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Abstract of Thesis

The San Francisco Bay Area emerged as radical space for student and youth driven activism during the 1960s. The area was the birthplace of Ethnic studies and a key organization of the Black Power era—the Black Panther Party. This work uncovers the shared activist centered relationship between African Americans and Asian Americans by interrogating how members of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and the Black Panther Party (BPP) worked within the frameworks of grassroots and collective activism to address local and Third World liberation. Furthermore, this work seeks to bring forth and provide a space for the suppressed voices of women within the BPP and APPA, as it is through their narratives that collective activism between African Americans and Asian Americans is illustrated.

BLACK, YELLOW, AND SHADES OF PURPLE: RADICAL AFRO-ASIAN COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE, 1966-1972

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts in Pan African Studies in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

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For my ancestors, who continue to strengthen me.

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I first would like to thank my ancestors whose shoulders I stand on. Nana, AC, Cicley, and Andrea thank you for always supporting me in my intellectual endeavors. Destiny, Essence, Danielle, Dominique, Imani, and G'neva, you young Brown girls inspire me to strive for excellence and remind me of my purpose. Tabbayon, my little Power Ranger, your innocence and joy has rubbed off on me and brought me some much needed relief and laughter during hard times. To my best friends, my sisters, my golden girls, Chinelo and Shaina, thank you for your unwavering support and unconditional love. I couldn't imagine completing graduate school without my two hoodboogers by my side!

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iv

Introduction 1

Historiography 11

Background 22

1. *Afro-Asian Radicalism in the Developing Post-Industrial East Bay* *36*

2. *'Women Hold Up Half the Sky:' Afro-Asian Women's Perspectives* *69*

3. '*Poetic Justice:' Afro-Asian Women's Activism Through Verse* *106*

Conclusion 130

Bibliography 132

Curriculum Vitae 139

Introduction

Black is beautiful, Free Huey! Set our warrior free, off the pig!

— Tarika Lewis

While conducting research for this project I had the opportunity to meet Tarika Lewis, the first woman to join the Black Panther Party (BPP). Ms. Lewis, or Mama Tarika as we called her, was a guest speaker at the University of California Berkeley's (UC Berkeley) Afro House in July of 2013. She discussed her role within the Party as well as her role as historical consultant for the film, *Panther.* Seated on couches and the living room floor, the audience was mesmerized as Mama Tarika spoke with eloquence, poise, and humility; it was as if she were our aunt or grandmother. After discussing her time in the Party, her eyes lit up and she said that she wanted to teach us one of the Party's chants. She loudly proclaimed, "Black is Beautiful," with her clenched fist reaching toward the sky. Every eye was focused on her and we had the feeling that she was looking into and speaking directly to each of us. Within five minutes everyone in the audience had learned the lyrics and the brothers and sisters were engaged in the call-and-response chant, demanding the freedom of our beloved Huey.[1]

Most of the audience was between the ages of 18-26. Together we emphatically proclaimed, "Black is Beautiful..." and demanded the freedom of someone we never met or knew beyond what we read and studied. It was in this moment that I began to *feel* Black Power. The energy was bouncing off the walls; we became so enthralled that time escaped us. "Black is beautiful," rang throughout the house for at least twenty minutes.

[1] Tarika Lewis, Interviewed by author, Berkeley, 2013.

Reading and writing about the movement are instrumental tools in gaining a deeper understanding of the period; however, it was Mama Tarika's embodied knowledge, narrative, and spirit that made Black Power real to me.[2]

Mama Tarika discussed many aspects of the movement, highlighting her role in organizing members and supporters at various marches and demonstrations. She began painting a picture of what these moments looked like, with a keen focus on numbers of rallies and marches. Her narrative shed light on the presence of women in the Party, the organization's paramilitary style, and its relationship with other Third World organizations. Mama Tarika spoke about Black Power beyond the confines of blackness and masculinity; she emphasized the entire Third World struggle and quest for liberation from the dominant society and systems of oppression—"All power to all people!"

Mama Tarika's informal passing of oral history to a group of students in a communal living space may be perceived as just another Panther sharing her story; however, her narrative only scratches the surface with regard to responding to the research questions posed within this thesis. Her discussion on gender politics, Third World solidarity, and militancy, all speak to my research questions and overall quest to understand how African Americans and Asian Americans worked together during the Black Power era through collective activism in the East Bay Area, specifically Oakland and Berkeley, to address local as well as national and international forms of oppression. By examining the two principal African American and Asian American organizations—the Black Panther Party and Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA)—this work uncovers how members of both organizations worked within the frameworks of

[2] Ibid.

grassroots and collective activism to address Third World liberation. Furthermore, this work seeks to bring forth and provide a space for the suppressed voices of women within the BPP and APPA, as it is through their narratives that collective activism between African Americans and Asian Americans is illustrated.

In this thesis, I raise three questions that help intersect these themes and parts of history that have often been discussed separately. 1) What role did women play in the BPP and AAPA? 2) To what extent did collective activism exist between African Americans and Asian Americans in the Bay Area during the Black Power era? 3) What were the gender dynamics within the BPP and AAPA? These posed questions present an alternate imagining and understanding of Black Power as they force us to consider gender and other people of color in relation to Black Power. The historical narrative and historiography on the period commonly disregard and negate these integral voices, as they do not align with the andro-centered and monochromatic paradigm. These questions are addressed throughout the three chapters of this work, and what emerges is another way of conceptualizing and understanding the Black Power movement.

This research bears a social significance as it begins to intersect histories that have often been discussed and written independently of each other. In linking these histories and narratives, this work advocates for Third World unity, transnational feminism, and cross-cultural solidarity. Recognizing and continuing to document resistance movements where Third World people are employing collective activism provides a blueprint of hope for future generations that carry the torch towards liberating the Global South. Additionally, this work provides a space for voices and forms of knowledge that have been marginalized within the western academy and historical

narrative of the Black Power era; thus, this work in itself is liberating, especially for the narrators and poets whose work and narratives are examined extensively in the second and third chapters. With many calling for a revolution or movement that will respond to the continued overt racial antagonism and onslaught, this work is incredibly timely as there is much that can be learned and inferred from the varying voices of those involved in the Black Power movement; a period when the nation changed dramatically, mostly in the favor of people of color. During the 2011-2012 Occupy movement and recent organizing around the murder of Trayvon Martin, people of color and other progressive groups mobilized to combat the unjust U.S. legal system, institutional racism, and capitalism. Many of these demonstrations utilized tactics from the Black Power era, including collective activism. The aim of this work is to help further the legacy of the BPP, AAPA, and all other Third World organizations that sought/seek to liberate the people and prove that collective activism is not only a possibility, but an invaluable tactic because there is strength in numbers and strength in the Third World collective.

Methodology

To begin responding to my research questions, I conducted a series of oral history interviews, collected archival materials from various repositories, and attended community events that were relevant to this work, using the participant observation method. During the summer of 2013, I traveled to Oakland, Sacramento, and other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area to conduct interviews with former members of the BPP and AAPA as well as other community members and local activists. The majority of my participants were women as I yearned to capture their voices to develop a stronger

understanding of the perspectives of women from the Black Power era. These interviews, archival materials, and field notes from attended events are the basis of this study.

Archival research

I conducted archival research to unearth poetry, pamphlets, speeches, newspapers, music, pictures, and other texts on the BPP, AAPA, and Bay Area activism at large. Although I found helpful information in the various repositories including: UC Berkeley's Ethnic studies library, the Bancroft library, the University of California, Los Angeles special collections, Cornell University special collections, Syracuse University special collections, and the Oakland African American Museum and Library, I found the personal archives of my participants to be some of the most fruitful and invaluable. I am especially thankful to those that provided me with copies of materials or allowed me to make duplications of these rare items. Researching in these various spaces afforded me the opportunity to find primary sources that spoke to political and collective activism occurring in the Bay Area during the Black Power era.

In addition to oral history narratives, *The Black Panther* newspapers, and poetry from various Third World presses informed much of my analysis. These sources included a vast amount of information on gender dynamics and varying ideologies, women's perspectives and reflections, and documentation of events where Third World solidarity between African Americans and Asian Americans was evident. Chapter three focuses on the art of African American and Asian American women activists, many of which were affiliated with AAPA and/or the BPP. This chapter argues for the use of non-traditional sources, like poetry, to be recognized as authentic sources of knowledge. The uncovered poetry examined in this chapter showcases voices that have essentially faded into history

and argues for their legitimacy. I found these sources to be some of the most liberating, structurally as well as in terms of content, due to poetry's emancipatory and free-flowing nature. These works inspired me to produce a product that was also liberating and served to authenticate those voices that straddled the margins and faced historical erasure.

Oral History

In writing social and cultural history, oral history is a useful and effective research method to employ as it democratizes knowledge production and provides a space for participants to lend their voices and tell their stories on their own terms. For the purpose of this work, oral history was used because it established shared authority and power dynamics during the interviewing process. This allowed for narrators to build a sense of trust in me as a researcher. African feminist scholar, Christine Obbo, states, "women's voices have been devalued by male chroniclers of cultural history even when the men acknowledge female informants; they are overshadowed by the voice of male authority and ascendance in society."[3] Using oral history enables women, the majority of my narrators, to tell their story on their own terms uninterrupted by external influences, thus inherently placing a value on their voices.

Seven oral history interviews were conducted; five with women who were former members of AAPA and the BPP; the other two were men, Charles Presley—a West Oakland native and griot— and David Hilliard, a high ranking leader within the BPP. The latter two narrators help provide a backdrop for this work as both Mr. Presley and David Hilliard discuss African Americans in Oakland during the postwar era, the Great

[3] Christine Obbo, "What Do Women Know?...As I Was Saying!," in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women: Collecting Treasures*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), pg 43.

Migration, provide insight into the spaces African Americans occupied in the Bay Area, and provide an in-depth overview of the BPP structure.

Overall, these interviews serve as the basis of my analysis. While interviewing my women participants, each addressed at least two of the three research questions in their narratives. However, some of the most rewarding information was found in their discussions about upbringing and political awakening. These discussions manifest throughout the thesis when interrogating how Bay Area, specifically Black and Yellow youth of the 1960s, politicized themselves, which I argue helped lead to the emergence of collective activism. Many of the participants shared similar "awakening" stories and were inspired by some of the same Third World leaders and philosophers, enabling me to draw direct links during analysis. It is this idea of linking and comparing/contrasting that serves as a structural framework for this thesis. This framework emerged because this was how participants shared their stories and perspectives. In aiming to maintain the voices and integrity of these women, I decided to maintain the structure that they organically created.

Recruiting Narrators

Prior to entering the field, I established contact with individuals whose names were provided via snowball sampling. Mr. Presley, a father figure, beloved small business owner and elder in the West Oakland community, introduced me to David Hilliard. My current thesis committee member at UC Berkeley, Harvey Dong, helped me develop a relationship with Victoria Wong and Bea, both activists within Berkeley and one a former member of AAPA. Dong is also the owner of Eastwind Bookstore in Berkeley, and it was at a book reading held in that space that he introduced me to Wong and Bea. The online

Black Panther Party archive, itsabouttimebpp.com, was probably the most rewarding resource I stumbled upon during the research process. In contacting Billy X Jennings, the Webmaster of the site, Jennings connected me with Gayle, Sylvia, and Madalynn, all former members of the BPP and Berkeley chapter of the National Committee to Combat Fascism.

Building a Rapport

To build a strong rapport with my narrators, I met with each of them in person or over the phone prior to our meeting. During this preliminary meeting I discussed with them my background, project, and interest in their experiences. In some cases I also explained the process of oral history, whereas others were very familiar with the method.

The Oral History Interview

During the actual interviews, the narrators explored various themes including: their personal childhood and background, motherhood, womanhood, student activism, political education, sexism, community conditions, oppression, the Third World struggle, their role within the movement, opponents and proponents of activism, and their legacy. These interviews were conducted in spaces agreed upon by the narrator and myself. I used a digital voice recorder to record the interviews, which ranged from one and a half hours to four hours.

Structure of Thesis

Chapter One, entitled "Afro-Asian Radicalism in the Developing Post-Industrial East Bay" explores the emergence of the Black Power movement in the Bay Area. The first

half of the work focuses on the emergence of the BPP, paying close attention to the organization's political evolution, mission, and Third World influences. In discussing the fight for Black Power at the local college campuses of San Francisco State College, UC Berkeley, and Merritt College, this is where we see these histories and narratives intersect. It was, in fact, during the Third World Strikes at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State College that organized Third World solidarity began to flourish. AAPA and the BPP were incredibly vocal in these strikes, which most notably resulted in the establishment of the first College of Ethnic Studies.

The second half of the chapter provides a historical background of the AAPA and addresses the organization's parallels with the BPP, specifically their mission, tactics, political grounding, and overall struggle. This chapter concludes with an analysis of Maoism, interrogating how both African Americans and Asian Americans adopted this praxis, yet have starkly different views on gender.

In Chapter Two, "Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Afro-Asian Women's Perspectives," my work illuminates the role of women in the BPP and AAPA. I explore the evolution of the gender politics and ideologies within the Party by exploring the Party's definition of Black masculinity and coalescing it with the narratives of women Party members. Furthermore, I grapple with Daryl Maeda's argument that Asian Americans during the Black Power movement were performing Black masculinity. However, it is the narratives of Rucker, Wong, and Perez that are the true gems as they respond to many of the posed research questions and delve into multiple issues including: motherhood in the Party, combating and remaining complicit within sexism, and their everyday role within the organizations. This chapter concludes by posing the argument

that AAPA, structurally, was the more progressive, feminist oriented, and equitable organization, as women were not subjected to the sexism and tyranny that was witnessed within the BPP.

Finally, Chapter Three, "Poetic Justice:" Afro-Asian Women's Activism Through Verse," uses poetry by women from the BPP, Black Arts Movement (BAM), and Asian American Movement, to further explore the role and perspectives of women within the Black Power movement. This chapter is also distinct in that it argues for the authentication of poetry as a source of knowledge to be used to further democratize knowledge and provide a space for voices that have been marginalized and undervalued. Throughout this work the poetry included is left in the original structure set forth by the artists. In doing so, I hope to maintain the original message, as there is much that can be extrapolated from the choice of style and resistance to certain structures.

This thesis intersects three areas of history— the Asian American movement, Black Power movement, and contemporary U.S. women of color history— which have traditionally been told separately, to forge a new understanding of the movement. This new lens is one that forces us to recognize the struggle shared by people of color as they navigate this world.

Historiography

Since the 1990s there has been an increased proliferation of work on the Black Panther Party and the Black Power era. The work centered on the politics and history of the era prove to be some of the most comprehensive, encapsulating the vision and mission of Black Power. Within the scholarship there remains a contestation over the era's periodization. It is widely accepted that the Black Power movement has its roots in Stokley Carmichael's 1966 speech where he exclaimed, "we are gonna use the word Black Power."[4] Conversely, many works challenge this notion and seek to reconsider the periodization of the era. Timothy Tyson's, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power,* being one, as he uses the life of Robert F. Williams to argue that "Black Power tactics" were employed prior to 1966. Tyson also provides a different lens through which we can examine the NAACP as he argues that the organization was more radical than depicted, straying from the civil disobedient narrative that is often propagated. Simon Wendt's article, "Roots of Black Power?: Armed Resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement," builds off of Tyson's work and asserts the need for a re-periodization of the history through a deeper analysis of how Civil Rights organizations radicalized themselves. What remains salient from these works is their discussion on Black Power and visions of radicalism. Jeffrey Ogbar states,

> ...Black Power was not necessarily nationalist. Black Power employed—even co-opted—the activism typified in civil rights struggles and operated

[4] Voices of Democracy The U.S. Oratory Project. Accessed March 17, 2014.http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/carmichael-black-power-speech-text/.

> on basic assumptions of rights and privileges. In essence, it demanded inclusion while advocating autonomy and self-determination. It asserted black access to full citizenship rights while conspicuously cultivating pride in much that was not America…[5]

This definition of Black Power not only links both movements, but distinguishes the two as Ogbar begins to allude to the more overt radicalism that emerged through militancy, increased racial pride and solidarity, and Black nationalism during the Black Power era beginning in 1966.[6]

A noticeable trend within this historiography has been the use of the lives of iconic figures as focal points of this history—"The Great Man of history" method. Timothy Tyson, Peniel Joseph, and others take this limiting, top-down, and biographical approach. With this method, the voices and perspectives of women, the rank and file, and collective are negated, and virtually written out of history. While such works are needed, the increased proliferation perpetuates a singular narrative, one that is often male and heteronormative.

The Black Power era included varying political views: communism, socialism, Black nationalism, cultural nationalism, and intercommunalism. There is a considerable amount of focus placed on Black nationalism, Ogbar's work, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity,* examines this political grounding and its place within the movement through an interrogation of the BPP and Nation of Islam's (NOI) orientation and relationship with it. Ogbar's work moves our understanding of Black nationalism beyond Black autonomy and discusses it in the context of consciousness and

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[5] Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pg 2.
[6] Ibid.

the racialized American societal structure.[7] Unfortunately, this work neglects to take into consideration the many political transformations the BPP has undergone, failing to delve into the full political history of such an organization and all the essential elements of the Black Power era history. Post 1969 the BPP was rooted in intercommunalism, which often goes unexplored in most works outside of Huey P. Newton's. This political grounding is discussed at length in the second chapter, as it becomes evident that intercommunalism was central to the organization's survival programs and collective activism.

While dated, Charles Hamilton and Kwame Ture's, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation,* provides some of the best analysis on the political orientation of the era. Published in 1967, the work provides a vision and political framework for Black Power. Additionally, the work does a phenomenal job of critically foreshadowing the political grounding of the era and providing a clear definition of Black Power. This work is not only a manifesto for the movement but is a concrete response to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) who proclaimed that Black Power was idealist, an emotional concept, and varied from person to person.[8]

Panther History

Works on the Black Panther Party dominate Black Power era scholarship. Prior to the late 1980s/early 1990s many of those works came in the form of biographies and autobiographies of members and people associated with the Party. New research and

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Martin Luther King, Jr. And the Global Freedom Struggle, accessed March 17, 2014, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_black_power/.

analysis of the Party is certainly cutting edge and strays from the typical narrative; however, the early biographical texts remain staples and are inexplicably heralded as Black Power classics. Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson, Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Bobby Seale's biographical/autobiographical texts rank high amongst the most widely circulated and discussed works. In a society where oral tradition is valued far less than the written word, it becomes critical to document one's voice through autobiography; this also helps with the accessibility of one's narrative.[9] From the subject's perspective, these texts were often a form of therapy and release. In the preface of her autobiography, Angela Davis argues that her work is a "political autobiography," in that there is an emphasis placed on the people, events, and forces in her life that helped catapult her into political activism and dedication. This was a stance that others from the period also adopted, as Black Power era autobiographies speak to the collective and movement as a whole; thus, it is no longer simply about the individual, challenging the traditional structure of autobiography.

