Though the initial Out-Reach Program was designed around sickle cell anemia testing, the plan was to expand to tuberculosis and lead poisoning testing to provide a variety of medical services to the Boston community.²⁵⁵ This outreach program, however, was not free for the Panthers, and they continued to seek donations and request money from groups like the Boston Black United Front to continue providing free access to their radical vision of health care.²⁵⁶ The Panthers also requested material resources from the BBUF like mimeograph paper to create leaflets about their sickle cell anemia testing campaign.²⁵⁷ In addition to their own outreach program, the Panthers took part in a Community Relations and Public Health Information day in Roxbury where groups

²⁵⁰ "The Black Panther Party is Giving Free Sickle Cell Anemia Tests in these Areas", *Black Panther*, June 12, 1971.

²⁵¹ "The Boston People's Free Health Center Will Come to You".

²⁵² *Ibid*

²⁵³ Currier, "2000 of Boston's blacks get sickle cell test by Panthers"; Haynes, "Panthers conduct Sickle cell testing".

²⁵⁴ Currier, "2000 of Boston's blacks get sickle cell test by Panthers".

²⁵⁵ "The Boston People's Free Health Center Will Come to You".

²⁵⁶ "Steering Committee Meeting", September 13, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 3, Folder 4, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library; "Leonard A. Durant to Sister Donna Howell", September 15, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 5, Folder 4, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²⁵⁷ "Use of Resources Form", November 5, 1971, Boston Black United Front records, Box 1, Folder 7, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

as diverse as the Boston Police Department and MacDonald's participated.²⁵⁸ The event, held on November 27th, involved the Panthers at a table "where technicians did free blood tests for sickle cell anemia."²⁵⁹ The Panther PFMC involvement with an event as cosmopolitan as this shows their importance in the community, and their ability to work with, and inside, the mainstream in matters such as health and wellness.

Sickle cell anemia was an important part of the Black Panther Party's health activism nationally, and the same was true in Boston. According to Gene Jones, sickle cell anemia testing and education were important because, "there has been a lot of misinterpretation as to what the Sickle Cell trait is and the effect it has upon black people."²⁶⁰ He also claimed that, "most medical schools do not train their students in testing for the traits of sickle disease."²⁶¹ The Black Panthers used sickle cell anemia as a "vehicle for Party political ideology."²⁶² They connected the racism of the medical establishment to sickle cell anemia through its unknown nature and that those of African descent were primary affected by the trait.²⁶³

In 1971, the Panthers in Boston continued many of their programs of reaching out to the community. Importantly, they expanded their PFMC with a sickle cell anemia testing campaign. This was immensely important for the African American community in Boston. It identified and served a need of the people, while promoting Party ideology and keeping the Panthers relevant. But while the PFMC of the Panthers became more and more important, the Party as a group of revolutionaries became less vital to the community. Though still engaged with the community

²⁵⁸ Viola Osgood, "Health day held in Roxbury", *Boston Globe*, November 28, 1971; "Youth have their day in Roxbury", *Bay State Banner*, December 23, 1971.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*

²⁶⁰ Haynes, "Panthers conduct Sickle cell testing".

²⁶¹ *Ibid*

²⁶² Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 116.

²⁶³ *Ibid*

through community outreach and service, the Panthers in Boston were less and less part of the discourse on politics and political action.²⁶⁴ Nonetheless, their remaining importance as a community organization dedicated to service to the people shows the value of the Black Panther Party beyond the political ideologies and rhetorical posturing.

1972

The Franklin Lynch PFMC conducted more physical treatments in the new year. On the afternoon of May 24th, eight year old Devon Pugh was shot by a police officer while he was outside playing.²⁶⁵ The Boston Police Department arrived at the Orchard Park housing project after hearing a rumor of someone with a gun.²⁶⁶ In attempting to shoot a twenty one year old man, John Simms, who was walking away from the police, the shots went wide and one struck Pugh.²⁶⁷ Simms was arrested and the police left the scene—leaving Pugh to be taken to the hospital by his mother, where he required “surgery for extensive muscle and nerve damage.”²⁶⁸ Pugh stayed at the Boston City Hospital until Friday, May 26th, when his mother decided that he was being treated poorly, not getting “proper medication or food.”²⁶⁹ She brought him to the Black Panther Party’s PFMC, and a doctor there began house calls on Pugh to treat him until they were able to find him another hospital.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁴ This is likely because the sympathy for the Party nationally was falling during the early 1970s. After Huey Newton was released from prison, as mentioned earlier, the Party lost clout with many Leftists for their claim that an African American could not receive a fair trial in the United States. In addition, the Newton-Cleaver split, along with a series of high profile trials, affected the perception of the Party, causing many more white Leftists to see the Panthers as thugs.

²⁶⁵ “So It’s Backyards and Bullets for Black Youth”, *Black Panther*, June 17, 1972.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*

The health program of the Panthers, particularly regarding sickle cell anemia testing, continued into 1972 as well. On January 4th, the Boston Panthers asked the Boston Black United Front to reach out to the Boston Public School system regarding sickle cell anemia, in an effort to test more school age children for the trait.²⁷¹ On July 14th, the Panthers again took part in a community health day in Roxbury where they conducted sickle cell anemia tests for members of the community.²⁷² The health fair included groups like the Red Cross, Tufts Dental School, the Massachusetts Cancer Society, and the Panthers.²⁷³ This was likely one of last, if not the last, event held by the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party. In July 1972, the Central Committee's order came down to close all branch offices and consolidate all Panthers in Oakland.

As part of the national Black Panther Party shift toward running the electoral campaigns for Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown, local branches of the Party shut down all over the country; from Denver, to Seattle, to Los Angeles, to Boston.²⁷⁴ The immediate impact of this was the loss of bodies in local cities all over the country, as Panthers moved to Oakland,²⁷⁵ either permanently or temporarily, to work to get Bobby Seale elected as mayor and Elaine Brown elected to the Oakland City Council.²⁷⁶ Ending with a whisper, rather than a bang, as might have seemed appropriate from the grandiose rhetoric and tactics of the Panthers in the late 1960s, the

²⁷¹ "Mail Log", January 4-5, 1972, Boston Black United Front records, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, Roxbury Community College Library.

²⁷² "Blood Test", *Boston Globe*, July 15, 1972.

²⁷³ *Ibid*

²⁷⁴ Cynthia Bellamy, "Black Panthers shift from 'guns to butter'", *Bay State Banner*, August 2, 1973.

²⁷⁵ After a trip to China in 1972, Audrea Jones remained in Oakland and eventually became a director of Bobby Seale's mayoral campaign and the George Jackson Free Health Clinic. Jones was also elected to the Berkley Community Development Council in 1973. Donna Howell also moved to Oakland from Boston, where she became one of the directors of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School. Douglas Miranda also moved to Oakland, though he had moved on from Boston long previously with his leadership of the New Haven chapter. LeBlanc-Ernest, "Black Panther Party Women", 317, 318, 319; Lazerow, "The Black Panthers at the Water's Edge", 101.

²⁷⁶ Bellamy, "Black Panthers sift from 'guns to butter'".

Boston Panthers fell off the radar of the city, and did not return after the campaigns in Oakland. While Harvard professor Martin Kilson argued in the *Bay State Banner* in 1973, that the Panthers necessarily had to move toward electoral politics or face either the guns of the state or the eventual disbanding by entropy, the stories of the Boston Panthers tell a different tale.²⁷⁷ As Alondra Nelson so eloquently states, “The activists rejected capitalist liberalism and laid claim to democracy’s radical potential as this potentially was articulated in the ‘WHAT WE WANT’ and ‘WHAT WE NEED’ that was the Party’s ten-point platform.”²⁷⁸ The Black Panther Party of Boston was efficient and functional, creating socialist programs designed to aid the African American community of Boston. They served as a model for what a different type of society could look like. Their greatest achievement, the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Medical Center, is a testament to the importance of the Panthers beyond the rhetoric and police reports, beyond the Free Huey rallies and speeches. The Panthers in Boston are essential to remember for their survival programs which changed the communities for the better. These socialist programs modeled the future the Boston Panthers wished to see in their city.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*

²⁷⁸ Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 184.

Conclusion

The Boston Black Panther Party was a multifaceted and multitalented organization of men and women working to better the conditions of the African American community in Boston, and through Boston the United States. Through their activism they worked to build the dream of Boston as a true “Cradle of Liberty” for African Americans, a dream that had been deferred over the long course of Boston’s history. The Boston Panthers are little remembered because they engaged in no shoot outs with police, and kept safe from the assassin’s bullets of FBI-planned raids. But, these qualities are a positive to the branch, not a negative.

This work, while delving into the importance, and mere existence, of the Boston branch of the Black Panther Party, is by no means exhaustive. Though not incomplete, the work here needs to be further expanded upon through interviews with Boston Panthers, locals who were not in the Boston Party but interacted with it, and other stakeholders like members of the Boston Police Department, the Boston city government, and members of other Black Liberation Struggle organizations in Boston. The appendix provides a further look into my own research, and touches on many events that I did not cover in the third chapter for want of time and lack of detailed information. It is my hope that this work serves as a starting point, and inspiration, for future scholars to investigate both the Boston Panthers and other local chapters that are little known in the historiographical canon.

The historiography of the Black Panther Party is too focused on branches like Detroit where violent revolution was expected and the clashes between the police and Panthers mask the survival programs which prospered in the city. This milieu of “urban guerrilla warfare” was central to the Detroit Panthers and is a case study of how it was “carried out and narrated by

some Panther chapters across the country.”¹ For those African Americans in Detroit who joined the Black Panther Party it gave their struggle with the repressive force of the police—which was there before the Panthers and survived after they were gone—an ideological framework legitimating their struggle, and empowering them as part of a national struggle.² Many of the Detroit Panthers saw the necessity for an immediate violent revolution within the United States by African Americans.³ “Taking it to the pigs” was seen as the next step in revolution, and some of the Black Panthers in Detroit saw themselves as the ones to lead this assault.⁴ The Boston Panthers, on the other hand, tapped into this same national struggle, but used different methods to bring about the changes they wished to see.

The Boston Panthers’ survival programs, most importantly the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Medical Center, were central to the way the Party functioned in the city. It is these programs that drive the way that the group is reflected in the historical record and my analysis. Panthers in Boston took their jobs as agents of revolutionary change seriously, but in a very different way from the Detroit Panthers. It is difficult to pinpoint a single cause of the difference between the Detroit and Boston Party chapters. However, it is clear that the social landscape of Boston, in addition to the physical segregation and racism inherent in the city, all played a part in making the Boston chapter what it was. The Boston Panthers focused on survival programs as the most effective way forward with the revolution in Boston without losing sight of the national struggle which was occurring between African Americans and white American society at the time. The Black Panther Party in Boston established an effective Free Breakfast Program, Free Clothing Program, Free Busing to Prison Program, and People’s Free Medical Center. These

¹ Rhodes and Jeffries, “Motor City Panthers”, 127.

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*, 173.

⁴ *Ibid*

survival programs define the Panthers in Boston—in ways that the rhetoric of violent revolution never will. The actions of the Panthers in Boston speak louder than the words of the Central committee they parroted. Panthers in Boston worked for revolutionary change by modeling the system they desired to see.

But this dichotomy, between the Detroit chapter and the Boston chapter, is part of why the Black Panther Party is such an important historical force within the framework of the Black Power Movement and the Black Liberation Struggle. The Ten Point Platform and Program was broad enough to cover almost all aspects of African American life in the United States, and spoke to various radical activists in different ways. This meant that individual Panther chapters conceptualized and lived out the values of the Party through divergent tactics. Boston is an important example of a chapter that did not embrace the gun, and actively worked to improve the welfare of the community through the socialistic programs of the Party.

The Black Panther Party, as a historical concept and marker for Black Power, needs to be reconsidered and redefined to include chapters like Boston where the rhetoric was blazing, but the guns were silent. The Boston Black Panther Party demanded that the African American community of Boston be treated as more than statistics. They claimed their rights as fully human. Unlike the Detroit Panthers, the Boston branch did not emerge within a sea of other Black Power groups, jockeying for prominence and the vanguard role in a violent quest against the police. The Panthers in Boston built a community around survival programs that practiced a socialism—that was both idealistic and practical—the Panthers desired for their communities. The Boston branch of the Black Panthers modeled the society where they wished to live. A society controlled by the community members, caring for each other and constantly striving to ameliorate suffering, most excellently modeled by the Franklin Lynch People's Free Medical Center. The Panthers called

for community control, but also community peace. Working to better the conditions of all those they could reach, the Boston Black Panther Party served as the vanguard of a movement redefining the realities of life in Boston's African American communities. Boston's Black Panther Party embodied the Party's beliefs and carried high the banner of intercommunalism, desiring land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace.

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This section contains all dissertations, journal articles, and books I consulted or read during my research for this work. The compilation is meant as both a look into the behind the scenes influences of my writing, and also as a further research point for anyone interested.

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Appendix

The resources in this appendix are meant as a guide to the newspaper, in section one, and archive, in section two, material that I used as my primary source material for this thesis.

The timeline of the Black Panther Party of Boston is an exhaustive collections and plotting of the information from the three newspapers used in this work. They are coded as the following: the *Boston Globe* – GLOBE; the *Bay State Banner* – BANNER; and the *Black Panther* – BPP. Following a summary of the article or events described in the article is the title of the source article(s) along with the paper it was found in. Dates are given in month/day/year format.

The timeline from the Boston Black United Front is the information I found concerning the Panthers in the Roxbury Community College's Special Collections of the Boston Black United Front. The document title, box, and folder number are listed.

Black Panther Party of Boston Timeline

1968 June – Founding of Boston chapter according to Globe article [“Boston Panthers Stalk New Goals” 07/06/69 GLOBE]

July – Founding of Boston chapter according to Banner article [“Who Are The Black Panthers” 12/05/68 BANNER]

August 9 – “Service for Oppressed Peoples” at St. Philip’s Church in Boston where the Panthers Chico Neblett and Jerry Verone spoke about Huey Newton’s imprisonment. Banner says crowd was about 300 people. Other organizations, including the United Farm Workers spoke as well, and Father Daniel Berrigan spoke about cooperation between white and black people. Date chosen because of anniversary of bombing of Nagasaki. Collection raised \$187 for Newton defense fund. [“Service Held for Oppressed People” 08/23/68 BANNER]

September – Panthers assisted the “Black Student Union” for a boycott according to Banner [“Who Are The Black Panthers” 12/05/68 BANNER]

October 27 – BPP mentioned as part of a coalition to boycott California grape growers, nationally organized by Cesar Chavez (can look at the essay on Calif. Boycott with BPP) [“The grape-pickers’ story” 10/27/68 GLOBE]

November 9 – Renee Neblett, Deputy Minister of Culture, got in a fight with a Probation Office clerk when she and her husband, Chico Neblett, were there. She was taken to trial, lost and was charged \$100. [“Northern Racism” 01/25/69 BPP]

BPP supposed to speak at “The Massachusetts Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam” rally; they didn’t speak, only ~500 people at Boston Common, and BPP didn’t show up to speak [“Drizzle Dampens Viet Rally” 11/10/68 GLOBE]

December 5 – As of December 5th political education classes were held every Thursday at 7:30pm at Northeastern University’s Ell Center, and Saturdays at 2pm at “Operation Black at 366 Blue Hill Ave” (right down the street from Panther office at 375 Blue Hill Ave). Classes taught by “Deputy Minister of Education Wendell Bourne and Deputy Chairman Frank Hughes.

Books which are mentioned in Banner article as essential literature for Boston (interesting for the “cultural nationalist stuff”): “Frantz Fanon’s ‘Wretched of the Earth’, Malcolm X’s Autobiography, Krame [sic] Nkrumah’s ‘I Speak of Freedom’, LeRoi Jones’s ‘Blues People’, E.D. Cronin’s ‘Black Moses’, Lerone Bennett Jr.’s ‘Before the Mayflower’, and W.E.B. DuBois’ ‘Black Reconstruction in American’ and ‘Souls of Black Folk.’”

At some point before December 5th Stokely Carmichael, the “Prime Minister” of the Panthers came to Boston and the Boston Panthers acted as a security detail for him. After December 5th the Panthers planned to organized patrols of the police, establish a nursery for mothers who cannot afford a babysitter, and expand political education classes. And the Banner article, when talking about the Panthers speaks as if the Panthers do not have weapons yet, but they plan to acquire them soon.

[“Who Are The Black Panthers” 12/05/68 BANNER]

December 12 – As of December 12th BPP of Boston planning an alliance with “our Puerto Rican brothers” according to Delano Farrar in Banner article.

A “Junior Black Panther Party” formed for young boys, in addition to the political education classes for adults and teenagers, to “teach culture, economics and politics to youngsters as a means of providing a positive male image, especially for fatherless kids.” Claim in the Banner article that there were “several women” in the Boston Party, but “total membership can only be guessed at.”

[“Panthers Try to Reach All Black People” 12/12/68 BANNER]

1969 January 11 – Boston Panthers held a bake sale at the Washington Park shopping mall from 9am-3pm to help raise money for the Party. [“Panther Bake Sale” 01/09/69 BANNER]

January 14 – BPP supported Brandeis students in “siege” with “workshops on politics, political tactics, black pride and related subjects” [“City’s Blacks Rally Behind Students” 01/14/69 GLOBE]

January 21 – two Panthers, “Deputy Minister of Defense Delano Farrar and Michael Akins”, arrested for “snatching a woman’s pocketbook, receiving stolen goods and

possessing marijuana. The case was thrown out of court.” This according to the Globe. The Black Panther Paper says that Farrar and Atkins were in Guido’s Pizza shop when the police came in and arrested them. [“The Decline of the Black Militant” 07/13/69 GLOBE and “Off the Pigs” 02/02/69 BPP]

Delano Farrar and “Junior Panther Michael Atkins” arrested at a pizza shop when they were waiting to get sandwiches according to the Banner. They were accused to stealing “a black woman’s purse” and that after they were arrested they were accused to possession of marijuana and carrying a stolen wallet. Panthers represented by “black lawyer” Richard Banks. [“Panthers Charge Party Slandered” 04/24/69 BANNER]

January 25 – Boston Chapter received two of seven boxes of the BPP paper ordered. BPP feel that this is indicative of repressive action. [“Repression of the Black Panther Newspaper” 08/08/70 BPP]

January 26 – T.D. Pauley, “assistant field marshal of the Boston BPP” spoke at Nasson College, Springfield about the place of white liberals in the revolution (“out of black communities.”) Mentions previous death of three Boston Panthers. [“Black Panther Warns Liberals” 01/26/69 GLOBE]

April 4 – Good Friday march in memorial of MLK through Roxbury. First stop at BPP office on Blue Hill Avenue. Delano Farrar gave “brief eulogy to King and several slain Panthers” [“Holy Thursday Begins Passion” 04/03/69 and “Parade, Rally in Roxbury Honors Kings” 04/05/69 GLOBE and “Roxbury Honors Slain Black Leaders” 04/10/69 BANNER]

April/May – (see May 24th for further information) leadership of BPP of Boston purged (“apparently the expelled members were guilty of lacking sympathy for white workers” – they were “cultural nationalists”; purged because “they were racist, and didn’t follow the party’s ideology, which is the liberation of all people” according to Eugene Jones in 1970 interview).