Both Malcolm X's autobiography and Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* directly impacted the BPP as members were required to read both works, shaping the ideas, platforms, and political education of the leadership and rank and file. Cleaver's work is often accused of assisting in the propagation of misogyny and chauvinism in the Party between 1966-1969. Malcolm X's work, which was also influenced by Elijah Muhammad, manifests directly within the BPP's 10 Point Platform.

Bobby Seale's pioneering work, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton,* lays the groundwork for the historiography of the

[9] Margot Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), pg 27.

organization. The work is a biographical account of the organization, highlighting the lives of Newton and other high-ranking leaders from the organization's infancy to 1970. Seale's approach to this history is often replicated as many scholars aspire to execute the comprehensive and detailed text. Waldo Martin and Joshua Bloom's *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* is an example of such reproduction. Seale sets the standard for what much of the BPP historical narrative would go on to look like. The work executed by scholars that seek to "reframe" and "reconsider" the BPP, straying from Seale's method, disrupts this monolithic narrative.

Reframing the Party

Post 1990s scholarship on the period tends to re-examine the history of the BPP and explores new dynamics and themes, providing cutting-edge perspectives that we can use to further understand this period. While Black conservatives like Stanley Crouch seek to vilify the BPP by tarnishing its legacy through this approach, others remain critical and simultaneously uphold the legacy of the organization. Certainly there were many pitfalls and flaws to the organization; however, one cannot deny the contributions the organization made to leftist politics and the Third World people's struggle at large, most notably the Party's Free Breakfast program for children, which has evolved into a government funded program implemented at schools throughout the nation. Charles Jones' anthology, *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (1998) is cognizant of these contributions and simultaneously makes some very much needed critiques. The work is groundbreaking in that it explores elements of the BPP that up until this work went uncovered, including: the narrative of the rank and file, an exploration and critique of the gender dynamics and politics, an examination of the demise of the BPP, and a critical

interrogation of the organization's legacy. This work stirred up a lot of controversy as many of the pieces forced scholars to re-charter the direction in which the scholarship was being channeled.

The Black Panther Party Reconsidered provided a new approach to documenting the history of the period and opened the door for new discussions. Since then, scholars like Robert Self, Donna Murch, and Alondra Nelson have continued down this more focused trajectory. Murch's, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California,* investigates the role of migration and education on the Oakland chapter of the Party. Building off of other Black West and Black Power scholars including, Robert Self and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Murch argues that the city of Oakland helped radicalize many of the early members of the organization, as the space became highly populated by African Americans who migrated from the South during the WWII era. Murch's primary contribution to this scholarship is her exploration of how academic institutions in the Bay Area like McClymonds High School, Merritt College, and the University of California, Berkeley were radical spaces that nurtured and fed the emerging political minds of Black youth and activists.

Forty years following the Black Power era, the BPP, Black Power politics and issues remain relevant as its sentiments are continuously echoed within music (especially hip-hop), scholarship, and contemporary Third World activism. As long as White supremacy, hegemony, racism, capitalism, and other systems of oppression continue to exist there will always be a place, need, and interest in the revolutionary thoughts and practices of the BPP and the Black Power era.

Multicultural Scholarship

Mainstream racial politics in the U.S. is often told in Black and White. The same can be said for the history of U.S. 1960s and 1970s social movements. The scholarship centered on the Black Power, Free Speech, and Feminist movements, all of which are portrayed as predominately White and African American, overshadow the limited existing scholarship that examines Asian American and Native American struggles and acts of resistance. However, it was a group of young Native Americans that occupied the island of Alcatraz for nineteen months beginning in November of 1969, demanding their autonomy and rights to the land that was once theirs.[10] And it was a group of Asian Americans that started an anti-eviction protest in opposition to the city of San Francisco, which sought to evict tenants, many of whom were elderly Asian Americans, occupying the International Hotel (commonly referred to as the I Hotel). The narratives of Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Chicano/as is often left out of history, especially that of the Black Power era. Sucheng Chan's, *People of Color in the West,* and Ronald Takaki's, *A Different Mirror* explore what Takaki describes as Multicultural America. Multicultural scholarship, such as the aforementioned works, grapples with various groups of people of color and study race and ethnicity inclusively and comparatively illuminating the diversity of American society.[11]

The Asian American Movement

Continuing with Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore,* is one of the most comprehensive texts on Asian American history. Takaki continues to work within this

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[10] Nicole Lapin and Jason Hanna, "1969 Alcatraz Takeover 'changed the whole course of history,'" CNN Justice, last modified November 20, 2009, accessed March 17, 2014, http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/11 /20/alcatraz.indian.occupation/.

[11] Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2008), pg 20-22.

multicultural framework, as he is actively redefining America and what is American by inserting the voices of Asian Americans into American history. While Takaki's work does not particularly highlight Asian Americans in the Black Power era, William Wei, Sucheng Chan, Darryl Maeda, and Dianne Fujino build off of Takaki and charter a new direction for Asian American scholarship, similar to what scholars of the 1990s did following Seale's ground breaking work.

William Wei's social history, *The Asian American Movement,* is one of the earlier works on the movement, addressing the history, politics, gender dynamics and legacy of the movement. Wei provides a deeper understanding of how Asian Americans challenged the American institutional framework and also alludes to why the movement didn't receive as much attention as other Third World movements occurring in the U.S. In Sucheng Chan's, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History,* published just a couple years prior, Chan looks closely at the acculturation process that Asian Americans underwent during the years immediately following immigration. Unfortunately her discussion on how they challenged this process and their resistance is missing. It isn't until the final chapter, "Current Socioeconomic Status, Politics, and Education, and Culture," that Chan begins to discuss some of the contemporary issues that confronted Asian Americans, leaving very little room for discussion on the Asian American movement. Wei and Chan's work are very much representative of how the Asian American historical narratives were told up until the 1990s. These narratives helped establish the history of Asian American identity and their plight. Unfortunately, both examine this history with a disregard for everything happening outside of Asian American society.

Reframing Asian American

Daryl J. Maeda and Diane Fujino represent the current generation of scholars studying the Asian American movement. Both have contributed various articles, but it is their book-length works that deserve critical examination when studying the Asian American movement. Maeda's, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* and *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* helped charter a new direction for the study of Asian American history. *Chains of Babylon* looks at the radicalizing of Asian Americans, how they challenged systems of oppression within the U.S., and the shaping of Asian American identity. Maeda connects the radicalizing of Asian Americans to the Black Power movement, specifically to the BPP. He articulates this in his chapter, "Black Panthers, Red Guards, and Chinamen: Constructing Asian American Identity through Performing Blackness." In addition to connecting the Asian American struggle with the struggle of other groups in America, Maeda illustrates how radical Asian Americans were also internationalists and sought to build and maintain solidarity with those in their homeland and the greater Third World.

In *Rethinking the Asian American Movement,* published three years after *Chains of Babylon,* Maeda argues that we should reconsider and rethink our understanding of the Asian American movement for three reasons. The first is to better understand the framework of the Asian American movement in that it was not just a fight for civil rights. He argues that earlier scholarship often downplayed the radicalism of the movement, and that the movement should not be portrayed as though it was about self-determination and power. Maeda's second point reconsiders how we ideologically understand the movement in regards to whether the movement was about making reforms, or being revolutionary. He refuses to categorize the movement as either; however, his work begins

to align with the latter as there is an emphasis on anti- imperialism, racism, and capitalism. The third reconsideration emphasized in this text directly connects with this work as he argues that a main component of the Asian American movement was that it was inter-ethnic, interracial, and international. The coalitions and solidarities that were formed with other Third World movements had a significant impact on Asian American identity.

Dianne Fujino's *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* and *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* detail the lives of two prominent Asian American activists, both of whom have deep ties to the African American community and struggle; Aoki being one of the first members recruited to the BPP and Kochiyama, a close colleague of Malcolm X. Both were influenced by the neighborhoods in which they grew up and lived, West Oakland and Harlem, then predominately African American urban spaces. Within the Bay Area, Aoki was one of the leaders of the Asian American movement helping found the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and was on the front line during the San Francisco State College Third World strike. He maintained close ties with the BPP, acting as a liaison and ambassador of Afro-Asian interracial activism. While Kochiyama and Aoki certainly didn't garner the attention of a Cesar Chavez, Bobby Seale, or Kwame Ture, they were key figures in the Asian American struggle and were the closest spokespeople of their movement. Fujino's documenting of these two figures is integral to continuing Takaki's legacy of redefining American history and also expanding our understanding of the Asian America that Maeda poses.

A salient critique across the historiography of many Third World movements is that the scholarship is very much andro-centered and approached from a top-down perspective. This same argument applies to how scholars are interrogating the Asian American movement. Works like *Making Waves: an Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women,* fill the void by inserting the voices of women into this historical narrative. Using non-traditional sources of knowledge such as poetry and prose, as well as traditional essays, this work provides a space for Asian American women, whose voices have until now been silenced.

Intersecting Histories: Arriving at "Afro-Asia"

Very few scholars have begun addressing the intersections of the two aforementioned narratives—Black Power and the Asian American movement—this work seeks to position itself within the few that have done so—Laura Pulido, Vijay Prashad, Fred Ho, Robert Takaki, Quintard Taylor, and Jeffrey Ogbar being some. The aforementioned scholars works' examine interracial and collective activism and furthers our understanding of Black Power by integrating the narratives of Yellow, Brown, Red, and Black people into the historical narrative of the Black Power era. Pulido's B*lack, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* is an example of how we can begin to address the intersection of these narratives. With an understanding of the Red, Brown, and Black Power movements and their historical narratives, the Yellow Power or Asian American movements have received significantly less attention. This work comes on the heels of Pulido's work in that it centers itself within a region, Oakland, and is looking at collective activism between two groups—Black and Yellow. While Pulido's work focuses more on Black and Brown activism, this work explores the often neglected

rainbow combination of Black and Yellow activism. Furthermore, Pulido succinctly addresses the issue of gender within her work, while this thesis primarily uses the narratives of women to allow this history to unfold.

Background

Blacks and Asians in Post Gold Rush East Bay, 1869-1942

The San Francisco Bay Area, specifically the East Bay, encompassing the major cities of Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, and a host of smaller cities and surrounding suburbs, has acquired the legacy of being associated with identifiers like radical and diverse. With a vast immigrant and migrant population, the politics and culture of the incoming groups during the postwar era help provide a context for the origins of this rich and radical space. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Asians began immigrating to the California in vast numbers. It is also during this period that African Americans began to migrate to California in response to the gold rush and other employment opportunities. This background history helps set the stage for the Afro-Asian collective activism in the 1960s.

There is an undeniable consciousness, outlook, and political grounding (typically Left) shared by many people from the San Francisco Bay Area, an area affectionately known as "The Bay." It is during the Black Power era that we see the shaping of the Bay Area into this radical blue collard space, which would go on to influence its inhabitants for years to come.

Since its inception, the West has been a racially dynamic space. The area was first part of an autonomous Mexico, home to the great Olmec and Aztec empires; by 1521 it

was seized during the Spanish conquest. The Spanish maintained strict control of the region through the early 19th century. As the push for U.S. expansion began, in 1783, newly liberated Mexico was met with U.S. settlers in search of the Western frontier, creating tension, resulting in the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848. As Mexico weakened during the war, negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This compromise re-bordered and demarcated the region, granting the U.S. a vast amount of the current contiguous U.S. including present day California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.[12]

California was admitted into the union in 1850. Gold had been discovered in the region less than two years earlier, resulting in a migration of Whites as well as free and enslaved Blacks. Black seamen were some of the first in the gold rush fields, as many were able to sail ships from New England and other eastern ports into San Francisco Bay.[13] Blacks in the North and Canada migrated to California of their own free will, while those in the South were brought out West still enslaved and subjected to the harsh realities of the antebellum period. It was this mixture of free and enslaved Blacks that complicated the social setting and racialization of early California.

Across the Pacific, China was recovering from the first Opium War of 1839-1842.[14] With word of the discovery of gold in California in the 1860s, and the need for a labor force to complete the transcontinental railroad project, the state would soon witness the immigration of those whom Takaki describes as "Strangers From a Different Shore,"[15] The Chinese were among the first of these "strangers," or immigrants from

[12] Sonia Hernandez, "The Legacy of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on Tejanos' land," *Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2001): pg 103-105.
[13] Rudolph Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), pg 17.
[14] See Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (London, UK: Picador, 2001).
[15]Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History*, pg 79.

across the Pacific, to settle in California, soon followed by Japanese. During the early part of the Gold Rush, just a few hundred Chinese settled in the state; by 1870 there were nearly 63,000 Chinese in the U.S. with 77 percent of them in California.[16] A vast majority settled in San Francisco, as the nearby Angel Island was a principal immigration station. While many Chinese were initially welcomed into the area, as their numbers increased, Whites felt that their job security was threatened and measures were taken to begin to exclude the group from access to certain jobs, eventually halting Chinese immigration into the state with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

By 1850, free Blacks began migrating to California in increased numbers with their population rising to 2,000 within two years, many of them establishing themselves as miners. Blacks quickly developed the reputation of being fortuitous in this trade.[17] Areas where Blacks were the first to mine were commonly referred to as "Negro Hills." There were several documented accounts of Black miners who struck gold in the amount of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars. Chinese and African Americans shared a similar fate during the Gold Rush in California— they weren't White and were marginalized in their ability to obtain economic gain. The Foreign Miners Tax of 1850 originated as one of many measures that sought to limit mining's economic incentive to people of color including Asians, Blacks, and Mexicans. By the 1870s, the treatment of the Chinese and Blacks as inferior became more evident as schools and other public spaces were segregated, housing marginalized, Asian immigration halted, and jobs, which were once plentiful, became scarce and paid less.

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, 50.

Following the Gold Rush, the Chinese began settling in areas like San Francisco's Chinatown (encompassing the intersecting streets: Kearny, Powell, Broadway, and California). Oakland's Chinatown and Daly City later emerged as predominately Asian immigrant neighborhoods. Following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, many residents of San Francisco's Chinatown sought refuge in Oakland's Chinatown, increasing the Asian population in the East Bay.[18]

During this period, African Americans in the Bay Area began settling in San Francisco and parts of Oakland, the latter quickly developing into an industrious city. It was this environment that attracted even more Blacks to the East Bay, as employment opportunities were once again plentiful. In 1869, George Pullman, founder of the Pullman Car Company, recruited Blacks from the post-bellum South to come West and work on the Pullman cars. Melinda Chateauvert's work discusses the impact the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had on Blacks in the West, highlighting women and their integral role in union organizing. Black men worked as car porters and filled minor mechanic positions; Black women occupied domestic positions.[19] While working in such capacities, Blacks were still subjected to overt racism as the railroad cars were segregated, their clientele primarily White, and the majority of higher paying positions went to Whites. Such marginalization impacted access to economic gain.

By 1921 Garveyism reached the West Coast and many Blacks, especially the working class, became enamored with the ideology and movement. [20] Garveyism provided a Black nationalist framework that helped propel activism, organizing, striking,

[18] Relocation of the Chinese, last modified June 1, 1996, accessed March 17, 2014, http://www.sfmuseum.org.
[19] Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*(Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003) pg 61-65.
[20] Robin Dearmon Jenkins, "Linking up the Golden Gate: Garveyism in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1919-1925," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (November 2008): pg 275.

and other acts of rebellion against the status quo, and simultaneously generated a push for the development of the Black economy through entrepreneurship.[21] Combining both the labor and employment problems with that of African liberation, Oakland Garveyites believed that the fight for equality in Oakland would lead to the redemption and liberation of Africa.[22] It was this early activism, radicalism, collectivity, and budding Third World consciousness that helped set the stage for the Black Power era and the city's important role within the movement.

At the turn of the century, California became home to a growing Asian population, including new ethnic groups. Between 1890 and 1907, Japanese immigration to California skyrocketed as many came to fill cheap labor positions.[23] Richard Aoki's family provides a context to better understand how the Japanese settled in Oakland and Berkeley.[24] His grandparents immigrated in resistance to the militarization of Japan. Unlike many Japanese, the Aokis were able to live relatively well in the U.S. due to their class standing in Japan. While the lineage of the family is contested, it is believed that the Aoki clan were descendants of samurais, having access to capital.[25] The Aokis' experience was a rarity in that it was often very unlikely for families to travel to the U.S. together, as men often traveled alone, later sending for their wives, future brides, and children. This helped create large bachelor societies throughout the Asian communities in the Bay Area. Aoki's maternal grandparents settled in Berkeley where they opened a noodle manufacturing company.[26] In contrast, most Asian immigrants were forced to

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid, pg 270.
[23] Diane Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life.*(Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pg 2-3.
[24] Aoki was an early member of the Black Panther Party, founding member of Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), and Third World activist. See, Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard.*
[25] Ibid, 7.
[26] Ibid.

labor on farms. Although possessing a level of mobility, the Aokis were confronted with a great amount of discrimination. The passage of the California Alien Land Law of 1913, which prohibited "aliens" from owning or leasing (for more than three years) property and agricultural lands, speaks to the discriminatory nature of the state, as many Whites continued to possess a strong disdain for Asians. Riuzo, Aoki's uncle and the first-born Japanese American (Nisei) of his grandfather's children, was the official owner of the family's business and property. Of the remainder of the Nisei generation, Aoki notes that his mother and aunts had access to higher education as they would later go on to attend West Oakland's McClymonds High School and later UC Berkeley. Richard Aoki was born November 20, 1938, just three years prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into WWII, a moment that would greatly affect the Japanese population, especially those in the West.