New leadership instated.

Free Breakfast Program (offered to children very weekday morning at Tremont Street Methodist Church). Panthers want to have “liberation classes” after breakfasts, but church didn’t allow it.

Begin putting posters up around Roxbury and the South End.

Selling the paper on street corners and at events (claimed that 5000 circulated a week).

Hold “political education” classes every Saturday at offices for ~24 people a week

Eugene Jones (in July 1970) claimed that after the purge the group was harassed by the police in Boston more frequently: 25 times in two months.

[“Boston Panthers Stalk New Goals” 07/06/69 and “300 Hear Panthers’ Speak” 07/07/69 and ““You can jail a revolutionary but not a revolution”” 07/26/70 GLOBE]

May 1 – May Day Free Huey rally planned for Boston federal courthouse as part of a national Free Huey day coordinated by the BPP. [“Nationwide Rallies to Free Huey” 05/04/69 BPP]

The Globe doesn't have a story from the next day about any Panthers in Boston at a Free Huey Rally however. ["Panthers Rally for Jailed Chief" 05/02/69 GLOBE]

May 19 – Black Panther Party commemorated Malcolm X's birthday with a news release which gives large credit to Malcolm for the ideas of self-defense and the BPP. ["Malcolm X Birthdate Honored" 05/22/69 BANNER]

May 24 – "As of May 24, 1969 these renegade, cultural nationalist opportunists are no longer members of the Black Panther Party." BPP paper from July 19 lists 17 people purged from the Boston Chapter for a variety of reasons (given in the paper). Chico Neblett given primary blame for attempting to "undermine the people's revolution" and "take over the Boston Branch of the Black Panther Party." (mentions that Neblett joined the party at same time as Stokely Carmichael) ["Boston Purge" 07/19/69 BPP]

June 9/13 – (date is confused from the account of the BPP paper) Panthers Joel Brown and Ron Davis were selling the BPP paper outside First National Stores. A police officer (Accera) confronted them that they were causing a disturbance and they moved on to not cause trouble – walking toward Northampton Street. BPP paper reports that Officer then attacked them from behind, with the aid of two store managers. They were beaten and then sprayed with mace, and then arrested where they were beaten more. ["Boston Panthers Maced and Beaten for Selling Panther Newspaper" 06/28/69 BPP]

June 29 – Black family in white neighborhood of Dorchester attacked by whites, they call Panthers because police slow to show up to scene. Panther Gregory Jones arrested for carrying a rifle on the street. ["Youth Attack Black Family in Dorchester" 06/29/69 and "Dorchester Area Quiet After Attack" 06/30/69 GLOBE]

July 1 – The BPP of Boston held a "People's meeting" at 8pm at Blue Hill Christian Center (288 Blue Hill Ave) to discuss the recently created United Front Against Fascism. ["Panthers to Meet" 06/01/69 BANNER]

July 3 – Meeting at Central Square, Cambridge YMCA on the "Black Panther Party" about "goals and tactics [and] new breakfast program for children explained" ["Metropolitan Calendar" 06/29/69 GLOBE]

July 6 – Panthers call for "people's rally" at 1pm on 6th at Franklin Park to rename it after Malcolm X; and to also discuss police brutality. Rally draws 300 people to Franklin Park to hear about a variety of topics. More information about the rally: barbeque served, Malcolm X and Panther buttons were distributed. This was the first rally in Boston by the Panthers there (possibly means with the new Party leadership). Douglas Miranda, 20 years old, named leader; Gene Jones named as lieutenant of information. ["Boston Panthers Stalk New Goal" 07/06/69 and "300 Hear Panthers' Speakers" 07/07/69 GLOBE and "From Boston Chapter" 07/19/69 BPP and "Panthers Feed Kids" 07/10/69 BANNER]

July 10 – as of July 10th the Free Breakfast Program was established and every morning at 6am “some 40 or 50 youngsters congregate at the Tremont Methodist Church on Tremont St.” The Banner article says that the kids are “served eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, milk, orange juice, and vitamins” and “given a lecture in the future by a member of the party along with newspapers and posters.” The church would not allow the creation of “liberation classes” following the breakfasts though. [“Panthers Feed Kids” 07/10/69 BANNER]

July 11 – Press Conference at Blue Hill Ave. office for Ruby Ransom, mother of a drowned 11-year old. [“Boy’s Drowning in MDC Pool Raises Dispute” 07/12/69 and “Mother’s Battle Resulted in Pool Study” 08/13/69 GLOBE”]

July 19 – BPP paper article claims that Breakfast Program is doing well in Boston, but a couple of businesses – “Little Archie Williams and the Freedom Food Monopoly, Archduke Nelson of the B&B (Black and Beautiful – Bandit and Braggart) Blair’s Foodland, No-No Nepp_o and the Frankfurt Freaks, New England Meat Packing Company, Swfto Swift, Roxbury Cinema, and the Metropolitan Opera House of Roxbury” – are not helping the Panthers in their breakfast program. [“Boston Breakfast” 07/19/69 BPP]

By this point Eugene Jones claimed (in the BPP paper) that: 4000 papers sold (of 8000 ordered from national) at Newport Jazz Festival; the Panthers were going to begin a second Free Breakfast Program (“within the next week”); military drill and field training was established; the United Front Against Fascism established with connections to “mother country radicals” but the initial contacts with the black community were disappointing. [“From Boston Chapter” 07/19/69 BPP]

July 20 – “Outlook” on WEZE radio, interview with “area captain of the Black Panthers” by Jack Kelly; at 7pm. [“Other 20” 07/20/69 GLOBE]

Early morning on the 20th, at 1am, Panther Bob Jackson got a phone call from the daughter of Marion Alston, who was arrested – and harassed – earlier by the Boston police. She was bailed out of jail by her husband, for a \$12 bail, but the police were apparently very cruel to her. [“Boston Pigs Mace and Brutalize Mother” 08/02/69 BPP]

July 27 – “Con Cuba” rally on Claremont Street in South End to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. BPP spoke against the Boston Redevelopment Authority. [“Balloting is Heavy in So. End Election” 07/27/69 GLOBE]

August 7 – Douglas Miranda, 20; Carmen Jeffcoat, 28; John L. Cheatham, 19; William Jackson, 24; and David E. Quick, 16 all arrested and charged with driving a stolen car on I-84 in Connecticut.

BPP paper also mentions Ida Walston, as the driver of the car – and so actually charged with the theft – along with Miranda (Defense Captain), Cheetum (Lt. of Information), Quick and Jackson.

Banner says that people arrested are “Douglas Miranda, ... John Cheatham, William Jackson, David Quick, and Ida Wallston” (so possibly the Globe article is wrong about “Carmen Jeffcoat” – actually Wallston).

[“Five of Hub Area Arrested in Ct.” 08/10/69 GLOBE and “Conn. Fascist Pigs Vamp on Panthers” 08/23/69 BPP and “Boston Panthers Arrested in Conn.” 08/14/69 BANNER]

August 9 – March on the Freedom Trail to protest Vietnam War by 300 was co-organized by the Panthers along with other leftist groups [“Three Hundred Trek Hub’s Freedom Trail to Protest War” 08/10/69 GLOBE]

August 17 – Account from Banner: Douglas Miranda and Gene Jones arrested Sunday (August 17th) night about 10:20pm when they were stopped for “charges of improperly operating a motor vehicle” driving back to the Panther office after a Panther film rally. [“Panthers Arrested in Roxbury” 08/21/69 BANNER]

Account from BPP paper: Douglas Miranda and Eugene Jones driving back from a film rally and the Boston police pulled them over and arrested them (while calling in a large number of armed police to secure their arrest). Miranda accused of a “motor vehicle violation” and Jones of “being a fugitive.” [“Boston Pigs Rampage” 09/13/69 BPP]

August 20 – Robert “Big Bob” Heard arrested and charged with “grand larceny for taking scraps of metal from an open field.” [“Continued Harassment” 01/31/70 BPP]

August 31 – People’s Rally to Combat the Construction of Dudley Police Station at 2pm at the construction site at Dudley Terminal. [“Rally against Police Station” 08/28/69 BANNER]

September 3 – Winfield Chambers; Robert Heard, Jr.; Gregory Jackson; Eugene Jones; Russell Murchison; and Robert Rogers arrested at Dudley Street MBTA station for assault and battery charges against police officers. Panthers were protesting and selling papers and got in fight after being asked to leave the station. Chambers hospitalized with head injuries from “a police club” according to Banner article.

Panthers were picketing the construction of a new court house and police station when they heard that police were in the station where “students [were] being pushed around.” Panthers claim that there were “100 police in there – more pigs than people.”