The Wartime

Executive Order 9066 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, in response to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor called for the relocation of 120,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps. The order outlined the Bay Area and other cities along the Pacific Coast as prohibited areas for "enemy aliens," thus Japanese Americans were required to vacate these restricted zones and relocate to cities further inland.[27] Sacramento, Stockton, Merced, Fresno, Pomona, and Manzanar were a few of the California cities that set up temporary facilities to house displaced Japanese Americans.[28] These spaces were essentially prisons where life was confined to a few miles of fenced space with limited connection to the outside world. Aoki's family was

[27] Ibid.

[28] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History.* (Farmington Hills, MN: Cengage Gale, 1991), pg 127.

forced to relocate to Topaz, Salt Lake City. Although only three years old when his family was relocated, Aoki vividly describes the violence his family and others endured during internment. As the U.S. was immersed ever deeper into the war, losing record numbers of soldiers, internees were recruited to serve in the military. While many Nisei chose to serve, the Issei rejected this idea. The younger generations viewed serving in the military as the ultimate display of patriotism and were also swayed by the newly founded Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). Conversely, the Issei were opposed to the war and resisted serving in the military of a country that treated them like prisoners and criminals.[29] While WWII adversely affected the Japanese, it indirectly affected other Asian Americans and Asian immigrants. Through 1943, Chinese immigration into the U.S. was suspended. The few that were in the area were subjected to low-wage positions and poor working conditions on farms and wartime industries. Asian immigration was stunted; however, African Americans soon began migrating to the West in large numbers, occupying and navigating through similar spaces.

During WWII the Bay Area presented some of the greatest opportunities for African Americans as the space was heralded as the "largest shipbuilding center in the world," and decent paying jobs were plentiful.[30] Between 1940 and 1945, Oakland and its neighboring city, Richmond, witnessed a combined 5,341 percent increase in the African American population as many families and single women began moving West in search of opportunity, as well as to escape the segregation and institutional racism of the Jim

[29] Ibid.

[30] Albert Broussard, "In Search of the Promised Land: African American Migration to San Francisco 1900-1945," in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. Lawrence DeGraaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001),pg 190.

Crow South. Many of the African American Bay Area migrants came from Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Oklahoma.[31]

By 1945, Oakland was home to nearly 37,000 African Americans, a dramatic increase from 8,462 in 1940.[32] Many settled in West Oakland as the area neighbored the port of Oakland, Oakland Army Base and Naval Supply Center, and Moore Shipyard, all places offering employment to African Americans. Twenty miles north, Richmond's Henry J. Kaiser shipyard attracted nearly 10,000 African Americans. This steady increase in the African American population over the wartime era helped solidify West Oakland, Richmond, as well as Hunter's Point (another space that had successful industry just across the bridge in San Francisco) as predominately Black neighborhoods.

African Americans readily admitted, "things were better than in the South"; however, they still were not equitable as the working conditions were sub-standard.[33] In July of 1944, 320 men were killed in the Port Chicago disaster near Suisun Bay— just thirty-four miles north of Oakland. Many of the deceased and injured were African Americans. Port Chicago was a Naval loading center where bombs, shells, torpedoes, and other artillery were loaded into vessels. The port was segregated and enlisted nearly 1,400 African Americans, many filling positions that were deemed highly dangerous.[34] While the official naval reports on the event were inconclusive, many on the ground attributed the disaster to the poor working conditions and inadequate training. The leaders in command would often have ship loaders compete to see who could load ships the

[31] Charles Presley, interviewed by author, Oakland, 2013.
[32] Gretchen Lemke Santangelo, "Deindustrialization, Urban Poverty and African American Community Mobilization in Oakland, 1945 through the 19902," in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. Lawrence DeGraaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), pg 343.
[33] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Your Life Is Really Not Just Your Own: African American Women in Twentieth Century California," in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California,* ed. Lawrence DeGraaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), p 322.
[34] Sean Price, "The Port Chicago Mutiny," *New York Times Upfront* (New York, NY), January 3, 2000, pg 24-25.

fastest, with complete disregard for safety procedures. In the months immediately following the disaster, fifty African American men—the Port Chicago 50—refused to load any munitions, as they strongly believed that little had changed since the disaster. These men were demonized for their actions and sentenced to prison. This event made the discriminatory and racist actions of the Navy evident. While this catastrophe helped lead to the desegregation of the Navy, it came at the expense of hundreds of lost lives and the imprisonment of 47 others. The Port Chicago disaster and mutiny speaks to the severity of the employment and labor problems African Americans endured in Oakland and the Bay Area. The end of the war brought freedom for the Japanese in internment camps, many of whom returned to the Bay Area, now a quickly de-industrializing space. African Americans soon found themselves jobless and once again stricken with hard times.

The Post war era-1965

With the conclusion of WWII, the postwar era ushered in a new generation, the baby boomers, who would quickly reshape the nation with many of the generation's radical thinkers and activists emerging from Oakland. The postwar era also meant the demobilization of ports and wartime efforts, causing the unemployment rate to skyrocket, subsequently impacting the local economy of Oakland, leading to its deindustrialization. During the mid-1950s, people of color continued to settle in the Bay Area, while White flight increased. With the advent of the modern suburb, Whites were able to settle in spaces like Fremont, Milpitas, and the Oakland hills, leaving the majority of African Americans and Asian Americans in the "flatlands" of Oakland where they struggled for equitable housing, employment, and education. Youth growing up in the area were

conscious of the injustices that confronted them, as they either witnessed or heard from relatives what it was like to live in the repressive post-bellum South or hyper-militarized Japan. Charles Presley, West Oakland native, described his family's journey to the Bay Area during the great migration and his early upbringing in West Oakland. Presley's narrative highlights the migration patterns of African Americans venturing out west during the WWII era and begins to articulate the communities African American migrants created in an effort survive the harsh realities of Oakland.

> I was born in Oakland, California in 1945, and I came up when I came up, on 13th street. I used to go down to 16th street station where all the Blacks used to come in on the train and I was part of this big family from Louisiana out of the, they were out of Bastrop, Monroe, and Shreveport, from all in there, and we all hooked up in West Oakland. And a lot of people from West Oakland came from Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. And Oklahoma! Those, I think were the major groups. And there were people out of Mississippi, Alabama, a few out of Georgia. I never met anybody that I know that was from North Carolina or South Carolina here in California as I was coming up. And everybody was like a kin. When one person ate, we all ate. Now this man named Mr. Albert, he was the main chef on the California Zephyer that used to go from Chicago back to Oakland all the time, and he was the main chef, his name was Mr. Albert. And a lot of times they used to stay at the California hotel that's where a lot of Blacks were staying at then. And then you have the small hotels around Sixteenth Street; wooden houses some were you know like large triplexes or duplexes. You had Romani Baseball park that was right next to it...There was Babe Ruth village...What it was, was a housing project. They had one, Campbell village, was a housing project. Cypress, uh, and Poplar, that was a housing project. They had the one over on Grand and Peralta, years ago that was a project. I guess they were army barracks because they had harbor homes, which was over the Adeline Bridge, they had...harbor homes, that's what everybody will tell ya. It was a community unto itself.[35]

Mr. Presley's upbringing and roots in West Oakland is reflective of the early narrative of many African American families settling into the Bay Area during the

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[35] Charles Presley, interviewed by the author, Oakland, CA, 2013.

postwar era. Towards the end of this excerpt, he highlights some of the key neighborhoods and housing projects African Americans resided in during the early 1950s. Campbell Village, Peralta Village, Bayview Villa, Cypress Village, and Willow and Magnolia Manor were some of the first housing projects that were constructed.[36] These low-income housing projects were a product of the Oakland Housing Authority, a response to the housing crisis Oakland of 1940, and served as an appeasement to Whites that were visibly disturbed by the influx of African Americans in their communities. The racial antagonism of the South emerged in the West as African Americans were kept out of White neighborhoods through redlining and urban renewal. Mr. Presley reflects on the housing marginalization,

> They redlined West Oakland, so the Blacks that did own property they couldn't fix it up. And a lot of them had the old Victorians and all they had was the old brick foundations. So a lot of them fell in that earthquake of 89'. Now the thing about it is we all knew they were redlining Blacks, but also they came up with this urban renewal. Now you had a set of Victorians that, I'mma give you a good idea. The Victorians started on 8th and Union and went straight back to Adeline all the way up to Castro. They tore all those down, and the ones that were most beautiful the three, four, five, story ones the most beautiful ones. And they built the Acorn. And you know what Acorn is now? See and they built those and tore down all this good stuff! We just couldn't understand what they were doin. ...Macarthur was the cut-off point. I can remember when I was a little boy, me and my friends, I had just learned how to swim real good. And after a couple years of swimming, I had got my junior lifeguard card. And, uh, so, I was going to, we had heard about Temescal, it was a dream, so me and my friends, I never forget, we start walking. We went from West Oakland straight up Broadway and as we made the turn to go through the park out of nowhere the police shows up. And these were the words he said, I'll never forget em, "you guys are lost, there's been a lot of burglaries up here get in the backset let me take you back to where you guys belong." They put us in the backseat and took us all the way back to the Fox Oakland.[37]

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[36] Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pg 25.
[37] Charles Presley, interviewed by author.

Mr. Presley witnessed the affects of housing marginalization first hand and describes the invisible divide between the poverty stricken Black neighborhood, and the White neighborhoods that excluded him.

Black Mecca and Asian Entrepreneurship

By 1950 nearly 85 percent of the city's African American population resided in West Oakland. "We never realized we were poor" is a common saying amongst those from Mr. Presley's generation. While many lived in poor conditions, the communities they created with other southern migrants was comforting and served as a distraction from the harsh realities. Seventh Street quickly emerged as a "Baby Harlem" and Black Mecca. [38] The space was home to an array of Black owned businesses, clubs, theaters, and restaurants.

> When we got to 7th street, it's like where everybody would come, if you were at 7th street you would see people you wouldn't believe. Lil Willie John, Little Richard, James Brown, Ike and Tina Turner, Bobby Blue Bland, B.B. King, all and everybody. As a matter of fact the Temptations came here in the 60s, and the first time they ever played Oakland, we knew of. They didn't play San Francisco, they played Oakland! They played the Continental club, twice...You see Oakland had, let me name the shows I can remember. We had the Broadway, the Luxe, we had the Piralex, we had the Globe, we had the Roxy, We had the Paramount, the Fox Oakland. And down in West Oakland we had two shows. On 7th street we had the one called the Lincoln. Oh my God that was a kid's show, but that was our show! But the nicer show turned out to be Narcisse church. That was in Peralta on the corner of 14th and Peralta. It's still standing, it's called the Peralta theater. I used to go there in the 50s—52, 53. And all that's changed now.[39]

Mr. Presley's reminiscing on his childhood and the glory days of Seventh Street details how important the space was to African Americans for both social and economic

[38] Murch, *Living for the City,* pg 25.
[39] Charles Presley, interviewed by author.

purposes. Additionally, Seventh Street is a clear example of how African American Southern migrants began shaping Oakland. Toward the end of this section of the interview, Mr. Presley expressed sadness, "And all that's changed now." He states this in looking at the current status of West Oakland, as well as in retrospect, as the Seventh Street community quickly declined.

As the deindustrialization of Oakland loomed immediately following the war, the city began to transform both economically as well as politically. The Civil Rights Movement in the South was in full swing. Being isolated from the South, California and the West were physically disconnected from the movement, but not from the issues that were being addressed. Mr. Presley describes the unique role of California in the civil rights movement,

> So when things started jumpin, you see when we were coming up we get the *Jet.* We was gettin our news from back East. You see when they killed Emmett Till they showed his picture in the *Jet.* See people ain't never forgot that, you know! And then they had, uh, other thangs with that, but we were all here in Oakland, we were different see. What they had, when Martin Luther King died, Oakland didn't have no riot like they did in other places. You know because the people of Oakland know if you tear it up, you tearing up your places. See, and a lot of people in Oakland owned stuff. See, where the other places they didn't own like the people in Oakland. See, the people in Oakland didn't do no rioting. They might broke out some windows downtown or something like that, but they did not riot. They did not cause no rioting at all.[40]

While Mr. Presley depicts California as this mild space in terms of African Americans' response to the death of Dr. King, the state had long had a history of radicalism, civil disobedience, and its own movement for justice. This is best witnessed with the pioneering unionizing of African Americans during the late 1930s and 1940s,

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[40] Ibid.

which helped solidify better working conditions and jobs. The city's branch of the NAACP, the Council for Civil Unity, and politicians/activists like C.L. Dellums and Herman H. Long had long been fighting for the civil rights of African Americans in California even prior to the Civil Rights movement. But while the South was consumed with what was occurring in the movement and mourning the death of Rev. Dr. King, African Americans in California were slammed with the harsh reality of deindustrialization.

Beyond the shipyards, port, and naval base, Oakland was also home to many factories and industries. Ford, Chevrolet, GM, DeVaux-Hall, Durant, and Willys-Overland automotive factories, which were originally located in Oakland and Richmond all moved to the suburbs (Milpitas and Fremont) during the 1950s and 1960s, and by the late 1970s closed indefinitely. Mr. Presley, currently a laundromat owner, worked for Ford for nearly ten years before they closed. He discussed his experience as one of the few African Americans working in the facility because very few were able to make such a long commute. The relocation of industry to the suburbs was a direct attack on the African American community and a response to White flight. With no jobs, poor housing, and limited resources, African Americans in Oakland grew frustrated, especially the youth. With organizations like the SNCC, young people became more involved with the civil rights movement and emerging Black Power movement. By 1965 a political shift began developing within the civil rights movement. The death of Emmett Till, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, the four little girls in Birmingham, and a host of other martyrs acted as a catalyst that helped segue into the Black Power era, with Oakland at the epicenter.

Chapter One

Afro-Asian Radicalism in the Developing Post-industrial East Bay

By having no family
I inherited the family of humanity.
By having no possessions
I have possessed all.
By rejecting the love of one
I received the love of all.
By surrendering my life to the revolution
I found eternal life
Revolutionary Suicide.

— Huey P. Newton[41]

During the 1960s, African Americans engaged in uprisings and revolts in urban cities, Oakland, California being one of these volatile cities. These revolts were primarily in response to the repression of the urban city and the fury boiling over from the Civil Rights movement. Confronted with poor housing conditions, limited access to resources, increased unemployment, and the onslaught of racial antagonism and brutality at the hands of the Oakland Police Department (OPD), African Americans in the Bay Area were living on edge. In 1965, in response to the death of Malcolm X, this fury quickly boiled over. Simultaneously, Oakland was rapidly developing into a radical urban space. African Americans were drawn to the politics, philosophies, and teachings of Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and other Black nationalists. When Malcolm X (also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) was gunned down in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965, his death served as a catalyst for the Black Power movement and the establishment

[41] Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2009).

of the BPP the following year. In an interview with David Hilliard, the former BPP member discussed the impact the Black Power icon had on the Party. Just a year prior to his death, Hilliard saw Malcolm X walking through the streets of West Oakland. The youth who would later join the Party were enamored of and mesmerized by the presence and ideologies of Malcolm X. Hilliard was in fact in disbelief that such an iconic figure would be walking so casually through the streets of his neighborhood. Malcolm X kindled an interest in Blackness and politics within Hilliard, and awakened his consciousness. Bobby Seale, co-founder of the BPP, shares a similar affinity with and admiration of Malcolm X. Immediately after learning of his death, Seale ran outside his home, gathered bricks from his garden and threw them at cars driven by Whites.[42] In Jewel C. Latimore's poem, "St. Malcolm," she shares her relationship to Malcolm and how his life resonated with her as a radical poet-activist.

> the PROPHET speaks
> his image disseminate
> stripping façade
> and the Dream stands naked
> visibly before creation as the Nightmare
> in a truth of beasts grasping men
> Prophecy is silenced of necessity
> As nightmares erupt in fulfillment
> El Hajj Malik El Shabazz martyrized
> but his word cauterizes our infection
> unifying blackness[43]

Malcolm was the Black community's Saint, prophet, and martyr for the movement. it was this perception of his life and untimely death that acted as an impetus for the Black Power movement. Sterling Plumpp describes the transformations that

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[42] Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P Newton* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1991), pg 3.
[43] Jewel Latimore, "St. Malcolm," (poem) in *Black Essence,* Third World Press, 1968, Syracuse University Black Small Press Collection.

occurred within many African Americans during the Black Power movement, referring to them as a journey to "Malcolmland." It was in "Malcolmland" that they found their consciousness, manhood, and humanity.[44] Malcolm X resonated especially with African Americans in the West as they quickly grew disillusioned with the politics and tactics of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King jr. and the Civil Rights Movement occurring in the South.

Black nationalists—including Marcus Garvey, who established a chapter of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in West Oakland during the 1920s—had long influenced Oakland. African Americans' grief following the loss of such an important figure within the Black liberation struggle manifested itself in acts violence. Cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and Detroit erupted and were set ablaze. In Oakland this grief brought about a newfound hope that was rooted in Malcolm's mission and vision. The formation of the BPP was certainly a response to the many injustices people of color were enduring; moreover, it was a direct response to the death of Malcolm X. Bobby Seale states, "...there I was trying to find Huey to convince him that we need to start a new organization, 'cause they just killed Malcolm X a week or so ago."[45]

While Malcolm X is best known for his articulation of Black nationalism, it was during the final year of his life that he adopted revolutionary internationalism, a political framework rooted in humanism and linking the struggles of humanity with one another to promote solidarity and revolutionary action against the various systems of oppression. The arrival at revolutionary internationalism was Malcolm's final political transformation, and one of the most pivotal. Malcolm was conscious of the struggle shared amongst people of color, this is evidenced in his analysis of the Afro-Asian

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[44] Sterling Plumpp, "Half Black, Half Blacker," (poem) in *Half Black, Half Blacker*, Third World Press, 1970, Syracuse University Black Small Press Collection.
[45] Timothy O'Boyle and Will Plouffe, "The Black Panther Party: The Early Years, Bobby Seale," *Sociological Viewpoints* 29, no. 1 (Fall 2013): pg 8.

Bangdung conference of 1955, his relationship with Asian American activist Yuri Kochiyama, his work with the United Nations (UN), and support of global struggles against imperialism.[46] It was this final face of Malcolm on which the BPP would be modeled. The following delves into the politicization of Black and Asian American youth in the Bay Area during the Black Power era. Malcolm X, Mao Tse-Tung, and other Third World leaders were central to their political awakening and their understanding and implementation of collective activism.

Huey P. Newton and Robert "Bobby" Seale migrated with their families from Louisiana and Texas, respectively, to California during the World War II era.[47] Growing up in Oakland and South Berkeley, both young men experienced poverty, unemployment, and racism. Seale who resided in Cordonices Village in Oakland, describes his early living circumstances. "We lived in very crowded conditions with my mother's twin sister and her son. The place was always dirty. My mother always tried to save money but the money was used up every time my father was laid off."[48] This was typical for many newly settled African Americans in the East Bay as most were confronted with similar variables. While Newton lived in North Oakland, many of his friends were in West Oakland, thus he spent much of his time in the area.

Newton & Seale Battling it Out on Campus

The duo first met in the early 1960s at Merritt College where they were enrolled as students.[49] Seale was five years older than Newton and had recently been discharged from the military. Their shared political interests and views drew them to each other as

[46] Charles Alva Hoyt, "The Five Faces of Malcolm X," *Indiana State University* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1970): pg 110-112.
[47] Newton's family moved from Monroe, Louisiana to the Bay Area in 1945.
[48] Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, pg 6.
[49] Ibid, pg 13.

they first began engaging with one another during the protests against the Cuban blockade organized by the Afro-American Association (AAA) on Merritt's campus. Newton had already been working with AAA, and after fostering a friendship with Seale, he too joined the organization. The duo also worked with the Soul Students Advisory Council (SSAC), a student-run organization at Merritt and front group for the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM).[50]

To finance his education and livelihood, Newton engaged in criminal behavior including robbery and assault. In 1964 he was arrested and found guilty of assault with a deadly weapon. For the next twenty years Newton would spend much time cycling through the prison system as a political prisoner and it was during these periods of confinement that his intellectual transformation took place and his hunger for revolution intensified. Eric Cummins' *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement,* argues that the 1960s and early 1970s was a period when California prisons were radical, political, and intellectual spaces because most political prisoners were veracious readers and/or writers. Men and women like Huey Newton, George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver, and Angela Davis defended their crimes and simultaneously plotted for revolution using Marxism and other forms of political thought that became even more familiar to many while these leaders were imprisoned. Beyond what Newton was exposed to during his first stint in prison in 1964, the SSAC and RAM introduced the budding leaders to the writings of Frantz Fanon, Mao Tse-Tung, and Kwame Nkrumah, along with other revolutionary literature that quickly awakened their political consciousness, and would

[50] Ibid.

later be used as the foundation for the BPP ideology.[51] Seale and Newton became well versed with the international liberation struggles and aligned their oppression in Oakland with that of the people in Vietnam, Ghana, India, China, and other nations of the Global South.

As Seale and Newton flourished intellectually, they found themselves surpassing the intentions and actions of their peers in the SSAC and RAM, as they yearned to reach the people on the ground. The SSAC, RAM, and other student organizations were disconnected from the community and neglected to put theory into practice. This was the gap Newton and Seale sought to fill with the BPP.[52] In a meeting with the SSAC central committee, Newton stated, "we are going to have to show the brothers on the block that we have an organization that represents the community and we're going to have to show it in a real strong fashion."[53] Newton proposed to the committee that they bring armed brothers from the community to campus. Newton's intention was to unite the *lumpenproletariat*, a term coined by Karl Marx, which at its core refers to the unemployable; the working class; those that lack consciousness of the class struggle. Furthermore it was Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* that crystallized the importance of organizing the *lumpenproletariat* for Newton and Seale. This group was large in numbers, easily susceptible to being co-opted by colonial forces, were the most impacted by capitalism, yet highly capable if provided with the needed education and enlightenment. The SSAC denied Newton and Seale's proposal. The duo quickly broke away from and dismissed the organizations, calling them cultural nationalists that were

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[51] See, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963); Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Final Stage of Imperialism* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1966); Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking, CHN: Foreign Language Press, 1966);

[52] Waldo Martin and Joshua Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), pg 34.

[53] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story*, pg 30.

not invested in the historical material and taking physical revolutionary action, which Newton and Seale sought to accomplish. Newton and Seale defined cultural nationalists as inauthentic-faux revolutionaries and anti-white without any concrete reasoning besides skin color. This tension between cultural nationalists and the BPP would continue to escalate throughout the Black Power Movement.

Establishing the Party

In the summer of 1966, Newton and Seale found themselves working within their respective communities, Seale as a North Oakland Neighborhood Anti-Poverty Center foreman, and Newton as a community worker.[54] They used these platforms to begin providing political education to youth and the *lumpenproletariat*. That summer they also witnessed several incidents where members of OPD were violating the rights of African Americans. By August, they began laying the groundwork for establishing an organization whose primary concern was addressing the social and political issues within the African American community. In October of 1966, their plans were completed and the organization was formally established. Bearing the logo of a pouncing Black Panther, adopted from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), the Black Panther Party for Self Defense was born.

Newton and Seale sought to differentiate the Black Panther Party for Self Defense from the cultural nationalist organization bearing a similar name, the Black Panther Party of Northern California, which was affiliated with RAM.[55] The Panthers attempted to delegitimize the organization by accusing the group of being inauthentic and emphasizing

[54] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story*, pg 35.
[55] BlackPantehrPartyReconsideredpg 169 Floyd Hayes…

the urgency of the political struggle. The Black Panther Party of Northern California refuted these claims by arguing that the Panthers were premature paramilitarists.[56] In early 1967 the Black Panther Party for Self Defense still had very few members and sought to further establish itself within the community. In February of 1967 the small group was asked to escort Betty Shabazz, the wife of the late Malcolm X, from the airport to her various speaking engagements, including a memorial held in honor of the second anniversary of her husband's death. The Panthers, dressed in military fashion, wielding shot guns, and displaying precise synchronized movement, arrived at the San Francisco Airport drawing the attention of the local media, including an emerging writer for *Ramparts* magazine, Eldridge Cleaver. Cleaver was astonished at the precision, organization, and militancy of the Panthers. Furthermore, he was amazed at how Newton stood up against the police officers who were attempting to disarm and disrupt the contingent.[57] Following this event the Panthers began gaining new members, including a student from San Francisco City College by the name of Emory Douglas. The organization also dropped "for Self Defense" from their moniker, as they were now *the* Black Panther Party, and no longer had to contend for their authenticity or legitimacy with cultural nationalists, who, by the end of 1972, had faded from the scene.[58] This image of militancy that was showcased during the Betty Shabazz escort garnered the attention of many, as it was evident that Party members meant business, by any means necessary! Racial pride, self-determination, and confidence came across through their staunch militancy, and it was those characteristics that drew people.

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History*, pg 49.
[58] Ibid.

John Hulett, chairman of the LCFO, stated, "the black panther is an animal that when it is pressured it moves back until it is cornered, then it comes out fighting for life or death."[59] The Black Panther Party embodied this characteristic of the panther. For too long had African Americans been cornered, it was now time to pounce! No longer were the youth in the area going to endure the status quo, they had been marginalized and "othered" for far too long. They seized the time, pouncing against the systemic forms of oppression, and placing their lives on the line for the betterment of the collective. The Bay Area becomes this symbolic end point; hence its emergence as this radicalized space.

The Party anchored the radicalism of the Bay Area. Radicalism within the context of this work is more than militancy, guns, and verbose Black Power rhetoric. Peniel Joseph argues that rainbow coalitions, or acts of collective activism were radical. Certainly, those are all elements of radicalism; however, within the space of Oakland many of the survival programs and the BPP's 10-point platform were radical as they sought to directly change the status quo in a dramatic way that would render liberated those who were marginalized and disempowered. Newton stated, "the nature of a panther is that he never attacks. But if anyone attacks him or backs him into a corner, the panther comes up to wipe that aggressor or that attacker out, absolutely, resolutely, wholly, thoroughly, and completely."[60] The early Party members drafted the ten-point-platform, which served as their mission, guide, and agenda. The ten demands, which were inspired by the NOI, called for: decent housing, education, employment, the end of police brutality, the exemption of Black men from the military, freedom for those imprisoned, a

[59] As Quoted in, Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History,* pg 47.
[60] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story*, pg 65.

just judicial system, and autonomy.[61] The language of this document followed a "What we want, What we believe" format, in that the Party expressed its "wants" followed by grievances or what they believed and held to be true, which included revolutionary solutions to arrive at their "wants."

Hittin' the Streets, Policing the Police, and Gaining Community Support

During the Party's formative years there was an immediate focus on addressing police brutality and relations with law enforcement. An early pamphlet read, "The Black Panther Party has organized politically to raise the demand, STOP MURDERING AND BRUTALIZING OUR PEOPLE, and to put forward a concrete program for jobs, decent housing, and quality schools."[62] The strong emphasis on addressing police brutality was paramount because African Americans were being subjected to harsh punishment and racial profiling. Many of the early members of the Party were drawn to how it addressed profiling and police brutality

Seale, Newton, and Little (Lil') Bobby Hutton, the first recruited member of the organization, began riding around Oakland tailgating police cars they suspected were unjustly profiling African American drivers; the trio was policing the police! With Newton's knowledge of the legal system many officers they came into contact with were left befuddled at the intelligence, poise, and sharp delivery. These scenes empowered the *lumpenproleteriat* and working class drivers they aided, as well as the spectators that

[61] The 10 Point Platform, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm.
[62] The Black Panther Party, "The Black Panther Party-WHY?" (pamphlet), 1966, Bancroft Library Social Protest Project.

crowded around. These incidents helped the budding organization gain visibility, and consequently resulted in increased interest in membership.[63]

As membership grew, the organization began engaging with other people of color including Asian Americans, as the two groups often shared neighborhoods, lived in close proximity within Oakland, and were confronted with similar external social and political issues. Adopting the mantra popularized by Malcolm X, "freedom, by any means necessary," Newton and Seale believed that it was imperative that they armed themselves with weapons for protection, as well as to convey their urgency and discontent with the status quo and oppression by Whites. Seale, who had prior military experience, had access to a limited number of guns, which served as the foundation of the organization's early armory. As membership increased, the demand for weapons increased, Seale and Newton turned to Richard Aoki, one of their close friends from West Oakland. Aoki, who later emerged as the first Asian American member of the organization, also had a military background and provided the organization with some of its first weapons including an M-1 rifle and 9 mm pistol.[64]

While the BPP started off as just one of the many small Black Power organizations, it quickly moved to the forefront following demonstrations, speaking engagements at local college campuses, the rallying behind Denzil Dowell's family, and finally their sweeping entrance at the California state capitol building. Denzil Dowell, a twenty-two year old resident of North Richmond, was shot and killed on April 1, 1967.[65] His family believed that deputy sheriff Mel Brunkhorst murdered him, however, the

[63] Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History*, pg 45-50.
[64] Ibid, 48.
[65] UC Berkeley, Merritt College, and San Francisco State College were the primary college campuses were the BPP or Party influence was visible.

Contra Costa sheriffs' office claimed that Dowell was running from a liquor store, as if he were stealing, and refused to stop when ordered by Brunkhorst, justifying Brunkhorst's action. Further investigation done on behalf of Dowell's family revealed that Dowell actually had his hands raised to show that he was not resisting arrest. The Panthers came to the aide of the family; Newton acted as a spokesman for the family, and members helped bring awareness to the case. Dowell's death was a catalyst for the Panther's ambush of the capitol as well as the introduction of the Mulford Bill, AB 1591, which proposed to outlaw the carrying of loaded firearms in public. The bill was a clear response to the presence and militant actions of the Party.

On May 2, 1967, the Mulford Act was to be voted on. As an act of protest, the Party sent a delegation of twenty-four men and six women to Sacramento. After exiting their vehicles the men took great care to ensure that their weapons were pointed upward (the women were unarmed), immediately drawing the attention of the media and spectators. During the Party's infancy there was uncertainty with regard to the role of women within the Party; however, it was certain they did not fit into the vision of performed militancy, specifically carrying firearms. Bobby Seale led the contingent to the state capitol building. Members were immediately hassled upon their accidental entrance into Assembly chambers. They were eventually stripped of their weapons and led downstairs where police gathered and concluded that the group had not broken any laws.[66] After having their weapons returned, Seale read Black Panther Executive Mandate #1:

> The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense calls upon the American people in general and the Black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature which is now considering legislation aimed at

[66] Ibid, 58.

> keeping the Black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of Black people.[67]

These articulate, militant, and coordinated young Black men and women captured the attention of the politicians at the capitol as well as many across the country. The militancy the Panthers exuded was not simply evidenced with their ability to wield guns. Their defensive nature, strong presence, and aggression also spoke to how they performed and emulated militancy. The Panthers' presence at the capital only helped seal the fate of the Mulford Act, because it was actions like those that the government sought to discourage and render illegal.

While African Americans in Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, and Watts were recovering from rebellions, which left many of the aforementioned cities ablaze and in disarray, the BPP organized. The BPP created a structural framework that was repeatedly replicated, as chapters sprang up across forty-eight states and several countries in the global south. Donn Worgs argues, "when the oppressed strike a blow for freedom, they in a sense seize back their humanity. They move from object to subject. Despite their conditions of bondage or the social, political, and economic constraints that smother and confine them, the violent actor is liberated internally."[68] Worgs' comments on frustrated revolters parallels what the Panthers were channeling; however, their fury materialized into something much more organized, effective, concrete, and substantial, as the BPP provided a framework for activism.

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[67] As Quoted in Phillip Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), pg 40.

[68] Donn Worgs, "Beware of the Frustrated...: The Fantasy and Reality of African American Violent Revolt," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 1 (September 2006): pg 27.

Seize the Time

While there is much that can be discussed about the national/international history of the BPP, the focus of this work is Oakland and the East Bay. The local chapter focused primarily on three issues: police brutality, employment, and housing. The chapter framed local liberation around rectifying these three issues, as they were some of the most visible. The publication *Black Panther* highlighted these issues. The publication grew in popularity during the mid-1960s and proved to be an effective fundraising tool and means of disseminating information pertinent to the Party and the Third World liberation movement. The newspaper was ultimately the thread that held the chapters together as well as what kept the people informed.[69]

The first issue of the *Black Panther* centered on the Denzil Dowell case. It discussed the pertinent information concerning the case as well as the Panther's political perspective.[70] Further issues included detailed information on incidents of police brutality in the community and provided legal advice for its audience so they would know how to combat similar experiences. Later issues were more informative and inclusive as they included the names of every member or leader who had been detained, killed, or injured at the hands of law enforcement. These issues also included "Revolutionary Poetry" and art sections. Such inclusions were more popular between 1968-1969 as this was the period in which the Party had achieved great size and influence and was being attacked by government and law enforcement from every angle.

Beyond being hassled by law enforcement, African Americans, especially the *lumpenproleteriat*, were subjected to unfit living conditions in the urban city. Many

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[69] Regina Jennings, "Poetry of the Black Panther Party: Metaphors of Militancy," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 1 (September 1998): pg 106-107.

[70] Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History*, pg 56.

artists including Stevie Wonder, Sam Cooke, Curtis Mayfield and others discussed what these spaces looked like. Poet, Denise "Damali" Burnett's piece, "Euclid Street," reveals the harsh realities of the urban environment while simultaneously holding on to hope and optimism, ultimately trying to find the beauty in a concrete jungle.

> "Greeness grows in this ghetto
> cleaness neatness
> (dirtiness and bareness this we know)
> But
> Trees do tower here
> And laws small as match covers
> Are neat behind wire white wooded
> Flowers like flames flood from
> Yards and trees.
> One large full bloomed pink rose
> Stands starkly alone
> Before a pealing gray plaster home.
> Ignoring the gray littered concrete
> Delicate violets and blood purple leaves bend
> And almost hidden behind one fence
> Soft velvet blossoms rest.
> Do not say these yards are not green
> Or that the sky is always gray.
> More children than doors grow here
> Trees as waves of smoke playing
> (I shot you and you ain't dead)
> cursing
> (I'm gonna beat his ass)
> They speak without fear
> And question only with
> The curiosity of newness
>
> The women sit on porches of row houses
> Old women quietly watch worlds walk on.
> And the other women, young
> And not so young
> Carrying children, without children
> Faces work worn and war
> Walking wanting wishing
> For space and time and dream fulfilled
>
> Men stagger and stumble and swagger across sidewalks
> Tired, torn, without a revolution

But alive beyond the slight breath

And young men
Who think they are cool
So jive, they only fool
Themselves.

Life smolders. Here
Within the dark walls
Of our black homes

Life boils here

Like a rising tide
To flood
To wash the world clean
To begin a new creation.[71]

Burnett's poem reflects the reality of many urban cities during the 1960s. She is making mention of several issues: the darkness and grittiness of the city, the unconsciousness of Black men, the yearning for revolution, and how life seems aimlessly to escape everyone. However, Burnett remains sanguine as she proclaims, life lives here.

The BPP had a similar outlook on Oakland in that they understood the potential of the people and space, but the looming oppressive cloud of darkness needed to be addressed. The scarcity of jobs was next on the agenda of issues that needed to be tackled. Following the deindustrialization of Oakland, employment was scarce and often reserved for Whites as much of the industry was relocated to the suburbs (Fremont, Milpitas, San Leandro, Union City, and Hayward) to accommodate the White flight. When employment was available for African Americans, they were frequently under-compensated and subjected to poor working conditions. African Americans were left

[71] Damali (Denise Burnett), "Euclid Street," (poem) in *I Am That We May Be,* Third World Press, 1974, University at Buffalo Poetry Collection.

living on the margins of poverty, or as Stevie Wonder proclaims, "living just enough for the city." The BPP addressed the issue of employment, low wages, and unfit working conditions in several ways including employing people in the community and organizing workers at various companies.