[“Six Panthers Arrested” 09/04/69 GLOBE and “Black Panthers Arrested at Dudley; Protest against Police Continues” 09/11/69 BANNER]

September 6 – article claims that BPP called into help a riot-like situation at the Maverick housing project in East Boston. [“Peace talks begin... on Maverick st.” 09/15/69 GLOBE]

September 7 – George Cox, identified as a member of the BPP and a senior at Tufts, going to teach class called “Riot and Revolution in Black Communities: Violence as an agent of social change” in the Experimental College of Tufts. [“Blacks, disadvantaged and area colleges” 09/07/69 GLOBE]

September 9 – Robert Heard was passing out leaflets about the new police station near the Dudley Terminal MBTA stop and was arrested for “assault and battery on a pig, loitering, idle and disorderly conduct, and trespassing.” [“Continued Harassment” 01/31/70 BPP]

September 13 – Oscar Earl beaten by police and the cast from injury only came off at beginning of November. Police claim he is a member of BPP, but Globe says he is not. [“The Oscar Earl case” 11/03/69 GLOBE]

September 25 – Black Panther Party holds rally at the John F. Kennedy Federal Office Building for about 300 people. [“Panthers Rally at JFK Building” 09/25/69 GLOBE]

October 16 – As of October 16th the Panthers held a meeting and formed a committee of twenty people to “fight the construction of the Dudley St. police station.” The meeting had about fifty community members and sympathizers according to Banner. Three members of the meeting were the Reverends Virgil Wood and Michael Haynes, and they proposed picketing in their clerical robes. Haynes also the State Representative for Roxbury – though he had refused to walk on the picket line and give a definitive answer about if he supported the Panther police proposal (“provides for division of the city into districts, and then into neighborhoods which elect councilmen who control the hiring and firing of the policemen for any given district.”

Banner article from October 16th also mentions that Panthers begun organizing for the formation of a community health center.

[“Panthers form Committee” 10/16/69 BANNER]

October 23 – Robert “Big Bob” Heard arrested on the street and “framed with assault and armed robbery; and placed on \$20,000 bail.” BPP paper claims that “a female nigger pig, who goes by the name of Taart, [testified] that Bob held a gun on her while another man robbed her.” [“Frame Up” 11/08/69 and “Another Pig Plot to Frame Panther ‘Big Bob’” 06/13/70 BPP]

October 30 – Boston BPP part of the November Action Coalition (NAC), an organization formed out of MIT. Panthers working with other area colleges as well, and plan to hold associated militant protests with main NAC action. [“MIT Sides Squares for Takeover” 10/30/69 GLOBE]

November 1 – As of November 1st the Boston offices were at 375 Bluehill Ave 02119 [“List of Chapters and Branches of the Black Panther Party” 11/01/69 BPP]

November 5 – November Action Coalition demonstration involved the BPP, along with other groups. [“Eight hundred in Antiwar March at MIT” 11/05/69 GLOBE]

November 12 – Rally to “Free Big Bob” at noon at corner of Warren St and Blue Hill Ave. The Panthers gave out leaflets, held signs and had a speaker-car to broadcast message. [“Panther rally for prisoners” 11/20/69 BANNER]

November 19 – Boston Panthers have film screening at Kenmore Square Cinema with Panther films from Chicago. [“The Arts” 11/19/69 GLOBE]

November 22 – At a New Haven rally for the jailed Panthers, specifically about the seven Panther sisters imprisoned, and women in the Party, Audrea Jones spoke, and identified as “acting Area Captain of the Black Panther Party in Boston.” She spoke about “the nature of fascism, its use of racism, and the necessity for proletarian internationalism.” [“Free our Sisters” 12/06/69 BPP]

December 6 – BPP hold rally at City Hall Plaza to protest the killing of Fred Hampton, supported by SDS-Weathermen, where an “alliance was announced” between the groups. Formation of new group, the Students Against Fascism in response to Hampton’s assassination. Only twelve Panthers present in contrast to hundreds of white leftists according to Globe. Audrea Jones spoke about Fred Hampton’s death in an inflammatory manner according to the Globe. [“BU denies student demands, SDS votes Monday takeover” 12/05/69 and “Panthers, SDS Group Unite” 12/07/69 and “Blazing rhetoric or cold week-end” 12/12/69 GLOBE and “Panther rally for slain leader” 12/11/69 BANNER]

December 7 – Boston College held a panel discussion with four national black leaders: Ralph Abernathy, SCLC; Mesia Hewitt, BPP; Roy Innis, CORE; Roy Wilkins, NAACP [“Four black leaders agree on goal” 12/09/69 GLOBE and “Black leaders speak at Boston College” 12/11/69 BANNER]

December 27 – A “stop the war” rally scheduled at 2pm at the First Baptist Church in Beverly. BPP will speak, along with other groups. But the church decided that they would not allow the rally to happen because the church wasn’t allowed for “protest meetings.” Instead the rally was rescheduled for the Beverly Common. [“Yule events stress peace theme” 12/24/69 and “Beverly church halts war protest” 12/27/69 GLOBE]

1970 January – BPP charge that MBTA and Boston Police persecuted “Bob Herd” in a “trumped-up” series of arrests. [“Display Ad 13” 04/17/70 GLOBE]

January 9 – Boston Chapter of the BPP start a Free Clothing Program in the Mission Hill District Project of Roxbury at 81 Parker St in the basement. It took 2 months of work to organize the program so it could start at beginning on January. James Young as the “Free Clothing Program Coordinator.” According to the Banner there was enough clothing to clothe 200 people. Most donated by stores in the area, particularly “Bread, Inc.” but also cleaners who had unclaimed clothing and individual donations. Young hoped program would continue, every Friday if possible. [“Boston Free Clothing Program” 01/31/70 BPP and “Panthers begin free clothing program” 01/15/70 BANNER]

February 11 – Fifty person rally at Pemberton Square in front of the Federal Court Building to support Huey Newton who had his bail appeal on the 11th (Wednesday). [“Panthers rally for Huey Newton” 02/19/70 BANNER]

February 21 – Grand opening of new Party offices in Boston, 23 Winthrop St, part of the Malcolm X Community Information Center. The Center was to provide both a space for programs, and a library of information “relating to the conditions of black people.” As of March 12th political education classes held Wednesdays at 7pm and Saturday at 2pm in the Center. [“Panthers open new headquarters” 03/12/70 BANNER]

March 1 – Rally announced on February 11th for March 1st at Roxbury Boys Club at 3pm with speakers: Douglas Miranda, Audrea Jones, L.M. Owens, and Virgil Wood plus films and entertainment. [“Panthers Rally for Huey Newton” 02/19/70 BANNER]

March 15 – Speech by Jean Genet, French poet, at MIT to support the Panthers. Douglas Miranda, now based in New Haven Panthers according to Globe, spoke after Genet finished. [“French poet Genet draws crowd in behalf of black Panthers” 03/15/70 GLOBE]

March 24 – Gregory Daniels called the BPP for assistance in preventing the Development Corporation of America from evicting his family from their home in Academy Apartments. Members of the BPP went to the apartment to stop the eviction. She was (mostly) two months behind on her rent, and so her landlord wanted to strong-arm evict her, according to the BPP paper. The Party lent Mrs. Daniel’s some of the money she owed to help her keep her apartment. [“Landlordism” 04/18/70 BPP]

March 30 – Panthers held a “mass meeting” that only 65 people, 10 black, (according to the Globe) attended at 35 Kneeland Street. [“But cut the cards” 04/03/70 GLOBE]

April 5 – as part of an interfaith, interracial conference Eugene Jones, 22, chaired a workshop “on racism, called on blacks and whites to protest the New Haven trial of Seale and the other party members.” [“Parley urges blacks, whites to cooperate” 04/05/70 GLOBE]

April 8 – Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge has upheld a vote by the senate – a student-faculty-staff committee which can recommend actions to the administration – to give \$300, which was held by the then defunct student group, St. John’s Society, to the BPP for its “hot meal program.” [“Episcopal school in reversal” 04/08/70 GLOBE and “Panther Program aided” 04/09/70 BANNER]

April 14 – meeting at All Saints Lutheran Church by Panthers to “plan strategy” about New Haven trial. [“Parley urges blacks, whites to cooperate” 04/03/70 GLOBE]
At 3:30pm a group rallied at Post Office square and then march to Police Headquarters on Berkeley Street in support of Bobby Seale (in New Haven). This march was led by the “women’s caucus of the Coalition”. Howard Zinn, Artie Seale, and Audrea Jones to speak at Police Headquarters. Douglas Miranda said to have spoken at this rally as well. [“War protest week begins in Boston” 04/14/70 and “Panther Posture At New Haven” 04/26/70 GLOBE]

During part of the rally, at Kenmore Square, Jennifer Thomas, 16, was arrested for “using profanity and abusing the flag.” [“Hub probe of police brutality charge delayed” 05/02/70 GLOBE]

April 15 – Anti-War rally on the Boston Common, coordinated with the NAC. Estimates of number of participants between 45,000-50,000 by police, and 100,000 by the organizers. A member of the BPP (Douglas Miranda) schedules to speak. Miranda’s rhetoric of “kill the pigs” shouted down by the crowd at the rally according to the Globe. Globe analyzed the rally after the fact and talks about how more of it was focused on Seale’s trial than on the War. [“War Protest Due Today on Common” 04/15/70 and “Thousands Pack Common for Vietnam Moratorium” 04/16/70 and “Bitter Contrast” 04/17/70 GLOBE]

May – plans to open a Free Medical Clinic in Roxbury in a trailer at Ruggles and Tremont Streets intersection.

\$500 given to the Boston BPP for the clinic at end of April by Professor Jonathon Beckwith of Harvard Medical School after he won \$1000 from his work “isolating pure genes”.

BPP clinic one of only four health clinic in the black-Boston communities according to Afall Gueye.

The clinic is named after Franklin Lynch (at least by September 27, 1970).

Clinic has to “rely heavily on white doctors”.

[“Letters to the Editor” 04/06/70 and “Scientist donates award to Panthers” 04/28/70 and “Roxbury intern plan provides ‘black adult examples’” 08/23/70 and “Reaction to Panthers varied” 09/27/70 and “Community health care centers” 10/11/70 GLOBE and “On the Necks of the Greedy Businessmen” 05/19/70 and “The Black Panther Party Peoples’ Free Health Center” 06/13/70 BPP]

May 8 – Rally against the War, Kent State, and about the BPP behind the Harvard Stadium, at Soldiers Field. Globe claims 30,000 at the rally. Douglas Miranda, identified as the “East Coast defense captain of the Black Panther Party”, spoke at the rally about the War and 3rd-World solidarity, and the “war in America.” [“Nixon Predicts Full Pullout by End of June” 05/09/70 and “Pre-med student marches, vows to work for changes” 05/09/70 GLOBE]

May 9 – By May 9th the Boston offices were moved, according to the BPP paper, to 23 Winthrop Street, Roxbury, and Audrea Jones was listed as Area Captain. [“Black Panther Party List of all Recognized Chapters, Branches and NCCFS” 05/09/70 BPP]

May 10 – Concert/fundraiser for Black Panther defense fund in Connecticut trial at Nickerson Field at BU. Organized only one day in advance, according to the Globe, it was attended by 7000 people. Donna Howell spoke during breaks in the music. [“Seven thousand rock in sun for Panthers’ defense fund” 05/11/70 GLOBE]

May 13 – Big Bob Heard was “found innocent . . . on charges of armed robbery by an all-white jury in Suffolk Superior Court.” Heard had been accused by “Marilyn Tartt”

(married name Thomas) whose evidence was scanty and disordered. [“Panther acquitted on robbery charge” 05/21/70 BANNER]

May 31 – Opening of the Free Health Center (though Banner article from October 1971 says that the clinic had been operating since February 1970), dedicated to Franklyn Lynch, which had been previously delayed because of rain. The trailer on the land: “the corner of Whittier St. and Columbus Ave.” according to Banner (another article says Ruggles St, between Tremont St. and Columbus Ave). And there is another trailer next to the Health Center for the “New Urban League’s Adult Education Center.” It was a part of Operation Stop – which is a Boston Black United Front organization to oppose building a highway through Roxbury. The Free Health Center is a trailer on land that would have been used for the highway. Claim want it to be open 24 hours a day – but only have Saturday and Sunday 2-6pm; and Tuesdays and Thursdays 7-11pm (as of June 13th). [“The Black Panther Party Peoples’ Free Health Center” 06/13/70 and “Racist Bandits Attack Peoples Free Health Center” 07/18/70 BPP and “Panther clinic opening delayed” 05/21/70 and “Black Panther Health Clinic opens in Roxbury” 06/04/70 and “Panthers conduct sickle cell testing” 10/21/71 BANNER]

June 14 – Flozell Johnson was assaulted by the police in his apartment, which was seen by many people in the Mission Hill projects. The police ended up not arresting him and left. Johnson then called the Black Panther Party for assistance. [“Boston... Pigs Beat Mr. Johnson in his Home” 07/18/70 BPP]

July 5 – Freedom Food, a black-owned market chain (first on the East coast, according to Globe), at Columbia Road and on Talbot Avenue in Roxbury. Provide storage space for the BPP free breakfast program. [“Freedom Food achieving both its profit-making and social goals” 07/05/70 GLOBE]

During the morning of July 5th “thirteen shots were fired into the trailer that houses the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Health Center”. BPP paper claims that bullets which were found were “.38 special” which is the type of handgun ammunition the Boston Police Department used. Damage was minimal and the Center was open on Sunday as usual. BPP paper says that the morning of the 5th (following celebrations on the night of the 4th presumably) there were lots of fireworks going off, and so gun shots were not heard by anyone that night. BPP paper claims that after the attack there was more participation by the community in the Free Health Center. [“Racist Bandits Attack Peoples Free Health Center” 07/18/70 BPP]

“Bubble Celebration” or “Fifth of July Festival” on the Boston Common with about 1000 people. The BPP sold papers at the non-political event. [“Bubble celebration livens up the Common” 07/06/70 GLOBE]

July 26 – Two weeks before July 26th the Peoples Health Clinic, in a trailer at corner of Tremont and Ruggles Streets, was “pelted with bullets” by the Boston Police (according to interview with Eugene Jones)

At this point the Panthers in Boston had discarded the uniforms (“black berets and black leather jackets”) because they felt it made them targets of police harassment. They also didn’t release titles of officers any more, and they didn’t say how many members were in the party.

Panthers had also set up a “liberation school” during the summer to teach boys and girls from ages 5-12 about “reasons for their oppression, and why the power structure promises things that are never put into practice.”

Previously – though date not stated – the Free Breakfast Program, which served “over 250 school children per week” (according to the BPP paper), had been shut down when the Boston Housing Authority “changed the locks on the door of the breakfast room at Mission Hill project and refused to give the party new keys.” The Boston Panthers tried to get a new space in the Orchard Park housing project but were again refused the keys – though Jones claims that the people living at the project wanted the Program. Claims this is directly related to misinformation and lies spread by the FBI about the “dangers” of the Breakfast Program nationally (also talked about by Diana Roberson in BPP paper article). Eugene Jones, in interview, claims that part of the reason there hasn’t been the “inevitable clash” between the Panthers and Boston police was because “the people of the black colony of Boston have been and are showing their overwhelming support for the party’s activities.”

[“You can jail a revolutionary but not a revolution” 07/26/70 GLOBE and “Determining our Destiny” 07/04/70 and “Life in Concentration Camps” 03/27/71 BPP]

July 31 – Nineteen/twenty people arrested in New Bedford by police during an early morning raid on the “office of the Black Panther Party” (National Committee to Combat Fascism). Three were from Boston. Both “Panthers and community people” arrested. Evidently Bob Heard, 21, was in New Bedford at this time – he was interviewed by Paul Pappas, a reporter for WTEV of New Bedford.

Another member of Boston Panthers, John Wayne Thomas, 21, arrested as well. Bailed out after three weeks in jail on \$15,000 bond.

Another Boston BPP member, Orlando Vaughn, 26, arrested; also bailed out on \$15,000 bond after three weeks in jail.

Another Boston Panther, John Viera, 24, arrested. Released from prison after two and a half months.

[“Court overturns Lawrence man’s ‘smut’ conviction” 10/30/70 and “Wouldn’t tell Bristol County jury about night with Panthers” 01/06/71 GLOBE and “Revolutionary Brother and Sisters in the New Bedford 20” 09/05/70 and “The New Bedford 20” 09/05/70 BPP]

August 1 – BPP of Boston members in New Bedford to support the National Committee to Combat Fascism that was raided there on July 31st (Friday). They held a press conference at the “empty lot at Mill and Kempton streets, within sight of the headquarters.” Audrea Jones there to speak at press conference and offer support to New Bedford. [“New Bedford blacks object to police ‘occupying us’” 08/02/70 GLOBE]

August 3 – City Councilor Tom Atkin (African American) met with Black Panthers to talk about police harassment in New Bedford. News reporters were not allowed into the

meeting. According to the Globe three Panthers also guarded the door to the meeting room. [“City Hall in August” 08/09/70 GLOBE]

August 6 – Twenty two boxes of the BPP paper left San Francisco for the Boston Chapter. Only seventeen boxes arrived, and three of those were “soaked, not in water, but kerosene, in order to have the print run.” Another example, one from 1969 as well, of direct tampering with the Boston Chapter’s paper shipments. [“The Voice of the Panther Shall be Heard throughout the Land” 09/05/70 BPP]

August 8 – John Cheatham and Jackie Nunez (partners) were purged from the BPP of New Haven (though they had also both been previously involved in the Boston Chapter) because of their conduct. [“New Haven Conn. Black Panther Party Purges” 08/08/70 BPP]

August 15 – According to the BPP paper a Bay State Banner article was wrong about facts of a story they reported: a man, Milton Blue was arrested in a stabbing of two people sometime before July 16th (when the Banner paper was published). He actually was defending himself from an attack by people because he was hanging out leaflets according to the BPP. He also was “a community worker, working hand in hand with the Boston Branch of the Black Panther Party to educate people to implement programs to meet people’s basic needs.” [“‘Bay Banner’ a Puppet Newspaper used by the system to mislead the people” 08/15/70 and “Boston South End... Home of the Lumpen, a Setting for Pig Brutality” 10/24/70 BPP]

August 28 – a black man came into the Franklin Lynch People’s Free Health Center because he was injured and had trouble breathing (had a couple broken ribs) and because the doctors weren’t there for the day yet “Pat” (the author of the BPP paper news story) took him to a hospital where he was dropped off eventually – after being mistreated. Pat had to come back and get him again and take him to another hospital because he called from the first hospital because he was being mistreated. [“Boston Pig Hospital Strikes Again” 09/26/70 BPP]