As the Party continued to expand within Oakland, Newton and other leaders knew that there was a need for the organization to undertake certain business ventures in order to have financial and economic independence. The Lamp Post (a bar and restaurant) and other Party businesses served two purposes: providing employment for members of the community and financing the organization. These business ventures were radical as they aligned with early Black nationalist rhetoric as well as the ten-point platform that expressed the urgency of developing an autonomous Black economy. The Party also helped with union organizing as an attempt to challenge the employment crisis. The BPP helped develop a Black community/worker alliance.[72] On April 19, 1969, the Party organized a labor conference where employees from GM were invited to hear Bobby Seale and David Hilliard speak about the Revolutionary Union movement that was occurring across the nation. Seale and Hilliard aimed to get workers in the East Bay to join the movement in solidarity with workers in Detroit and other industrial spaces where African Americans were vying for jobs and decent working conditions. The Panthers were active in helping establish unions and advocating for the rights of workers. The oppression of African Americans did not end at the workplace. Poor compensation often resulted in low-income and sub-standard housing. With scarce resources and access to capital, African Americans and other people of color were relegated to urban housing that was affordable and marginalized.

[72]Black Panther Party, "On a Historic Labor Conference," (flyer), 1967, Bancroft Library Social Protest Collection.

The urban city continues to reflect the historical oppression of African Americans. They remain spaces where repression and exploitation are ubiquitous. Oakland was and is no different; the physical structure of the city (homes, streets, facilities, etc.) was often unsafe, dirty, and all around substandard when juxtaposed with the suburbs just twenty or so miles south. In West Oakland, African Americans primarily resided in housing projects like the Acorns, Campbell Village, Peralta Village, and others, most of which were products of urban renewal. Both the employment and housing crisis worked hand-in-hand and helped ensure that African Americans continued to live on the margins in Oakland, as many did not have access to capital to move beyond the city limits.

To begin addressing some of the housing and community issues, the BPP began working with the advisory committee of the poverty program in Oakland, a government-funded program, to place a traffic light in a heavy traffic area. Several automobile accidents, injuries, and even the death of a child, had occurred at this intersection.[73] Newton and early members of the BPP knew that if they wanted anything to change in Oakland they would have to fight for it. In 1967, the BPP and advisory committee began submitting the necessary paperwork to the Oakland City council to have a traffic light placed on the corner of Fifty-Fifth and Market.[74] The city responded with street engineers' reports, which stated a light would be placed in the area in late 1968. The Party was not satisfied with this response and stated that they would begin policing and directing traffic on the corner. The Party's actions in trying to work with the system to enact change illustrates that their militancy and radicalism only emerged out of necessity as they wished to solve and rectify issues using the systems that were already in place.

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[73] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story*, pg 99.
[74] Ibid, 101.

This connects with Bobby Seale's analysis of Malcolm X's famous quote, "the ballot or the bullet." Seale states that he knew Malcolm wanted to employ the ballot, or the system, however would use the bullet, a more radical tactic, if needed.[75] The city expedited the construction of the traffic light after receiving the Party's response and the light was erected in the early half of 1968.

After 1966, Third World organizations began replicating the BPP's framework, tactics, image, and approach to liberation.[76] The racial composition of the Bay Area, which has always been dynamic, given the complex racial make-up of the West, dates back to the Spanish conquest and even earlier. California has maintained much of its wealth and prosperity at the expense of migrants and immigrants. It is in recognizing this shared struggle that various racial groups began engaging in collective activism. The radicalism in Oakland during the 1960s was only a microcosm of Third World collective activism.

Intercommunalism

In addition to the racial diversity of Oakland and the thriving Black Power movement, the anti-imperialist movements and rebellions taking place throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia also influenced African American and Asian American youth. These acts of resistance, such as: The Mau Mau revolution and liberation of Ghana, helped awaken the global consciousness of Bay Area youth as they began to link their struggle with that of the entire Third World. Collective activism quickly emerged as a radical tool in countering their local oppressions, beginning with those in higher education.

[75] . O'Boyle and Plouffe, "The Black Panther Party, pg 16.
[76] Throughout this work Third World and global South are used interchangeably to discuss countries, nations, and people that have colonial pasts and are socially, politically, and economically, underdeveloped.

Newton, often portrayed as the "brains" of the organization, frequently reminded Seale, the "orator" and "personality," of their purpose, to "unite theory with practice… unite your ideas with practice, by applying those ideas."[77] This was clearly a critique of RAM and other cultural nationalist organizations they encountered during their early years of activism. During the organization's infancy, Black nationalism was the clear theoretical and political grounding. The works of Third World writers and leaders such as: Mao Tse-tung, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, and Ho Chi Minh, helped develop the global consciousness of Newton and members, forcing them to recognize other political theories including: socialism, Marxism, and revolutionary internationalism, all of which emphasized the greater collective and class struggles.

These political influences were at the root of the many ideological shifts the organization underwent between 1966-1973. These transformations can be summed up in three phases: Black Panther Black nationalism, revolutionary internationalism, and intercommunalism. Black Panther Black nationalism at its core is a call for racial solidarity amongst people of African descent and advocates for the political, economic, and social autonomy of Black communities. Under the guise of nationalism, the Party emphasized self-determination, autonomy, and believed that Black liberation was impossible to achieve within the U.S. without the destruction of capitalism, imperialism, and racism.[78] As the global and class-consciousness of the Party developed, nationalism was abandoned for revolutionary internationalism, the framework Malcolm X staunchly advocated during his final years. This provided the BPP with the rhetoric that articulated

[77] Ibid, 197.
[78] Jessica Christina Harris, "Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party," *The Journal of Negro History* 85, no. 3 (Summer 2000): pg 163.

ideas that moved beyond discursive discussions of intraracial solidarity, to something more unifying yet fluid, and proposed interracial solidarity.

Between 1967 and mid-1970, Newton was arrested and convicted of voluntary manslaughter following a dispute with OPD officer John Fray.[79] During his time in prison, Newton wrote extensively. It was during this period that the organization's final theoretical and political grounding—intercommunalism—manifested itself. In a speech delivered at Boston College in November of 1970, Newton publicly made one of his first presentations on intercommunalism. He states,

> ...every nation of the world has been violated by the ruling circle of North America, and every nation has thus been transformed. They are no longer nations...The ruling circle have recognized that this is one world...As the ruling circle continue to build their technocracy, more and more of the proletariat will become unemployable, become lumpen, until they have become the popular class, the revolutionary class.[80]

Intercomunalism does away with nation-states and boundaries and organizes the *lumpenproletariat*. It argues for a revolutionary system comprised of interdependent socialist communities that work together and control "the technological machine which imperialists have built."[81] This framework was what solidified the BPP's legacy as an organization that was no longer solely concerned with the issues of people of African descent, but that of the *lumpenproletariat*, the masses, the global south, the collective. Intercommunalism was best practiced through the organization's various survival programs including: the Free Breakfast program, career services, employment aid, health centers, and a host of others. Additionally, the United Front Against Fascism (UFAF) conference and National Committees to Combat Fascism (NCCF), which provided a

[79] The outcome of the incident remains inconclusive. Newton's conviction was eventually reversed in May of 1970.
[80] Huey Newton Speaks at Boston College, Presents Theory of 'Intercommunalism, last modified November 19, 1970, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1970/11/19/huey-newton-speaks-at-boston-college/#.
[81] ibid.

space for Whites as well as other groups of color to organize as affiliates of the Party, also speak to how intercommunalism revolutionized the Black Power movement through its inclusivity, recognition of the global struggle, and grassroots approach to combating the many problems that confronted the marginalized in Oakland.

Rebelling on Campus

During the BPP's shift to intercommunalism, interracial activism began taking off on the various college campuses in the Bay Area, including Merritt College, UC Berkeley, and San Francisco State College (SFSC, now San Francisco State University). These spaces were central to the Black Power and Third World movements in the Bay Area as they were often the headquarters for many organizations involved in the movements, and were a breeding ground for progressive and radical thought, as it was on these campuses that students were first introduced to politically driven scholarship. The college campus was small and people of color were often plagued with similar social issues and lumped together. On all three campuses Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Chicano/a students were subjected to institutional racism, which manifested itself in a lack of curriculum that spoke to their experiences, and limited enrollment and hiring of faculty of color. Newton, Seale, and RAM first spearheaded the quest for Black studies in the early 1960s at Merritt College. This fight led to the establishment of Merritt College's first Black studies course in 1964 and the hiring of more faculty of color.[82] By 1968 this fight and campaign for Black and Ethnic studies spread to the surrounding colleges.

[82] Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2010), pg111.

Employing the tactics used within the greater Black Power movement and other class rebellions, students of color at SFSC went on strike on November 6, 1968, demanding a Third World studies curriculum.[83] African American, Asian American, Chicano/a, and Native American students organized under the umbrella organization, the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). The coalition was comprised of various student organizations including: the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), the Black Student Union (BSU),[84] Native American Students Union, Latin American Students Organization (LASO), and the Philipino American Collegiate Endeavor. The now-famous image of Richard Aoki, Charlie Brown (BSU representative), and Manuel Delgado (Mexican American Student Confederation member) standing side by side at UC Berkeley with their hands stretched out atop each other symbolizes the solidarity of the TWLF and how the liberation of one was negated for the liberation of the collective. The demands of the strike at SFSC were: the creation of a school of Ethnic studies, the adoption of fifty faculty to run the college, an increase in acceptance of people of color to the university, and a plea to reinstate George Murray, former English lecturer who was dismissed for his involvement with the BPP.[85]

Seventy-seven days following the strike at SFSC, students at UC Berkeley followed suit with their own strike and TWLF coalition. On both campuses students formed mass rallies and teach-ins, blocked entrances, and picketed against the administration.[86] These acts of civil disobedience and rebellion were met with tear gas,

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[83] Harvey Dong, "Third World Liberation Comes to San Francisco State and UC Berkeley," *Chinese Historical Society of America*, 2009, pg 95.
[84] Both UCB and SFSC BSUs were greatly influenced by the BPP as many members also held membership within the Party.
[85] Asian Community Center Archive Group, comp., *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement 1968-1974* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Community Center Archive Group, 2009), pg 45.
[86] Ibid, 43.

arrests, disciplinary action from the campus administration, and other forms of police brutality. While the SFSC and UC Berkeley Third World strikes have many parallels, student activists at UC Berkeley paid special attention to ensure that people of color were visible within the student population, faculty, as well as the leadership. These students were conscious of the inequalities throughout the entire University of California (UC) system and sought the employment of more Third World chancellors, deans, and administrators throughout the entire system. Unlike SFSC, this group of students made demands, which included student employment. They urged the allocation of work-study positions exclusively for students of color.[87] The most salient demands from the TWLF coalition came from AAPA and various African American student groups. Both developed lucid visions of Asian American, African American, and Ethnic studies programs at UC Berkeley. The strike at SFSC went on for three semesters, concluding March 20, 1969. During that period hundreds of students were arrested, suspended, expelled, and subjected to intense police harassment. However, after much strife, the first college of Ethnic studies was established. SFSC President, S.I. Hayakawa, Canadian born and of Japanese ancestry, was praised for his conservatism during the strike, but proved to be unsuccessful as the strike began to threaten the survival of the institution, and he was cornered into granting the demands of the TWLF organizers. At UC Berkeley, the TWLF strike resulted in the establishment of an Ethnic studies department. While this was not the victory the student activists had in mind, it was progress. Ultimately, the deal was a stalemate.[88] Beyond SFSC and UC Berkeley, the sentiments of the Third World strike rang throughout the state's two higher education systems—the California State

[87] Dong, "Third World Liberation Comes," pg 97.
[88] Ibid, 104.

University (CSU) and UC. Following the strikes, the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) was established throughout the California institutions of higher learning. The Harmer bill passed in 1969 mandated the EOP program, which helped provide access to higher education for socially and economically disadvantaged minorities.[89]

The Asian American Political Alliance

The BPP had a strong presence within the TWLF strikes, especially at SFSC, as many members were enrolled at both institutions or worked closely with student groups like the BSU. Also, UCB had long been a space where members would fundraise, organize, host informational speaking engagements, recruit, and distribute leaflets. Asian Americans, specifically Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Americans, quickly recognized the oppression and inequalities they were confronted with on the various college campuses as well as within their communities. The JACL had long been the leading political Asian American organization, however they primarily addressed issues concerning Japanese Americans and were incredibly conservative and assimilationist. Emerging radical Asian American youth grew disillusioned with JACL and similar organizations as they neglected to challenge society with the needed urgency and radicalism. In May of 1968, the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) was established in response to this growing outcry. The organization sought to build intraracial solidarity, address issues that confronted Asian Americans, and help support the struggle against imperialism occurring throughout Asia.[90] Founded by Richard Aoki, Victoria Wong, Emma Gee, Yuji Ichioka, and a handful of others from the East Bay, AAPA emerged as a political grass-roots

[89] "History of the Educational Opportunity Program," EOP History, accessed March 22, 2014, http://web.calstatela.edu/univ/eop/history.php.
[90] Amy Tachiki et al., eds., *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971), pg 251.

organization.[91] Consciously choosing to distinguish itself from previous organizations and student groups, AAPA included "Political Alliance" in its moniker to be more inclusive and assert the organization's willingness to work with others. In advocating for inclusivity, it became necessary for the organization to define itself and the people whom they served.[92] Victoria Wong describes how the term 'Asian American' came to be,

> …but when it came to something like a movie, even if the star was Japanese or the maid was supposed to be Japanese, we would go see it. We didn't understand, you see, it was because they were Asian, they looked like us. So even though we didn't understand immediately, we knew we're going to see it because there was that Japanese person…So when that whole thing, when I was sitting in the meeting in someone's living room and Yuji came up with the term 'Asian American' it just, like a light bulb. Yeah! Our whole world changed, it suddenly became clear why we would want to see something. Because in this country we are all treated the same. We are all treated alike, especially with the Vietnam war going on…It just clarified why we had been treated the same, we were all lumped together anyway, so why not come together and stand up for ourselves? Because nobody else was.[93]

Ichioka proposed the term Asian American because it was unifying in that it acknowledged the Asian diaspora and encompassed all Asian ethnic groups. Moreover, 'Asian American,' spoke to the shared struggle that Wong describes, and promoted Pan Asian solidarity. Since the AAPA's coining of the term, it has been adopted by scholars, government agencies, and various institutions.[94] Wong recalls that the original purpose of the group's convening was to form a caucus for the Peace and Freedom Party. After discussing the term Asian American, the young activist proclaimed, "why stop there, I'm

[91] Victoria Wong, "Origins of the Asian American Political Alliance," in *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement 1968-1974*, ed. Asian Community Center Archive Group (Berkeley, CA: Asian Community Center Archive Group, 2009), pg 23.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Victoria Wong, interviewed by author, Berkeley, 2013

[94] Sucheng Chan, *Asian American: An Interpretive History* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publisher, 1991), pg xvi.

sick of being an appendage."[95] Similar to the BPP, members of AAPA were attracted to the radicalism of Malcolm X as many grew weary of the tactics employed during the Civil Rights movement and the assimilationism being expressed by conservative Asian American organizations. Wong and her peers had been active within the Peace and Freedom movement and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) prior to working with AAPA. Thus, during the formation of AAPA, they integrated much of what they had learned from other organizations, especially SNCC, into the organization's framework. AAPA chose to have a non-hierarchical structure, similarly to SNCC, in an effort to further distance themselves from elitism and Eurocentric paradigms, placing an emphasis on the membership body as a whole.[96]

Yellow Power and Filling the Gap

As Asian Americans entered a movement dominated by African Americans, early Asian American activists faced rejection, as other people of color did not know where to situate them within the struggle, thus the formation of AAPA was essential and filled a void.

> …I just couldn't take it, we were always supporters, we were always supporting, but we weren't, they didn't know what to call us, except yellow sometimes. But then that wasn't quite right either because the Filipinos and Pacific Islanders didn't identify as being Yellow. They were Brown! But they weren't Chicano either. So you know all that was going on, this, when AAPA formed it was such a liberating thing, it just freed us and philosophically we understood what we needed to do. So we did take, without the civil rights movement, specifically the role Blacks played, here locally with the Panthers, we owe, you know, our existence to that, because they really were the vanguard in that way…[97]

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[95] Oral history interview with Victoria Wong, 2013.

[96] Asian Community Center Archive Group, comp., *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement 1968-1974* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Community Center Archive Group, 2009), pg 31.

[97] Victoria Wong, interviewed by author.

Influenced by the BPP, other Black Power organizations and student groups, AAPA became more visible after distributing their own publication. Early issues detailed their aims as,

> "AAPA is not primarily interested in proselytizing the Asian community, but approaching the Orientals on campus. AAPA is interested in the political sentiment of Orientals with regard to issues at Cal and outside. The non-structure of AAPA and the US groups encourages fluid discourse amongst members and non-members..."[98]

On July 28, 1968, the organization held its founding rally at UC Berkeley where Aoki and Seale were speakers. The rally provided the audience with an in-depth understanding of the goals of AAPA. Aoki delivered the keynote address and proclaimed that AAPA was about the political advancement and education of Asian people. He also stated that the organization refused to continue to cooperate with the White racist and imperialist system, and that AAPA supported all oppressed people and their struggle for liberation.[99] While the organization gained much notoriety from their participation in the TWLF strikes, they were also very active within the community. The organization aimed to be more than a student organization. AAPA championed various campaigns and partnered with other community organizations. They worked with Asian American factory workers protesting against poor working conditions, were instrumental in the protests surrounding the International Hotel (I-Hotel) in Manilatown,[100] worked in conjunction with the BPP and other Third World organizations during the Free Huey

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[98] Asian Community Center Archive Group, comp., *Stand Up,* pg 30-32.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Nearly two hundred elderly Filipino tenants were forcibly evicted from the International Hotel (I-Hotel) in the Manilatown region of San Francisco.

campaign,[101] and mentored youth at Berkeley High School who were attempting to organize and protest against their administration.

The Political Education of the Bay Area's Afro-Asian Collective

The BPP and AAPA's interactions and collective activism were no accident; Afro-Asian relations had been in existence prior to the establishment of either organization. Vijay Prashad details the extensive relationship between Africa and Asia in relation to trade, exploration, and exchange of knowledge, dating back to at least the 1300s in his work, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*. Moving into the twentieth century, Afro-Asian relations and solidarity were crystallized with the 1955 Bangdung conference and the introduction of Maoist thought.