August 31 – Donna Howell, a Panther from Boston, was in Philadelphia to help prepare a plenary session for the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C. She was caught in an attack by the police and FBI in Philadelphia. Became part of the “Philly 14.” [“Philly 14 Trial Begins charges from 1970 Police” 06/16/73 BPP]

September 5 – After the riots in New Bedford the Boston BPP went there and helped to form a National Committee to Combat Fascism. [“Concerning the New Bedford NCCF” 09/05/70 BPP]

As of September 5th five of the New Bedford 20 were still in jail: Robert Heard, Pedro Almeida, Shelia Reach, Cathrine Perry, and John Vierra. [“The New Bedford 20” 09/05/70 BPP]

September 7 – Ali Muhammed came into the “Black Community Information Center” (unclear if this means the BPP offices or something else, but written by Panther, and he says “our” when referring to it) to talk about the treatment of his son, Wali, 11, in the Dudley Street School and the Sara J. Baker School during May-June of 1970. Wali refused to “salute the flag” during school and was first ridiculed, and then beaten by his teacher (according to the BPP paper). [“Eleven year old brother beaten for not saluting ‘the Symbol of Fascism, the American Flag’” 09/26/70 BPP]

September 26 – “recently” the BPP Free Health Center, “together with welfare moms” conducted a series of lead-poisoning tests for approximately 300 children. Thirty had been infected by lead poisoning. [“People Unite to Deal with Slumlords” 09/26/70 BPP]

As of September 26th three of those arrested in New Bedford (according to this article it was 22, not 19 or 20) still “remain captured.” They are “‘Big Bob’ Heard, Johnny Veirra and Petey Almeida.” BPP paper talks about how Veirra was “instrumental in setting up the NCCF” in New Bedford, because he is a native of New Bedford. And he became “armed with the teachings of our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton.” (he was not a Panther before the July 31st raid) [“Free Johnny Vierra” 09/26/70 BPP]

September 29 – BPP members, including Lydia who wrote the article in the BPP paper, walking home at about 6:30pm, found a man nearly comatose from drug abuse on the steps of a church on Warren Street. They got him back to the “community center” first and then to the Free Health Clinic where he was treated. [“People Save Brother near death from Drugs” 10/24/70 BPP]

October – Robert “Big Bob” Heard, on trial (again) for “allegedly having a concealed weapon” according to interview with Eugene Jones in late July. [““You can jail a revolutionary but not a revolution”” 07/26/70 GLOBE]

October 9 – Roland Chambers, member of the Boston BPP, was put in jail for “an alleged probation violation” and “was sentenced to three months for charges of assault and battery on a pig, and attempting to rescue a prisoner.” BPP paper claims it was all a frame up, and that Chambers was beaten while in jail (so badly he was on crutches). [“Free Roland Chambers” 10/31/70 BPP]

October 10 – The three from New Bedford still in jail as of October 10th according to BPP paper. [“Racist Murderers walk the Streets while Revolutionaries Remain in Jails” 10/10/70 BPP]

October 17 – member of the BPP, “Semaj” selling BPP papers in the Grove Hill area of Roxbury when she witnessed a man who had been hit by a car who was mistreated by the ambulance when they eventually came to pick him up. [“Pigs let injured Brother lie in the street for 36 minutes” 11/21/70 BPP]

October 20 – Robert Heard was found guilty and sentenced to “Deer Island for two and one half years on trumped-up charges of (1) assault and battery on a pig, (2) carrying a

concealed weapon, and (3) idle and disorderly conduct, resulting from an incident in December of 1969 at the Dudley Street MBTA station.” [“Racist Jury Convicts Big Bob” 10/31/70 BPP]

October 24 – Story in the BPP paper about a fifteen year old black kid coming into the “Black Community Information Center” (which, again, maybe is the Panther offices, maybe not) because he ran away from the Hagen School in Dorchester. (Panthers dealt with kids as well as adults) [“Fifteen Year Old Brother Escapes Racist School” 10/24/70 BPP]

Story from October 24th BPP paper about the residents of apartments that were being evicted and their story as the reason for why they are going to the “Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention” in Washington, D.C. [“Why the Tenants of 35 and 29 Mt. Pleasant will be at the Constitutional Convention” 10/24/70 BPP]

October 29 – Young Workers Liberation League rally at the John F. Kennedy Federal building to demand freedom for Angela Davis a week before October 29th (not specified in Banner article), and members of the BPP briefly part of the rally. [“JFK building site of Angela Davis rally” 10/29/70 BANNER]

October 30 – Bristol County Grand Jury indicted 10 Black Panthers “on charges ranging from conspiracy to commit murder to inciting a riot and anarchy.” Ten on the 30th, out of total of 19 arrested in July 31st raid in New Bedford. Three of the total were from Boston. [“Court overturns Lawrence man’s ‘smut’ conviction” 10/30/70 GLOBE]

October 31 – As of October 31st Milton Blue had created a “revolutionary People’s Drug Program, Project Concern.” Though he was not a Panther he was “relating to the Party for some time.” The BPP paper claims that Project Concern was doing a good job of helping rehabilitate drug addicts – the first of its kind in Boston. [“Revolutionary Drug Program Serves the People” 10/31/70 BPP]

November 15 – At 4:15pm there was a car accident outside the People’s Free Health Center and the staff of the Center ran outside to help people. They took the man that looked the worst hurt, a 72-year old, into the Center where they treated him briefly before the police arrived. The police attempted to question the man while he was being treated by a doctor but the Panthers at the clinic refused to allow them into the examining room according to the BPP paper. [“Pig Harasses Brother at People’s Free Health Center” 12/26/70 BPP]

November 18 – Huey Newton spoke to 4000 people at Boston College. [“Four thousand at BC hear Newton” 11/19/70 GLOBE and “Let us hold high the Banner of Intercommunalism...” 01/23/71 BPP and “Newton addresses 4000 at B.C.” 11/26/70 BANNER]

November 21 – As of November 21st the BPP of Boston was beginning to implement a Free Busing to Prison Program for Norfolk State Prison, and with plans to expand to the

Walpole and Concord State Prisons, and the Women's Reformatory in Framingham, MA. Also asking for community support from people who have cars to help with organizing this program in the BPP paper article. ["Free Prison Busing Program in Boston" 11/21/70 BPP]

A Free Breakfast Program set up in Bromley Heath three weeks before November 21st. Had already served almost 700 school children according to BPP paper. Program run daily Monday-Friday 7-8:15am. The article in the BPP paper complains about the businesses in the area of Bromley Heath not supporting the Free Breakfast Program in any way; and calling specifically for a boycott against three stores: Meatland, Stop&Shop, and Kozy Korner. ["Pigs Attempt to Sabotage Free Breakfast Program" 11/21/70 BPP]

1971 January 5 – According to the BPP paper the Boston offices were almost attacked by the police – a “trial run” in the words of the BPP paper – at 4am that morning. They issued a press statement about it later that day. This occurred, the BPP paper says, because a series of articles in the Record American about “Militants stockpiling guns” were reported, and this created a furor about the Panthers in Boston. ["Pig Press Attempts to Set up Police Attack" 03/20/71 BPP]

January 16 – The BPP of Boston had helped to organize a “Free Christmas Food to Prisoners Program” for the people in Norfolk Prison. ["An Open Letter of Thanks to the Black Community of Boston" 01/16/71 BPP]

February 25 – The People's Free Health Center performed an eye operation on 14-month old Stacey Burston who had a “problem with the muscles in her eyes”. She had been prescribed glasses at the Boston Children's Hospital when she was 6-months old, but because the condition was worse in January 1971 she was brought to the Free Health Clinic immediately and an eye doctor was found to perform the surgery. ["People's Free Health Center Aids in Correcting child's Eyesight" 03/20/71 BPP]

March 30 – Charges dropped against ten people accused of “conspiracy to murder, commit anarchy and inciting to riot” from October 30 (arrested July 31 raid in New Bedford). The three Boston people were: Robert J. Heard, 22; John W. Thomas, 21; and Orlando B. Vaughn, 25. ["Chief counts dropped in New Bedford" 03/30/71 GLOBE]

May 8 – First written “signature” in the BPP paper by the “MASS STATE CHAPTER Black Panther Party.” ["Western Union Telegram" 05/08/71 BPP]

May 22 – Some time before May 22nd, “recently”, there had been a fire in the Parrigo family apartment in the Columbia Point Housing Project at 15 Montpelier Street. The Parrigo family were engaged with the Panthers through buying the BPP paper and sending the children to the Free Breakfast Program. The family lost their home and was essentially evicted after the fire. The Panthers helped to find them permanent housing, and the children were “treated for the effects of the fire and smoke at the Black Panther Party's people's Free Health Clinic.” ["Another Family Evicted" 05/22/71 BPP]

May 30 – First anniversary celebration of the Black Panther Party People’s Free Health Center. BPP paper article claims that “hundreds of people have received treatment, health counseling, and preventative medical education; [and] enabled many people of our community to be trained as technicians, medical secretaries, and nursing assistants.” Because of inclement weather instead of an outdoor barbeque a dinner was held in the Party Information Center. [“Boston Celebrates First Anniversary of People’s Free Health Center” 06/12/71 BPP]

June 12 – BPP paper announces free sickle cell anemia tests every Saturday in Boston – beginning June 12th – from 12-5pm at the People’s Free Health Center. Part of a national campaign of Panthers administering sickle cell anemia tests. [“The Black Panther Party is Giving Free Sickle Cell Anemia Tests in these Areas” 06/12/71 BPP]

June 22 – After an incident at Zayre’s Department store at the Roslindale Shopping Center where Philomena Brewer, 16; Andrea Brewer, 14; Patricia Daniels and Mildred Richardson were all caught in a melee with police after they decided that Philomena stole something – and began beating her. Philomena, Daniels, and Richardson were arrested and taken to Police Station Five (while Andrea escaped and got her mother, Evelyn Brewer). The Panthers eventually heard about the incident and went to the police station, after which people left. [“Black Shoppers Beaten and Robbed” 07/10/71 BPP]

June 24 – A ten year old, Virgil Lee Swindell, was killed by a train after his foot was caught in the track and he couldn’t get loose. He was a member of the Black Panther Party’s Liberation School.

Margaret Swindell, Virgil Lee’s mother, began a campaign, Parents for Justice and Welfare, which the Panthers support, to build a protective fence around railroads so that kids playing can’t get hurt on the tracks again.

Eugene Jones gave a eulogy at the funeral of Virgil Lee Swindell.

[“Wrong Side of the Tracks” 07/10/71 BPP]

August 3 – Recently, from a BPP paper from August 3rd, the Boston Panthers helped raise money for Shirley Harris, an expectant mother who lived in Orchard Park Housing Project with another son who was five. She reached out to the Party for help because she hadn’t received her welfare checks for a month and she didn’t have enough money to feed herself and her kid. The Panthers also went with Harris to her welfare office to try and get the situation straightened out – which it seems to have been. [“Welfare Candy” 07/03/71 BPP]

August 15 – Eugene Jones quoted in the Globe as complaining that people see “America’s number one problem” as environmental when there are people of color being killed. [“Can urban, suburban ecologists unite” 08/15/71 GLOBE]

September – Robert Heard and Peter Almeida, two members of the BPP of Massachusetts, were “sentenced to 5 months in prison following a 2 hour trial for allegedly burning mattresses.” [“Even Juries are Banned in Boston” 10/30/71 BPP]

October 4 – as of October 4th the People’s Free Health Center offered “pregnancy tests, immunization shots, tuberculosis tests, gynecology, general medicine and many others” according to the BPP paper. It also had an Out-Reach program which was first implemented with the Sickle Cell Disease Campaign – which began August 8, 1971. More than 1000 community people had been tested to this point, and 70 had positive results (either they have the trait or the anemia). The Out-Reach program was looking to expand into schools for sickle cell testing at this time, and then into “general medicine, immunizations and various blood tests.” [“The Boston People’s Free Health Center will Come to You” 10/04/71 BPP]

October 25 – In last two months BPP has given sickle cell tests to more than 2000 blacks in Boston (in October 21st article in Banner it says 1300 tested, and 120 found to have the trait for sickle cell anemia). This is part of the People’s Free Health Center. Eugene Jones and Mary Bassett named as people who work at the trailer-clinic and answer the phones. Jones explains that the “outreach program, the door-to-door visits” is the main part of what they are currently doing. Planning tests for tuberculosis and lead poisoning once finished testing for sickle cell anemia. The clinic open Tuesday-Friday 7-11pm; Saturday 12-5pm; Sunday 2-6pm. [“Two thousand of Boston’s blacks get sickle cell test by Panthers” 10/25/71 GLOBE and “Panthers conduct Sickle cell testing” 10/21/71 BANNER]

November 27 – Community Relations and Public Health Information Day at the Masonic Temple Grove Hall in Roxbury, and coordinated by Jeanne Q. Tibbs of the Young Women’s Leadership and Development Program and sponsored by WILD radio station. The Panthers part of the event. They did free blood tests for sickle cell anemia at their table. [“Health day held in Roxbury” 11/28/71 GLOBE and “Youth have their day in Roxbury” 12/23/71 BANNER]

December 11 – The BPP paper named three black businesses in Boston that “have been very supportive of the People’s Survival Programs”, and tell people to support them. They are: “Sax Steak Sandwiches”, “Ray’s of Boston”, and “Morcel’s Shoes.” They call out “Bill Boyette [a Oakland business that had national recognition for a boycott] and the Ad Hoc Committee of Black Businessmen” who “refused to give a continuous nominal amount” to a series of listed programs. The Survival Programs listed (not known if all of these are only Boston based): Angela Davis People’s Free Food Program; David Hilliard People’s Free Shoe Program; George Jackson People’s Free Medical Research Health Clinics; People’s Free Clothing Program; People’s Sickle Cell Anemia Medical Research Foundation; Free Busing to the Prisons Program; Free Breakfast for School Children Program; Free Community Legal Aid Education Program; Intercommunal Youth Institute, Free Tutoring, and Liberation Schools; and Free Film showing. [“These Black Businesses in Boston...” 12/11/71 BPP and “Black Panthers shift from ‘guns to butter’” 08/02/73 BANNER]

1972 March 5 – Black Panther Party “delegation” went to China. “Edna Helson, a secretary and housewife from Boston” went; as well as “Audrea Jones, from Massachusetts.” [“Progressive Americans, Led by Panthers, Return from China” 04/22/72 BPP]

April 11 - Black Panther Party “delegation” returns from China. “Edna Helson, a secretary and housewife from Boston” went; as well as “Audrea Jones, from Massachusetts.” [“Progressive Americans, Led by Panthers, Return from China” 04/22/72 BPP]

May 26 – After being accidentally shot in the leg by a Boston police officer, eight year old Devon Pugh, left the Boston City Hospital on May 26th when his mother took him to the People’s Free Health Center and saw Dr. Friedland there, because she thought that he wasn’t getting “proper medication or food” at the hospital. [“So it’s Backyards and Bullets for Black Youth” 06/17/72 BPP]

June 4 – Angela Davis acquitted of charges of “murder, kidnap[ing] and conspiracy.” Panthers in Boston, now referred to as “The Massachusetts Chapter of the Black Panther Party” praise the innocent verdict – but blame the system for putting her on trial in the first place. [“Jubilation among Hub blacks” 06/05/72 GLOBE]

July 8 – The BPP, with the help of the “Inner City Welfare Rights [and] Roxbury Multi-Service, and other community organizations, and churches” helped the families of Doris Knight, A. L. Hicks, Willie Mae Hicks, Mary Mollett, Madeleine Kay, and Vera Hicks with getting “free food, free clothing and money to purchase other necessities” because welfare was being bad to them and the Boston Housing Authority was as well (according to the BPP paper). They also utilized the People’s Free Health Center. [“Rats Won’t Wait for the Housing Authority” 07/08/72 BPP]

July 14 – Health Fair in Roxbury under sponsorship of Model Neighborhood Board and Roxbury Community Comprehensive Health Center. The BPP participated in health clinic capacity. [“Collins moves to break racial imbalance logjam” 07/15/72 GLOBE]

November 10 – Bobby Seale spoke at Suffolk University. [“Photo Standalone 12” 11/10/72 GLOBE]

1973 August 2 – As of August 2nd the Panthers’ office in Boston was closed (along with Denver, Seattle, and Los Angeles according to Banner). The Banner also claims that “half of the party’s national membership came to Oakland to work on the campaign [for Bobby Seale for mayor of Oakland in 1973].” [“Black Panthers shift from ‘guns to butter’” 08/02/73 BANNER]

Boston Black United Front interactions with Black Panther Party of Boston Timeline

- 1968**
- March 13** – Chico Neblitt at United Front meeting. Mention of BPP and a rally for “Houghy [sic] Newton” [“Decision to vote on the recommendations next Thursday 3/21/68” Box 3, Folder 1]
- April 10** – Panthers not mentioned in list of organizations for an organizing meeting of the BBUF on April 10th – consistent that it has not been created yet. [“Black United Front” Box 3, Folder 1]
- 1969**
- February 17** – “Daleno [sic] Farrar” identified as dealing with “Communication” for the Steering Committee of the BBUF. [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting February 17, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]
- April 14** – Panthers delegated to “Communications” [for something; possibly Operation STOP, seems to be what rest of meeting is about] by the United Front Steering Committee Meeting. [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting April 14, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]
- June 16** – Steering Committee meeting decides that “Andrea [sic] Jones” would be representative from the Panthers to the Front (but not at that meeting). [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting June 16, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]
- July 14** – “Audrey [sic] Jones” listed as absent from the Steering Committee meeting.
 “Doug Meranda [sic]” came to the meeting from the BPP to “discuss his plight” which was that he would like to borrow \$500 to pay for his and some other people’s expenses to go to a conference (The United Front Against Fascism Conference) in California. Steering Committee agreed to loan him the money if he brought back pictures and materials from the conference which he agreed to. [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting July 14, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]
- August 11** – At Steering Committee Meeting “Floyd [Hardwick]” talked about the United Front Against Fascism Conference [Floyd presumably went to Conference with Dough Miranda – from previous meeting notes – as part of Panthers in Boston] held in California on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of July. Recounts that it was ~80% white attendance and that “decentralization of the police, establishing a Lawyer’s Guild, and organizing the people” was discussed. [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting August 11, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7; Hardwick confirmed with “United Front Steering Committee Meeting September 8, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]
- September 15** – The Panthers represented by Floyd Hardwick, says that they would continue to picket the police station under construction. They were also going to hold a rally [soon] that is hoping to get spokespeople from the community and various organizations to come to so that it is big. The Panthers want community control of the station/police. [“United Front Steering Committee Meeting September 15, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]