The Bangdung conference was the first large-scale meeting between African and Asian nations, with twenty-nine nations in attendance. The core principles and themes that emerged from the conference were: promotion of international diplomacy, discussions on decolonization, political self-determination, and Afro-Asian solidarity.[102] Chou Enlai, former premier of the Peoples Republic of China, spoke at the conference and stated,

> The people of Asia and Africa created brilliant ancient civilizations and made tremendous contributions to mankind. But ever since modern times, most of the countries of Asia and Africa in varying degrees have been subjected to colonial plunder and oppression, and have been thus forced to remain in a stagnant state of poverty and backwardness. Our voices have been suppressed, our aspirations shattered, and our destiny placed in the hands of others. Thus, we have no choice but to rise against colonialism. Suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim, we the Asian and African peoples have found it easier to understand each other

[101] Following Huey's arrest in 1967 the BPP and other activists and organizations organized the nation wide Free Huey campaign, rallying support behind the political prisoner.
[102] Bangdung Conference, accessed March 22, 2014, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/bandung-conf.

> and have long had sympathy and concern for one another…This meeting of ours was not easily brought about. Though there are among us many different views, they should not influence the common desires that we all hold. Our conference ought to give expression to our common desires and thus make itself a treasured page in the history of Asia and Africa.[103]

Delivered over ten years prior to the emergence of AAPA and the BPP, the speech echoed the same sentiments. In connecting this legacy of Afro-Asian collective activism, excerpts from this speech were featured in an article in AAPA's newspaper entitled, "Third World Roots: Bangdung."[104] The conference concluded with a signing of a communique which listed several concrete objectives including: the protection of human rights, self-determination, a call for the promotion of peaceful coexistence, a plea to cease dependence on European nations, and a host of other goals that were aimed at helping develop the nations that Europe underdeveloped.[105] While the historiography of the conference often portrays it as a failed political effort, the conference provided a foundation and inspiration for the youth in the East Bay during the 1960s.[106] Beyond the Bangdung conference, a small Red Book would also go on to be a symbol of Afro-Asian solidarity.

In *Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale shares the organization's first introduction to Mao Tse-Tung's, *Red Book Quotations from brother Mao Tse Tung.* The book quickly became a cultural phenomenon, and by 1967 Newton suggested selling copies of the work as a fundraising effort to purchase guns.[107] Seale and Newton bought the books in bulk from the China Bookstore in San Francisco for thirty cents apiece, and sold them to students at

[103] Asian Community Center Archive Group, comp., *Stand Up,* pg 29.
[104] Ibid, 28.
[105] Bangdung Conference.
[106] Naoko Shimazu, "Diplomacy As Theatre: Staging the Bangdung Conference," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 01 (January 2014): pg 228.
[107] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story*, pg 79.

UC Berkeley for one dollar.[108] They quickly sold out of the little red books, earning enough money to purchase two shotguns.[109] Newton eventually began circulating copies amongst members, as he believed Mao's principles were revolutionary and essential to the movement. The "Little Red Book," an abbreviated compilation of some of Mao's greatest quotes, speeches and writings, discussed everything from women, labor, class, and youth within a revolutionary socialist framework. The work was one of the sources the BPP used as a blueprint. The work provided a guideline for how members should conduct themselves as revolutionaries, and helped brothers and sisters understand their role within the movement. The work was incredibly accessible, as it was not riddled with dense theory or academic jargon like other Third World works that were also on the organization's reading list. The portability (it was pocket sized) also made the work highly popular and widely read. Through Maoist thought, Newton and members were first exposed to literature that forced the organization to move beyond Black nationalism. The Red Book and Maoism provided a Marxist model that stressed the global class struggle.[110]

African Americans and other Third World people had long viewed Mao and China as a "beacon of third world revolution."[111] Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, and most notably W.E.B. DuBois all studied under Mao. Dubois and Mao probably shared the closest relationship as DuBois lived in China and was enamored of the country. He viewed it as a progressive and sophisticated nation that would lead the global struggle

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[108] Ibid, 80.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political & Cultural Connections Between African Americans & Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill Mullen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), pg 99.
[111] ibid.

against imperialism.[112] The relationship African Americans shared with Mao and China was reciprocal; Mao was a staunch supporter of Black and African liberation. On August 8, 1963, Mao made one of many of speeches in support of the Black struggle,

> ...The American Negroes are awakening, and their resistance is growing ever stronger. In recent years the mass struggle of the American Negroes against racial discrimination and for freedom and equal rights has been constantly developing...I call upon the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, enlightened elements of the bourgeoisie, and other enlightened personages of all colours in the world, white, black, yellow, brown, etc., to unite to oppose the racial discrimination practiced by U.S. imperialism and to support the American Negroes in their struggle against racial discrimination.[113]

Mao was a supporter of Black liberation and called for Third World solidarity within the U.S. With this support, many BPP leaders would go on to visit the nation, most notably Elaine Brown and Huey Newton in 1971. Maoism helped transform the Black Power movement as it provided a framework that was much more inclusive; however; there was one lesson that members of the BPP neglected to take from Mao.

While members were well versed in the teachings of Mao, many neglected to read the chapter, entitled "Women." The chapter is incredibly fruitful as it asserts the need for the liberation of women. The work is arguably feminist, moreover aligned with Black feminism, as Mao spells out what Kimberle Crenshaw later coins as intersectionality. He provides a clear understanding of the plight of women of color throughout the chapter and supplies suggestions as to how men and women can work to deconstruct gender binaries.

> A man in China is usually subjected to the domination of three systems of authority [political authority, clan authority and religious

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[112] ibid.

[113] "Oppose Radical Discrimination By U.S. Imperialism," Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_04.htm.

> authority]...As for women, in addition to being dominated by these three systems of authority, they are also dominated by men (the authority of the husband). These four authorities—political, clan, religious and masculine...

The most glaring blemish on the BPP's history is certainly the treatment of women members. The gender politics and dynamics of the organization have long been a discussed topic within the historiography, and will be the subject of much of chapter two.

The East Bay area, especially Oakland and the UC Berkeley campus, were instrumental in helping Afro-Asian relations flourish, as both African Americans and Asian Americans recognized their shared struggle in these spaces. The BPP and AAPA were instrumental in uniting these groups and addressing many of the communities' concerns through their shared grassroots and tactical approach as well as similar political and philosophical groundings. Beyond the ground activism, Asian Americans and African Americans activists in the Bay Area shared a similar politicization. Maoism, Nkrumahism, and the works of Malcolm X and SNCC serve as a basis for both the AAPA and the BPP.

Chapter Two

"Women Hold Up Half the Sky:" Afro-Asian Women's Perspectives

"Women hold up half the sky."
— Mao Tse-Tung

A widely held position by political scientists is that "women all over the world are less active in politics than men."[114] Women of color cannot afford to be silent nor neutral as we are disproportionally affected by the decisions of the dominant society and political systems. This work grounds itself in Black feminism within a transnational context. Patricia Hill Collins' groundbreaking work, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* demonstrates the recognition of Black women's power as agents of knowledge. By interrogating how Black women's voices have been suppressed within various spheres due to their intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and often sexuality, Collins argues that it is essential for Black women to be activists. She states,

> ...because Black women have been relegated to the bottom of social hierarchy from one generation to the next, U.S. Black women have a vested interest in opposing oppression. This is not an intellectual issue for most African-American women—it is a lived reality. As long as Black women's oppression persists, so will the need for Black women's activism.[115]

[114] As Quoted in Charles Payne, "Men Led, but Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in the Mississippi Delta," in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers*, ed. Vicki Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), pg 2.
[115] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), pg 274.

Women of color have led and been in the forefront of revolts, rebellions, social justice movements, and uprisings throughout history. The narratives of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ella Baker, Dianne Nash, Yuri Kochiyama, and Modjeska Simkins speak to this history of women-led and women-centered activism. Furthermore, Collins' work builds on Kimberlee Crenshaw's theory, intersectionality: a critique of identity politics that fails to recognize intragroup differences and conflates the experiences of all.[116] As aforementioned, Black women navigate the world with the intersecting oppression of race, class, gender, and often sexuality on their backs. Thus, an African American woman's experience in the U.S. stands in opposition to that of a White woman or a Black man, because she is not privileged in regards to gender nor race. Crenshaw expands this argument to include all women of color and contends that it is this shared unique identity that enables and motivates women of color to organize amongst themselves.[117] Towards the end of Collins' work, she examines Third World and transnational solidarities that were spearheaded by women within the framework of transversal politics. This theory is paramount to this work as well as to understanding collective activism because it articulates how you can have other women of color working within a Black feminist framework. Coined by Italian feminists, transversal politics emphasizes coalition building.

Furthermore, Nira Yuval-Davis states, "Transversal dialogue should be based on the principles of shifting—that is, being empathetic to the differential positioning of partners in the dialogue…the dialogue being determined by the message rather than its

[116] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): pg 1242.
[117] Ibid.

messengers."[118] Within transversal politics, "messengers" are able to root themselves in their own backgrounds, histories, and realities, and simultaneously engage in dialogues, activism, etc., across multiple markers of difference because they've been able to "shift" from an individualistic point of center, and recognize the larger collective.[119] This theoretical framework and practice is integral to the unfolding of this chapter as it provides an understanding of how African Americans and Asian Americans could come together under the guise of Black Power and Black feminism to produce Third World solidarity and transnational activism. The following explores the gender relations, politics, and dynamics of the BPP and AAPA. Moreover, this chapter presents an analysis of the oral history interviews conducted with former women BPP, AAPA, and NCCF members.

While the youth of the Civil Rights movement quickly grew disillusioned with the tactics and politics of the era, it is important to note that this period engendered a number of African American women-activists, many of whom would continue the struggle in the succeeding movement. Women of this era struggled to discern their role within a movement that was rooted within the Black church—a very male-dominated and patriarchal space—however, this climate failed to discourage women, as their presence was highly visible during the period. Charles Payne's work, "Men Led, but Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in the Mississippi Delta," argues that the Black church and religion contributed to the increase in activism amongst African American women as women, who were generally more religious than their male

[118] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge*, pg 274.
[119] Ibid. pg. 274

counterparts, believed that the "Lord would see them through," and their participation was a direction from God that was to be honored.[120]

Alberta Barnet, Mississippi Delta native, joined the civil rights movement while in high school. She recalls, "round here women just go out for meetings and things more than men. Men just don't do it. They don't participate in a lot of things…"[121] Additionally, Anne Moody's autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi,* also reiterates how women, especially young women, were drawn to the movement. Moody's father and older relatives were fearful of her joining the NAACP and did not understand her attraction to the movement. Barnet's reflection, Moody's narrative, as well as the lives of Rosa Parks, Ella Jo Baker, Fannie Lou Hammer, Septima Clark, and a host of others highlight the invaluable role women played within the Civil Rights movement.

Within the two principal organizations of the time, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and NAACP, women's involvement was often stymied as few were able to ascend to leadership or insert their voices and perspectives into these existing frameworks. Ella Jo Baker, who by this period was a seasoned activist, was marginalized within the SCLC because of her gender. In turn, Baker would go on to help found SNCC, an organization that emphasized grassroots activism, self-empowerment, and the incorporation of youth into the movement. Baker worked tirelessly with students and youth within SNCC to understand the importance of grassroots activism—an obvious criticism of the hierarchal-based organizations that failed to tap into the youth demographic and relied on the guidance of male-dominated leadership. While women did

[120] Payne, Men Led, But Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in the Mississippi Delta to *Women in the Civil*, pg 9.
[121] Ibid.

not have the same opportunities as men to lead, they were key organizers, which arguably was more important, especially within organizations like SNCC.

Baker and SNCC helped bring about the fundamental shift from the Civil Rights movement to the Black Power era, as Black Power was built upon the foundation of grassroots activism and SNCC's mission to "build indigenous, trained leadership…on college and high school campuses, and in local communities…[in] hopes to bridge the gap between centers of learning and the work-a-day communities."[122]

Women in the BPP and Black Power movement at large were also conflicted with discerning "when and where they should enter," to use Paula Giddings apt phrase. Founded by men, the organization was male driven, sought to restore Black manhood, and to educate and politicize the "brothers on the block."[123] In Newton's 1967 essay, "Fear and Doubt," he discusses the plight of the Black man and ultimately pathologizes Black male insecurity and the crisis of Black manhood,

> The lower socio-economic Black male is a man of confusion. He faces a hostile environment…All his life he has been taught that he is an approximation of humanity…It is a two-headed monster that haunts this man. First, his attitude is that he lacks innate ability to cope with the socio-economic problems confronting him, and second he tells himself that he has the ability but he simply has not felt strongly enough to try to acquire the skills needed to manipulate his environment…What did he do to be so BLACK and blue?[124]

Early members were concerned with uplifting the brothers that were rendered powerless and worked to attract the young men on street corners, at night clubs, and parks, all spaces where you could undoubtedly find idle Black men, many of whom were

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[122] Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee, *SNCC: Structure and Leadership* (Atlanta, GA: SNCC, 1963), accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc63-1.pdf.
[123] Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History*, pg 95.
[124] Huey Newton, "Essays from the Minister of Defense Huey Newton," 1967, Michigan State University, Ann Arbor, MI, accessed March 22, 2014, http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/essays ministerdefense.pdf.

in search of manhood and their place in society. Seale discusses another Black male trope, the jackanapes. These were male members not invested in the revolution or politics but were attracted to the image of the BPP; "a jackanape is a fool. He's foolish, but he's not scared of the police. He's foolish in that he'll get himself killed quicker. If you don't straighten him out, and try to politically educate him, he will definitely bring the Party down."[125] The emergence of the jackanape forced Seale and others within the leadership to recognize that some of the brothers in rank were no better than the ones on the streets as they too walked the world confused and aloof.[126]

Shortly following the establishment of the BPP, women began expressing interest in acquiring membership.[127] Many were initially attracted to the organization's radical approach. Joan Kelley-Williams explains her attraction to the Party,

> Probably for me the thing that differentiated the Black Panther Party from any other organization was this dichotomy between the logic and the theory as far as Marxist-Leninism…But the self-defense aspect and the fact that it appeared to me, certainly in the Los Angeles chapter of the Party that women were seen as equals when I first got involved with the Party. There were other organizations, Black organizations at the time, for the most part had women walking two steps behind, whether it was in African garb or in traditional garb, it didn't matter. Women weren't even remotely considered to be peers or policy makers in the organization, and that just didn't appeal to me.[128]

Kelley-Williams' entrance into the Party reiterates the theme of youth growing disillusioned with the old politics and tactics of the civil rights era. Additionally, she inadvertently discusses Newton's drive to connect the various streams of Third World political thought with the new movement. While many women share a similar narrative

[125] Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story,* pg 379-381
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid, pg 379.
[128] "Let the Truth Be Told...Voices of Women in the Black Panther Party," itsabouttimebpp, WMV video, 15:52, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Media/Video/Let_the_truth_be_told_BPP_Women_clip1.wmv.

about their arrival to the Party, Kelley-Williams' assertion that the organization treated women equally is one that is highly contested.

Women were invaluable members as they occupied various roles and participated in most Party activities and programs. The extent of their roles within certain activities and ascension to leadership was frequently limited. During the 1967 invasion of the California state capitol, the women were the only unarmed members a fact that clearly speaks to the early limitations placed upon women in the Party. Figures like Taricka Lewis complicate this argument as Lewis and others were entrusted with guns and responsibilities that were often relegated to men. Overall, women filled many roles within the organization including: being writers and artists for *The Black Panther,* rally organizers, and heading various survival programs. Later into the Party's existence, women began occupying leadership roles with the appointment of Elaine Brown and other women to the central committee. While some women were welcomed into these positions, others were confronted with blatant sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy.

The Party and Gender Ideologies

As the BPP gained popularity, the organization attracted a diverse group of members, many entering with their own ideas on gender dynamics and norms, clearly influenced by the societal gender binary. Subsequently, the Party became entrenched with sexism and patriarchy, creating a hostile environment for women members, which in some cases resulted them parting from the Party. Eldridge Cleaver's, *Soul on Ice,* exposes the origin of some of the early gender politics and dynamics of the BPP. Cleaver's work included writings on U.S. capitalism, imperialism, and the U.S. prison and legal system; however,

it is his vivid descriptions on women, rape, and Black masculinity that are some of the most troubling and repulsive. Cleaver, who ascended to leadership within the organization during Newton's absence, was also a writer for *Ramparts* magazine. Both Newton and Seale admired Cleaver. His work quickly spread amongst Party members and eventually made its way to the organization's book list. While there is much we can gather from *Soul on Ice,* two very important themes that emerge concerning the gender politics of the organization are Cleaver's "promise" of a reclamation of Black manhood, and his objectification of Black women. These two are synonymous because in his thinking Black manhood is dependent upon the continued degradation of Black women. Throughout *Soul on Ice,* the rape of White women is described as an insurrectionary act. Cleaver states, "it delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his systems of values, and that I was defiling his women…I was very resentful over the historical fact of how the white man has used the black woman…"[129] In the process of honing his "skills," Cleaver admits to "practicing" on Black women. Thus, Black women's bodies were central to this reclamation of manhood via rape and other forms of degradation.