November 3 – Floyd Hardwick, representing the Panthers, tells Steering Committee of the United Front that the Panthers are going to go “underground.” They want to move to a community information center [and/but] that they [also] want to buy a house for \$5000 but they would like \$2000 from the Front to cover expenses. The United Front has already resolved to not give out more money this year (from earlier in the summer) and so can’t grant request. Trying to look at other ways of getting a building though. [“United Front Foundation & Steering Committee Meeting November 3, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]

November 12 – List of Organizations that were part of the BBUF shows the Black Panther Party elected to the Front as of November 12th, 1969 and Floyd Hardwick given a 1 year term of office on the Steering Committee. Other note – George Cox mentioned as representative of the “Tufts Afro-American Society” [“List of Organizational United Front Members” Box 2, Folder 7]

December 1 – Floyd Hardwick listed in meeting notes and introduced self as representative of the Black Panther Party. [“United Front Foundation & Steering Committee Meeting December 1, 1969” Box 2, Folder 7]

(1968/1969) Boston Panthers submitted a proposal for an “Intercommunal Youth Institute” to the United Front Foundation, the funding arm of the Boston Black United Front. [“Proposal for Intercommunal Youth Institute” Box 28, Folder 4]

The New United Front Foundation wrote back to the Panthers and explained they could not fund them at that time, but encouraged working on the proposal and applying again. [“Panther Proposal submitted to the Foundation” Box 25, Folder 1]

Unknown date – Black Panther Party listed with address and telephone number as part of the “Organizations Against the War: Greater Boston Area” along with lots of others [“Organizations Against the War: Greater Boston Area” Box 1, Folder 10]

1970 **March 11** – Floyd Hardwick (and Elaine Hardwick) part of “Police Trail Committee” along with other members of Boston Black United Front to conduct people’s trial for police officer who killed Franklin Lynch. [“Police Trail Committee” Box 13, Folder 8]

March 12 – “Trial Committee” meeting at 6pm with Floyd Hardwick from the Panthers there. Mention that Hardwick would act as a judge in the trial, and Audrea Jones was a witness. [“Trial Committee” Box 13, Folder 9]

March 20 – Floyd Hardwick and Audrea Jones mentioned in minutes of Justice Committee Meeting and Meeting roll. [“Justice Committee” and “Meeting Started” Box 13, Folder 8]

March 26 – preliminary draft of a “Repression Ad” about government repression of black people, in the United States and in Boston specifically. Talks about Robert “Herd [sic]” being constantly harassed since he joined the BPP. [“Repression Ad – Preliminary Draft” Box 13, Folder 9]

April 13 – Floyd Hardwick, Elaine Hardwick, Audrea Jones, Lotus Perry, Donna Howell listed in “Justice Committee Members” list (all Panthers as identified by the list). Justice Committee also for Franklin Lynch. [“Justice Committee Members” Box 13, Folder 8]

May 4 – Letter from the BBUF to the BPP informing them that they will be kicked off of the Steering Committee of the BBUF if they do not send a representative to the next meeting (May 11th) because they have not had someone at the regularly scheduled meetings for a long time. [“May 4, 1970” Box 5, Folder 4]

July 6 – A letter to the BPP from the BBUF saying that because Panther representatives have not been attending Steering Committee Meetings they are losing their seat on the Committee. [“July 6, 1970” Box 5, Folder 4]

August 12 – Robert Jackson, an active Panther in “the past two years” wrote to the BBUF from prison on Deer Island. He wanted to try and get some organization going so that could recruit for the Party and raise people’s consciousness. [“United Front Meeting” Box 6, Folder 2]

October 5 – The United Front Steering Committee decided to eliminate all debts held by the BPP as of October 5th. The Panthers also asked for \$100 for transportation to the Revolutionary Peoples Conference in November, and the Steering Committee of the Front decided to grant this money to them. [“Steering Committee October 5, 1970” Box 3, Folder 2]

October 27/28 – BBUF General Body Meeting discussed the Black Panther Party People’s Revolutionary Convention in Washington D.C. The Panthers would be providing transportation but they wanted donations of furniture (like cribs) for providing day care, and medical attention if necessary. The meeting also discussed eliminating loans to the Party and that the Party should get \$100 toward support of the Convention in D.C. [“General Body Meeting” Box 6, Folder 2]

November 9 – The United Front Financial Report from November 9th lists check 194 made out to “Martin Trailer Service, Inc.” for “Trailer Delivery” for the “Black Panther Party” for \$80 [for the trailer for the Health Clinic]. Check 202

was made out for “Heating System for Trailer” [for the BPP health clinic] for \$167 and check 203 was for “Dudley Door Window – Stairs for Trailer Clinic” to equip the Health Clinic for \$32.64.

Check 206 was made out for “Black Panther Party – Trans. To Convention” for \$100 [for the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C.]. [“Steering Committee Financial Report November 9, 1970” Box 3, Folder 3]

November 23 – At a Steering Committee Meeting the Front decided that the Panthers (along with “The Sough [sic] End News, the In Group, and the Out Group”) would not be allowed to make any more public statements about “Project Concern” and to stop printing news about it because it would confuse the community. [“Steering Committee November 23, 1970” Box 3, Folder 3]

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(possibly 1971, using the context of the file it was in; though since offices are 23 Winthrop it has to be after Feb 1970 at earliest) Pete Armeida listed as contact person for the Boston Black Panther Party. [“Name...Address...Telephone” Box 6, Folder 2]

April 20 – The BPP requested money (\$100) from the United Front for air fare to California. The Front offers to help fundraise for the trip over the radio but not directly give money.

Accuse the Panthers of only coming to the Front for money rather than helping to work on projects in general and that the United Front would like to work this problem out with them. [“Emergency Steering Committee Meeting Tuesday, April 20, 1971” Box 3, Folder 3]

July 14 – Panthers involved in the boycott of a jewelry store, Zayres, because a security guard there harassed and assaulted a black woman. [“General Body Meeting” Box 6, Folder 2]

Orlando Vaughn, a Panther, involved in BBUF General Meeting. [“General Body Meeting” Box 6, Folder 2]

July 25 – Panthers present at a Community Organization meeting about the shooting of Derek Culbert at “Station #2” on July 19th. [“General Body Meeting” Box 6, Folder 2]

July 28 – Panthers selected to be centralized phone number to call to coordinate “ways of dealing with the pigs” because of recent brutality/repression in community. [“General Body Meeting” and “General Body Meeting Motions” Box 6, Folder 2]

September 13 – The BPP asked the United Front for \$100 to continue their health program. “Chuck [Turner]” was contacted at the United Foundation to ask for money, but this was denied and directed to go to the United Front (both groups

sort of sending the Panthers back and forth). The Steering Committee decided to hold fundraising dinners for two weeks to raise money which would hopefully be matched by WILD [radio station] to get the Panthers money they needed. ["Steering Committee Meeting Sept 13 1971" Box 3, Folder 4]

September 15 – The BBUF Steering Committee gave Donna Howell of the Panthers \$50 for the Sickle Cell Anemia Testing Program run by the Panther Free Health Center. And also mention in the letter to contact WILD radio station regarding the "Sickle Cell Anemia Fund." ["September 15, 1971" Box 5, Folder 4]

October 28 – The BBUF wrote back to Doctor Rosamond Murdock of the Department of Public Health of Massachusetts in regards to Sickle Cell Anemia Testing that the Black Panther Party, with Donna Howell as the point person, was one of the groups that the BBUF was working closely with on the issues of Sickle Cell Anemia. ["October 28, 1971" Box 5, Folder 4]

November 5 – Request for "Mimeo paper: 2 reams" for the BPP from the Boston Black United Front to create leaflets for the "Sickle Cell Disease Campaign" signed by Michael Fultz (Panther). ["Use of Resources Form" Box 1, Folder 7]

December 21 – Request for "IBM typewriter ribbon" for the BPP signed by "Adrienne Humphrey" ["Use of Resources Form" Box 1, Folder 7]

1972 **January 4** – The BPP sent the BBUF a letter requesting that they send a letter to the Boston Public School System on their behalf regarding Sickle Cell Anemia testing. ["Mail Log" Box 1, Folder 2]

(MISC) **December 6, 1971** – Delano Farrar requested money from the BBUF for paper to make "Propaganda" to "Let the people know about the Purge" [which, I don't know – it seems late to be defending himself against the Panthers since the purge in Boston occurred in 1969!] ["Use of Resources Form" Box 1, Folder 7]

December 17 (sometime) – Delano Farrar asked for a stencil and use of the stencil machine (that the BBUF presumably owned) for an unknown reason (possibly to print the leaflets he requested paper for from the previous "use of resources form?") ["Use of Resources Form" Box 1, Folder 7]

(Unknown date) – BPP request form to BBUF for mimeograph paper for (something – can't read the script), no date. ["Use of Resources form" Box 1, Folder 7]

(Unknown date) – "The Black United Front of Boston, Mass" packet of information with address on cover, "statement of purpose", "political platform", "nation building concept", "black laws", "list of black holidays", mission

statement type thing, Black Panther Party listed as an “organizational member” in big list. [“The Black United Front of Boston, Mass” Box 1, Folder 6]