In 1968, Cleaver delivered a speech at Stanford University where he introduced the idea "pussy power." He proclaimed that a woman's primary role within the movement was to exercise her "power" by "holding out" or denying sexual intercourse to men that were not involved in the movement, and rewarding with sexual favors those who were.[130] Cleaver's remarks instilled in women that they were commodities with the

[129] Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York, NY: Delta Publishing, 1968), pg 14.
[130] Eldridge Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1969), pg 142-143.

sole purpose of reproduction and the sexual appeasement of Black men.[131] As the ideology gained popularity, misogyny and blatant sexism spread throughout the BPP. With many BPP rank-and-file members living in communal spaces, commonly referred to as Panther houses, women were pressured to engage in sexual acts with their male counterparts. While this was not the case for all women, many autobiographies and recorded narratives of Panther women substantiate these claims. Regina Jennings, member of the East Oakland chapter of the BPP, joined the organization in 1968, the same year Cleaver was in power. In reflecting on her experience within the Party and specifically its gender issues, she notes,

> All I wanted was to be a soldier. I did not wish to be romantically linked with any of my comrades, and even though I gave my entire life to the Party—my time, my energy, my will, my clothes, my money, and my skills; yet my captain wanted more. My captain wanted me…the man who I thought was my friend turned into my nemesis. When I repeatedly refused his advances, he made my life miserable. He gave me ridiculous orders. He shunned me. He found fault in my performance.[132]

Growing weary of the strained relationship with her captain, Jennings sought help from the Central Committee—the governing body of the Party. The all-male panel found her sexual abstinence to be "counter-revolutionary."[133] Jennings' captain continued antagonizing her until she was eventually transferred to national headquarters where she was once again confronted with sexism. During her tenure with the Party, Jennings witnessed many women abandon the organization after enduring mistreatment at the hands of male members.[134] Jennings' loyalty to an organization that continued to

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[131] Trayce 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 Jones (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1998), pg 280.
[132] Ibid, 262.
[133] Ibid, 263.
[134] Ibid.

objectify and degrade women can be better understood using the theoretical framework and identity, Africana womanism/womanist, with which Jennings identified. Coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems, Africana womanism, which distinguishes itself from mainstream feminism, womanism, Black feminism, and Third World feminism, by arguing that race is the paramount oppression confronting people of African descent, consequently dismissing the primacy of gender oppression.[135] Hudson-Weems argues that it is essential to dismiss the feminist movement, feminism, and those who embrace them, as they are "sellouts who, in final analysis, have no true commitment to their culture or their people."[136] Africana womanism emphasizes the coexistence and solidarity of Africana men and women. The oppression that confronts women of color from their own men is just as serious as the racial antagonism and hatred they receive from Whites. To not address and fight for the complete liberation of women of color is counter-revolutionary. What good is liberating and seeking the humanization of only one part of your being?

To counter Jennings' narrative, there were many women in the BPP who actively resisted sexism and racism simultaneously. Madalynn Rucker, member of the San Francisco and later Oakland chapter, joined the organization in 1968 after graduating from high school in Los Angeles. Her experience as a woman in the BPP was on the opposite end of the spectrum of Jennings because Rucker adopted more of a Black feminist stance and confronted the issue of sexism head-on during her tenure with the organization. Rucker lived in several Panther houses during her time in the Party; she describes her experience,

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[135] Clenora Hudson-Weems, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, 1993), pg 24.
[136]ibid. pg 26

> You know everyone had a bit of a different experience…I think, obviously we brought in the same social ills and inequalities and, you know, issues the broader society had, but because of the situation we're in we dealt with them a little differently. Umm, you know probably there was an imbalance in terms of power, umm, I personally felt that and you know…I grew up in a household; we didn't call it domestic violence, that was kind of it, yeah. And having personally grown up in an environment like that I had very little tolerance for any kind of mess like that. I just thought all Party members were pretty amazing back then. There were certainly some that I really loved more than others but you know for the most part I felt pretty safe early on in terms of being able to confront those issues. And we would have like political education classes. We've had people from San Francisco come over, from San Francisco central headquarters, cus there were a couple of issues, you know, there was the whole thing about folks feeling like, you know, your sexuality, somehow could be socialized. Uhh, no! And its not that it was hard to be monogamous then…but I didn't feel like I had to do anybody just because they said so or anything like that. But there were a couple of those type of incidents where you kind of had to draw the line and deal with some principles around, you know boundaries, and that kind of stuff, especially in living in communal spaces. We kind of dealt with them as they came up, and of course everybody wasn't always happy with how things were dealt.[137]

Rucker's refusal of sexual propositions by male members shows her actively working within a Black feminist framework, as she addressed both her gender and racial oppression. During this period, Black feminism emerged, in part as a response to the sexism of the Black Power movement. One of the early Black feminist organizations, The Combahee River Collective, began articulating what we now recognize as Black feminist thought. Within the anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color,* The Combahee River Collective's statement proclaimed that it is impossible for Black women to separate race, class, and gender oppression, because they are experienced simultaneously.[138] Furthermore, the Collective states that in order to address

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[137] Madalynn Rucker, interviewed by author, Sacramento, 2013.

[138] Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga (New York, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1984), pg 212-213.

the issues concerning Black female identity, Black women must continue to struggle with Black men against racism and concurrently critique, criticize and challenge the intragroup sexism and patriarchy.[139]

Asian American Men Performing Black Masculinity

From both Jennings and Rucker's narratives we can ascertain that the BPP provided a framework for revolutionary change that Black women were attracted to, even though many internal changes needed to be made in order for the organization to be an equitable and safe space for women. Jennings' complacency and Rucker's constant struggle with male members further illustrates how women truly believed in the mission of the Party in that they were willing to remain in an organization and communal space where their bodies were on the line. By 1970, Newton, Cleaver, and other male leaders began shifting their views on women's roles within the Party. Unfortunately, the damage was done and began to spread, as many Third World organizations began modeling themselves after the BPP and adopted some of their unforgivable traits including the Party's early gender dynamics, sexism, and expression of hyper masculinity. The Red Guard Party, a radical Asian American organization, exemplifies how the hyper masculine characteristics of the BPP influenced other Third World organizations.

In 1969, Alex Hing and Asian American youth from San Francisco's Chinatown founded the Red Guard Party. Named after the radical Chinese paramilitary group was active in China during the Cultural Revolution, and modeled after the BPP, the organization used the tactics, politics, ideas, and momentum of the Black Power

[139] Ibid.

movement to address the concerns of Asian Americans.[140] The Red Guard Party was comprised of Chinatown youth that Hing and others met at a non-profit community agency, Legitimate Ways (Leway).[141] Chinatown's youth were confronting many of the same issues as African Americans in Oakland, including: poor housing, substandard schools, extreme poverty, and police brutality. The founding members of the Red Guard Party were first introduced to the BPP through some of the young women in Chinatown, many of whom were politically active and who also dated members of the BPP.[142] In 1967, Bobby Seale and David Hilliard were invited to Leway, the beginning of a formidable political relationship between the two organizations.[143] Seale and Hilliard advised the group to continue organizing and invited them to the Party's political education courses that were held in numerous locations including: the San Francisco office on Fillmore Street, the Oakland office, and Eldridge Cleaver's home.[144] Hilliard reaffirms this relationship, "Yeah the Red Guards, you know the Red Guards in Chinatown in San Francisco they were our comrades…Alex Hing from San Francisco, Dianna, and a lot of those women from the Red Guard and San Francisco…they all attended our PE (political education) classes and we had coalitions with most of those groups."[145]

Less than two years later, the Red Guards proved to be a pioneering Asian American organization as they quickly emerged as one of the first to display such overt radicalism and militancy, a great stray from the traditional stereotypes of Asian

[140] Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard*, pg 149.
[141] Leeway was the central gathering space for Asian American youth of San Francisco's Chinatown to engage in recreational activities.
[142] Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard*, pg 149.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] David Hilliard, interviewed by author, Vallejo, 2013.

Americans and the existing organizations, specifically, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA). Founded in 1929, the JACL was commonly viewed as being a passive and assimilationist organization. While AAPA's politics were certainly radical, in that their mission sought to counter the status quo by employing grassroots efforts, the organization was far from militant. [146] The Red Guard Party grounded itself in Maoism and it's 10 Point Program, which mirrored many of the demands that the BPP made in their respective 10 Point Platform, including the use of similar language, specifically borrowing the "What We Want, What We Believe" format. The organization called for: decent housing, the exemption of Asian men from military service, freedom for all Asian men in prison, an end to police brutality, a better education system to serve the needs of their community, and a host of other solutions to their grievances. Even the structure of the organization was based upon what the Panthers had created in that they too had a Central Committee, minister of information, and positions that were synonymous with the BPP. The Red Guards sought to address the social issues that were germane to San Francisco's Chinatown and later branched out beyond their home base and began advocating for Asian Americans throughout the Bay Area.

Donning berets and armbands, the organization went public in March of 1969, holding their first rally in Portsmouth Square in Chinatown. "Yellow Power" became the slogan and mantra of the organization and it was under this idea of empowering Yellow people that the Red Guards set forth to serve their community through their Free Sunday Brunch program for the elderly, partnering with AAPA and other organizations, and organizing rallies and events throughout San Francisco. The organization also held movie

[146] Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard*, pg 15.

nights at which they screened political films, participated in Anti-Vietnam war rallies, and publicized incidents of police brutality and other Third World events in the *Red Guard Community Newspaper*.

Daryl Maeda discusses the influence the BPP had on the Red Guards in his work, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America.* Maeda argues that the Red Guards presented performances of blackness as a way to "conceptualize Asian American identity, resist assimilation, and build multiethnic solidarity."[147] While the Red Guards were certainly influenced by blackness and the Black struggle, Asian Americans had a struggle of their own. The Black and Yellow struggle in the Bay Area in many ways mirrored each other, as their struggle was what Marx would consider urban proletariat culture, however both were confronted with external and internal variables that were exclusive to each group; immigration and Yellow peril being key problems for Asian Americans that were not necessarily an issue for African Americans. To conflate the Black and Yellow struggle is an inadequate representation. Asian American's genuine expression, sentiments, and dedication to the movement was that of their own and not something that was simply performed. Maeda misrepresents the relationship the Red Guard Party had with the Black Power movement and blackness. The Red Guards were undeniably influenced and inspired by the BPP; however, to argue that the group "performed blackness" insinuates that the group was inauthentic. The Red Guards replicated the BPP's aesthetic; however, their intentions and mission were genuine as they too were confronted with issues that needed to be addressed in a radical fashion. Thus, their radical

[147] Daryl Jofi Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian American* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pg 96.

acts were authentic because they were just as dedicated to the movement as the brothers on the block.

Maeda also discusses the negative influence the BPP had on the Red Guards. While patriarchy and sexism are epidemic across all races and ethnic groups, the hyper masculinity Black men exuded during the Black Power movement was very seldom witnessed within Asian and Asian American communities. Certainly women of Asian descent have spoken out against intraracial gender oppression, especially in *Making Waves,* the *amerasia journal*, specifically the special issue entitled, "Where Women Tell Stories." However, there is no hyper masculine and misogynist Asian counterpart to an Eldridge Cleaver in this period. Thus, the Red Guards display of hyper masculinity is arguably a performance. The few women holding membership within the organization confronted sexism, and like Panther women they were relegated to menial roles and the periphery. Nonetheless, Maeda and Hilliard credit Asian American women for bringing the Red Guard Party and BPP together, as Asian American women were politicized very early on and began making Third World contacts. Ergo, the initial relationship the men in the Red Guard Party shared with women could not have been one based on such overt masculinity, because these women wouldn't have had an opportunity to link the two organizations.

Unlike AAPA, the Red Guard Party was short-lived with its demise occurring in 1971. This quick decline is often attributed to intense police brutality against members, the constant raiding of their offices, and co-opting of members by the FBI under J.Edgar Hoover who instigated, the Counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO).[148][149] Victoria

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[148] Jeffrey Ogbar, "Yellow Power: The Formation of Asian American Nationalism," *Souls* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2001): pg 33.

Wong, former member of AAPA, spoke on the reliability of the members and why the organization quickly met its demise, "…some had criminal backgrounds or whatever and so because of that there was always this thing of whether or not they were reliable because unfortunately they tended to be some of the ones that the FBI and other agencies like that would co-opt and speak to, becoming agents and buying them off…"[150][151] Additionally, the gender politics within the Red Guard Party helped lead to its decay as Asian American women had the opportunity to be more active and vocal within organizations like AAPA that had a democratic organizational structure and were not ridden with such overt sexism.

Women's Role in the Black Panther Party—Intercommunal Programming

Ericka Huggins, former member of the BPP, stated, "women ran the Party, and men thought they did. And that's a problem! We have a tendency to romanticize history instead of looking at as it actually was."[152] The historiography of the BPP is, as discussed earlier, incredibly andro-centered and focuses too frequently on the militancy of the organization without looking at the broader purpose and mission of the Party. Rucker argues that women made up close to, if not more than fifty percent of the organization.[153] Furthermore, Angela LeBlanc-Ernest's "The Most Qualified Person for the Job: Black

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[149] COINTELPRO is an acronym for the Counter Intelligence Program, a U.S. FBI program that aimed to infiltrate and disrupt political organizations, especially those of the Civil Rights and Black Power eras. Of the organizations surveyed, the BPP was deemed one of the most dangerous, resulting in incessant antagonism, helping lead to its consolidation and demise.

[150] Victoria Wong, interviewed by author.

[151] This type of co-opting was not just limited to the Red Guards, as members of the BPP have been accused of being FBI informants, most recently, Richard Aoki. These attacks on Aoki emerged in 2012 just three years after his untimely death. Scholars and activists like Donna Murch, Diane Fujino, and Victoria Wong have come to the defense of Aoki and argue that he was a dedicated and unwavering activist of the people incapable of such actions.

[152] "Let the Truth Be Told...Voices of Women in the Black Panther Party," itsabouttimebpp, WMV video, 15:52, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Media/Video/Let_the_truth_be_told_BPP_Women_clip1.wmv.

[153] ibid.

Panther Party Women 1966-1982," details how women made up most of the leadership in the post-1969 period. Women's access to leadership positions often coincided with the exile, murder, or imprisonment of their male counterparts. Prior to 1969 and the shift in gender politics that occurred amongst male leaders within the Party, the organization was steeped in sexism. Ultimately this did not discourage women from participating in the organization. Women began occupying more leadership positions and gaining visibility, beginning in 1969. Simultaneously, the feminist movement was quickly emerging, helping to decrease the prevalence of sexism, as the rhetoric being disseminated argued for women's equality and empowered a generation of women activists.

A woman's role within the Party was dynamic. Not only was she working to change the organization itself but she was also actively working to change her community and society at large. These women did many of the same activities as male members, some of their greatest contributions being executed within the intercommunal and survival programs. The intercommunal youth institute, community learning center, free food program, free breakfast program, Sickle-Cell Anemia research foundation, People's free employment center, People's free ambulance service, legal aide and education programs, and the free clothing program were just a few of the programs the BPP instituted where women were the driving force behind their vitality.[154]

Members like Ericka Huggins, Elaine Brown, Connie Matthews, and Kathleen Cleaver have told their stories and are widely discussed within the history of the Party, but it is the women of the rank and file, the unsung heroes who are missing from this historical narrative. Women's participation in the Free Breakfast program and

[154] JoNina Abron, "Serving the People: The Survival Programs of the Black Panther Party," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles Jones (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1998), pg 178-188.

intercommunal school is most widely discussed, but Panther women also worked within other spaces, including the BPP sponsored medical clinics. In interviews conducted with Silvia Perez and Madelynn Rucker, both members discuss their time working at the George Jackson clinic in Berkeley and the Lamp Post restaurant and bar located in Oakland. Perez and Rucker, who remain close friends and 'sisters,' first met in 1971 after they were assigned to work at the Lamp Post and later the George Jackson clinic.

Named after political prisoner and co-founder of the Black Guerrilla Family, the George Jackson clinic was established by the BPP to address the many health issues concerning the Black community.[155] The clinic provided an alternative for African Americans who faced discrimination from local medical facilities and physicians, and brought awareness to medical issues that disproportionately affected African Americans. It was also during this period that research studies began to dispel information on African American's connection to sickle cell anemia. Bobby Seale was alarmed at the disproportionate rate at which the disease affected African Americans and found it to be an act of racism.[156] He was a staunch advocate and sought funding for sickle cell testing and research that would be invested in clinics maintained by Party members such as Rucker and Perez. Harriet Washington's *Medical Apartheid* provides a detailed history of the tragedy and injustice African Americans have endured with doctors and medical experimentation, one that has engendered a common distrust of the medical system, and has helped attribute to the poor health conditions of African Americans.[157] Perez and

[155] Founded in 1966 by George Jackson while incarcerated at San Quentin Prison, the Black Guerrilla Family is characterized as a prison gang: however, the group rooted itself in the principles of Marcus Garvey and other third world philosophers, proving to be much more intelligent, conscious, and sophisticated than any basic street or prison gang. The family was composed of prisoners that sought revolution and echoed the sentiments of Black Power rhetoric while behind bars.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Harriet Washington, *The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006), pg 1-22.

Rucker found great solace in working the clinic, as they understood the importance of such service to the community. Dr. Tolbert Small, one of the doctors who worked at the clinic during the 1970s and an associate of the Party, credits the organization with helping create a facility that was effective in serving the unmet medical needs of the East Bay community. He discusses the role of the BPP and it's members at the clinic, detailing day-to-day interactions, roles, and contributions to the community.

> The Black Panther Party set up the clinic and rented the building. I had pharmacy representatives at Oakland giving me medications; we had a whole line of pharmaceuticals to provide for the patients free of charge...Structurally, the Berkeley Black Panthers were the ones who rented the buildings, did the plumbing and the carpentry work. I supervised it and told them what to do and how much space for the rooms. We got donations and exam tables from physicians going out of practice. Community volunteers would come in and work. We actually even trained some of the personnel there to do screenings for sexually transmitted diseases because we believed that people could learn how to do things if they had someone who was willing to show them and they wanted to learn. I remember one of the community volunteers who later went on to medical school—he is a pediatrician but maybe even retired by now.[158]

The personnel and volunteers that Small describes were often in time Party members, Perez and Rucker two with whom he worked closely. Rucker reflects on her experience at the clinic, one that was dynamic, because she filled many roles, yet fulfilling.

> I was really happy with the work at the clinic, I really got interested in the whole healthcare... So, we set up pharmacy, we, Dr. Small and some of the other nurses showed us how to do very routine procedures. I mean we could draw blood and you know, OBGYN checks, we did sickle cell testing. You know, we kind of learned to do what most nurses or medical assistants would do. We knew the boundaries and we did get training but it was not official training. And I mean actually, I assisted in a couple of bullet wound, middle of the night calls, and we were at the clinic kind of thing. You know, you don't ask any questions, you just do it. You didn't

[158] Tolbert Small, interview by Emily Schiller, itsabouttimebpp, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Unity_Support/pdf/Dr_Tolbert_Small_Interview.pdf.

> know who they were or what happened, sometimes I'd find out later, but, you know, didn't really. You know we set up a record system, recruited volunteers, real medical professionals that we coordinated schedules with them. Tried to do outreach in the community, especially when we really started to do a lot of work around sickle cell testing…It was off Shattuck, Adeline…it was a great location, we coordinated with the Berkeley Free clinic…It was very organized, we did lab tests, pretty much everything a clinic would do.[159]

In Silvia Perez' interview, she describes more of the responsibilities the two women shared, the difficulties they encountered, and their interactions with White "hippy" doctors that volunteered at the clinic, assisting and educating Party members.

> we were there long, long, long hours…And, uh, so we had to run the place, we had to service all the people coming in there, and we had to clean it, we had to basically do everything, even the prescriptions. Then we would also go out and seek donations, you know from doctors. That was, you know, a little difficult because a lot of doctors, it doesn't matter what race they were, weren't into the Party because of all of the negativity from Hoover and the media, and this and that and whatever. So, but then, some of them were actually really, really generous. We had, you know, doctors of different ethnicities there, even white doctors would come and help, more of the hippy doctors. They would come and help us and whatever else. And we had a lot of the drug addicts from the houses they would come there too. But we had, basically the community would come there a lot. And they showed us how to do CPR. So, we did a lot of work at the clinic, and that part I really enjoyed working at the clinic…We'd have to go sell newspapers as well.[160]

Working at the clinic provided Rucker and Perez with a sense of purpose, because it was within this space that they could see the direct impact they were having on the community. While male members also worked within the clinic. Both women described the space as empowering and did not make mention of gender imbalance as they were "simply working for the people."

[159] Madalynn Rucker, interviewed by author.
[160] Sylvia Perez, interviewd by author, Sacramento, 2013

Working in Gender Conforming Positions and Challenging Gender Binarism

Prior to working at the clinic, Perez and Rucker were both tapped to work at the Lamp Post restaurant and bar. It is important to juxtapose these two positions as it illustrates how women in the Party occupied several spaces and positions, including many that ascribed to gender stereotypes, and others that were very progressive, non-gender conforming. Rucker and Perez served as waitresses and bartenders at the Lamp Post. The establishment was the brainchild of Newton and a few Party members. The initial purpose of the establishment was to generate revenue to fund many of the intercommunal programs and the organization as a whole. Located in Oakland, the restaurant was once the "hot spot" in town where Newton, BPP members, and youth would gather. In addition to the space being a haven and meeting space for members, the restaurant is also said to have been a front for illegal activity including prostitution and racketeering.[161] Rucker and Perez worked at the Lamp Post during the post 1969 period of the Party, the time when Newton and Cleaver denounced sexism in the Party. The Lamp Post is a prime example of how theory did not always manifest into practice, as the space was a cesspool of hyper masculinity and misogyny.

Perez and Rucker, expressed great disdain when discussing their experiences at the Lamp Post. Rucker described the place as chaotic, close to crazy, and not necessarily what she signed up for. While Rucker understood that this business venture served financial purposes, she detested the approach and sexist and illicit nature of the space

> But when I left San Francisco I was assigned to the Lamp Post, Huey brought me over. The Lamppost was a big change for me and when I first got tapped I was still twenty, so I could only help with certain things. But I was right on the verge of turning twenty-one. But once I

[161] Center for the Study of Popular Culture, "The Last Panther," *Heterodoxy* 6, no. 1 (February 1998): pg 9.

> did I was full on, that turned out to be my major assignment until I got pulled to when we started opening the clinic. I expressed interest and they needed help. In doing that I was able to— actually I slept very little because we ran the Lamp Post until it closed at two in the morning, yeah that was the spot. Yeah, and that was interesting and it made you a little closer to craziness too. You know that was not really in the scope of what you signed up for. I was like, 'ok, I'm wearing hot pants and wigs and serving and doing a lot behind the scenes,' but that was kind of rationalized in that even revolutions cost money. You have to have some kind of money stream. And that was one that was identified, but it kind of turned into a place for Huey to hold meetings, do you know, whatever. So I think it did a little bit of both.
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> A issue that was really difficult for me was in the beginning, at least for the first year, my memory is a little hazy on that, we weren't really able to talk about the Lamp Post. I mean the concept wasn't really umm, incorporated into the programs and services and that kind of stuff. So, it felt very isolating from the comrades that had strong relations with and we used to be out doing the community work together, and selling papers, and going through all that so, that was pretty isolating. And not something, while you had different levels of folks that knew something about it, but you had a lot of folks, rank and file, that knew a little but didn't really.[162]

This "craziness" that Rucker expresses is surely some of the illegal activity that Huey was known to facilitate within the restaurant during his political and intellectual disintegration that was fueled by the drug and alcohol addiction he developed during the early 1970s. Much of this culture is said to have materialized within the Lamp Post, as it was a front for various types of illegal activity. Additionally, Rucker's description of her degrading uniform, how it weighed on her conscience, and how she actively sought an escape from the restaurant, illustrates how some women refused to be complicit within the blatantly misogynist environment.

[162] Madalynn Rucker, interviewed by author.

Women on the Front Line

Beyond the Lamp Post and George Jackson clinic, women in the Party were also on the front line with many involved in armed defense against the police. During Rucker's tenure with the San Francisco chapter, an incident occurred in which she was beaten and kidnapped by authorities—"special Gestapo pigs."[163] In the February 6, 1971 issue of *The Black Panther,* she reveals how she was profiled by "special police" in downtown San Francisco, stripped of her vehicle, beaten to unconsciousness, arrested without any probable cause, held captive in Marin county jail, and later dumped in Oakland on the evening of January 28, 1971.[164] What began as her normal day of delivering newspapers, turned into one of Rucker's most horrifying moments. She was confronted with the harsh reality of the consequences of being a part of one of the FBI's most watched organizations of the period and what J. Edgar Hoover considered to be the greatest threat to the U.S. *The Black Panther* reported hosts of incidents involving law enforcement personnel committing acts of violence against women.

Panther women were not exempt from violence. Law enforcement did not see gender, placing women on equal footing within the context of police brutality and harassment, as race effectively trumped gender. The political autobiographies and narratives of Assata Shakur, Afeni Shakur, Elaine Brown, and Ericka Huggins also speak to this theme. In January of 1969 Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins, leaders of the Los Angeles chapter of the BPP, were gunned down at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) by members of a rival organization, US, during what was supposed to be a Black Student Union meeting. The cultural nationalist group had

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[163] Carol Rucker, "Panther Killed and Beaten By Special Gestapo Pigs," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), February 6, 1971, pg 7.
[164] Ibid.

long rivaled Party members in Los Angeles for influence of the area. The shootout at UCLA was the climax of this conflict. Huggins' wife, Ericka, fled the area out of fear of the violent aftermath that may have come at the hands of either the U.S. government or US. Huggins relocated to Connecticut where she started a chapter of the Party in New Haven.[165] The police in the area immediately identified her as a threat, resulting in her arrest in 1969 on conspiracy charges. Throughout her time in prison Huggins wrote poetry and letters. In response to their captivity, Party members organized the "Free Bobby and Ericka" campaign. While support came from every direction, one of the most unlikely sources was Eldridge Cleaver, who had once insisted that the only role of a woman in the party was to enact her "pussy power."

Ericka Huggins' imprisonment was a catalyst for the shift in Cleaver's gender politics, and subsequently the BPP's as a whole. In 1969 Cleaver issued a statement in support of Huggins,

> I know Erica, and I know that she's a very strong sister. But I know that she is now being subjected to a form of torture that is horrible...Let it be a lesson and an example to all of the sisters, particularly to all of the brothers, that we must understand that our women are suffering strongly and enthusiastically as we are participating in the struggle. The incarceration and the suffering of Sister Erica should be a stinging rebuke to all manifestations of male chauvinism within our ranks...That we must too recognize that a woman can be just as revolutionary as a man and that she has equal stature...That we have to recognize...revolutionary standards of principles demand that we go to great lengths to see to it that disciplinary action is taken on all levels against those who manifest male chauvinism behavior. Because the liberation of women is one of the most important issues facing the world today...I know from my own experience that the demand for liberation of women in Babylon is the issue that is going to explode, and if we're not careful it's going to destroy our ranks,

[165] Since the Party's inception, the organization had tension with various cultural nationalist organizations, most notably US, led by Maulana Karenga, with their headquarters in Los Angeles, California. The Southern California chapter of the BPP— led by Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins— and US vied for the influence over the Black community in the area. The tension came to a violent climax in 1969 where the two groups were involved in a fatal shootout at the University of California, Los Angeles, which led to the death of John Huggins and Bunchy Carter.

> destroy our organization, because women want to be liberated just as all oppressed people want to be liberated.[166]

Cleaver retracted all the misogynistic and sexist language he once spewed and called for men in the Party to do the same.[167] This statement was issued while he was in exile in Cuba and the Algiers, a voluntary move to escape the charges of attempted murder that were issued against him following a 1968 shootout that involved himself and Bobby Hutton. His argument for gender equality and the need for the Party to actively work towards Black women's liberation was very much needed; however, his initial remarks on women and their role in the Party still rang loud and resonated with many. Rucker's and Perez's experience at the Lamp Post speaks to the continued gender disparities. While Cleaver's words didn't become manifest in immediate practice, over time women became more visible, were able to ascend to higher positions of power (specifically seen in Elaine Brown's appointment as leader of the organization in 1974 by Newton), were in the forefront of the survival and intercommunalism oriented programs. In addition, an increase in stories concerning women's issues were featured in *The Black Panther.* Articles prior to 1970 tended to focus on police brutality, disputed cultural nationalism, and continued to stress the housing crisis in the urban city. By mid-1970 the paper featured stories on sterilization, women's liberation, male and female unity, and Third World women.

Newton's, "A Letter From Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," continued on the same trajectory as Cleaver's apologetic gender equality message. Moreover, Newton couples

[166] Matthews, "No One Ever Asks," in *The Black Panther Party*, pg 282.
[167] Ibid, 283.

women's liberation with gay liberation as he pleads with Party members to begin to forge solidarity with these groups in the name of the revolution,

> Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women, we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion…We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people. We must not use the racist type attitude like the White racists use against people because they are Black and poor…Remember, we haven't established a revolutionary system; we're only in the process of establishing it. I don't remember us ever constituting any value that said that a revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak about their own particular oppression…We haven't said much about the homosexual at all, and we must relate to the homosexual movement because it's a real thing. And I know through reading and through my life experience, my observations, that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society…We should try to form a working coalition with the Gay liberation and Women's liberation groups. We must always handle social forces in the most appropriate manner. And this is really a significant part of the population…[168]

Newton and Cleaver's pleas helped shift the gender politics of the organization over time. Their words were timely as many men, especially male leaders, were being imprisoned, murdered, or fled the country seeking exile, leaving women to fill many of these voids. While it would be easy to romanticize this history and claim that women possessed their own autonomy and agency as leaders, this is often disputed. In appointing Brown as his successor, Newton states, "Save my party. You're the only one who can do it. You are mine. I can't trust anybody else with my party."[169] Newton objectifies and stakes claim to Brown and his appointing of her is strategic in that he believes he can control her, thus indirectly controlling the Party. Brown's legacy and role in the Party has been contested by many scholars; however, what her presence forces us to question is

[168] Huey Newton, "A Letter From Huey to The Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), August 21, 1970, pg 5.
[169] Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1992), pg 11.

whether or not women were in fact leaders within the organization or were they female patriarchs operating within a false sense of consciousness, not recognizing that they were merely tokens or puppets working under the men in the Party? Brown's role within the history of the Party will continue to be contested; however, the narratives of Rucker, Perez, and so many other women in the Party detail the undeniable genuine and autonomous impact women had on grassroots activism and organizing, facets of the leadership structure, and intercommunal programs.

The United Front Against Fascism

Shortly following Cleaver's statement on Ericka Huggins and his newfound gender politics, the organization hosted the United Front Against Fascism (UFAF) conference from July 18th-21st of 1969. Building on the ideology of intercommunalism, the conference was organized in response to the BPP's position as the "vanguard" organization of the local Third World movement. Seale and other organizers of the conference sought to bring together the "New Left," encompassing: AAPA, the Red Guard Party, Young Lords, Brown Berets, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), churches, other community organizations, and the lumpenproletariat at large under the framework of intercommunalism and the core understanding that all these groups shared a similar struggle, had the same oppressor, and needed to form a sense of solidarity and cohesion in order to beget revolutionary change. Advertisements and articles in *The Black Panther* promoting the conference commonly featured pictures of police officers

assaulting students and Party members.[170] In one of the many articles and interviews published leading up to the conference, Bobby Seale stated,

> ...this conference is not called just to save the Black Panther Party. It's called so that we can save the people, and save the people's organizations. Because if the pig power structure is allowed to get away with what they are trying to do to the Black Panther Party, they'll be allowed to do the same to any organization, any union, any church, any group of people who are using their basic democratic rights as a weapon against oppression.[171]

The conference was a move to organize a revolution across race, gender, and sexuality to brainstorm concrete ways to free political prisoners, promote self-defense, and continue to address the issues of western imperialism and excessive police force on the college campuses in the Bay area as well as in communities at large.[172] The conference was held in West Oakland at DeFremery Park—commonly referred to as "Bobby Hutton Park" by Party members to honor the young member—and the Oakland Auditorium.[173] The event was an incredibly rich intellectual environment and in many ways acted like a huge political and Third World education seminar as speakers from around the world spoke on Pan Africanism, Maoism, intercommunalism, and various streams of Third World political thought. Bobby Seale, Roberta Alexander (BPP member), Penny Nakatsu (Japanese-American activist), Preacherman (Field Secretary of the Young Patriots), Oscar Rios (Los Siete member) and Jeff Jones (SDS member) were just a few of the speakers at the conference.[174] Additionally, letters in support of the

[170] The Black Panther Party, "National Conference for a United Front Against Fascism," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), June 28, 1969, pg 19.
[171] Liberation News Service and Bobby Seale, "What is the United Front Against Fascism?," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), July 12, 1969, pg 8.
[172] Martin and Bloom, *Black Against Empire: The History*, pg 299.
[173] Ibid, 300.
[174] Roberta Alexander, "Black Panther Tells It Like It Is: U.F.A.F Womens Panel: Roberta Alexander at Conference," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), August 2, 1969, pg 7.

conference were received from the leaders of Japan, Mexico, and other Third World nations.

The UFAF women's panel was one of the most eagerly anticipated of the conference because the Party's standing on issues regarding women were unclear and many in attendance hoped for clarity. This was certainly a defining moment for many organizations, especially those linked with the Women's liberation movement, in terms of whether or not they would continue to align themselves with the Party. Roberta Alexander's speech dispelled much of the previous male chauvinistic rhetoric that had been spewed during the earlier years of the organization. She urged sisters to not "walk out on the brothers" because there was a lot we could teach them. She quotes Newton and newly reformed Cleaver as evidence that brothers were now in support of their sisters.[175] Towards the middle of her speech she states, "black women are oppressed because they are black, and then on top of that, black women are oppressed by black men. And that's got to go. Not only has it got to go, but it is going."[176] This statement was followed by applause, as the audience was pleased with Alexander's assertion that the Party was taking active steps to rid itself of sexism.

In addition to providing clarity on the gender politics of the Party and helping form solidarity amongst already existing Third World political organizations in the area, the main outcome of the UFAF conference was the creation of national committees to combat fascism (NCCFs). Gayle, a local political activist, moved from Miami, Florida during the mid 1960s and settled in the Bay Area where she quickly became involved

[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

with SDS and later joined the Berkeley NCCF chapter. In an interview, she describes how the NCCFs functioned as Party affiliate chapters that were more racially inclusive.

> We were unique in that our group of the national committee to combat fascism in Berkeley was the only White group. And there was also a moratorium for a while on new Panther chapters because the Party was growing so fast that it was really hard to keep control of who was doing what all over the country. And so for a while instead of having new chapters formed they formed national committees to combat fascism. And the national committees to combat fascism, like the New Orleans chapter started as one, umm, umm, Nebraska, they started as one, several new chapters, and they later became Panther chapters, but we were the only white NCCF. Completely white, we worked in a mixed community. We had our own community center, ran our own programs. And all of those groups basically functioned as Panther chapters. So the difference between our group, and there were other White progressive groups, and other progressive groups, well for Asians there was the Red Guard and the Chicano groups, there were other groups that had coalitions with the BPP. The difference between that and our group was that we actually chose to take leadership from the BPP. We functioned as a chapter and we got our, you know, we were organized the same way all the other chapters were organized. We, because we were in the Bay Area close to central headquarters we attended political education classes with the Party. We went to distribution on Wednesday nights, worked on getting the newspaper out. We walked the picket lines, you know anything, any activity where multiple chapters came together, we participated. And then we also ran our own programs out of our own community center like most of the other chapters did.[177]

The NCCFs created a space for whites and other groups of color to be associated with the Party and function in a similar fashion. Another defining point of Gayle's interview is her discussion on the deconstruction of traditional gender roles, "everyone did what needed to be done."[178] At one point, Gayle showed me a picture of a female NCCF member dressed as a plumber, she proclaimed, "that was the people's plumber!"[179] While women have long occupied traditional male positions, the iconic

[177] Gayle, interviewed by author, Sacramento, 2013.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.

WWII Rosie the Riveter being a prime example, this image served a similar purpose of female empowerment and reiterated Roberta Alexander's sentiments that the Party welcomed and needed women beyond their use as sexual objects.

Dismaying the Gender Binary: AAPA's Shared Democracy Model

While Asian Americans were welcomed in the new NCCFs many were already active in autonomous Asian American organizations, some of which shared coalitions with the BPP. AAPA was one of these organizations and was in the forefront of the simultaneously occurring Asian American movement, with chapters emerging nationwide. AAPA adopted an egalitarian and shared democratic model. Influenced by Ella Baker and SNCC, structurally AAPA resembled SNCC in terms of its focus on grassroots efforts and the elimination of a hierarchical leadership. In an early issue from the organization's newspaper the group issued the following statement asserting their organizational structure and tactical approach.

> ...either 'yes' or 'no.' This hierarchistic organization, however, is only a manifestation of the elite control, primordial structure mentality in which you are not capable of making your own decisions, an idea drilled into you from the foundations of this society. AAPA is only what the people make it. We have adopted a structure which better fits the needs and goals of our alliance, not a structure to which we have to adjust ourselves.[180]

Theoretically, this framework placed all members on equal footing and was concerned about the voices of the collective. There was no need to define what a woman's role was within the organization as there were no foundations of gender antagonism or sexism, and everyone was inherently on equal footing. Many of the founding members of the organization were women— Victoria Wong and Emma Gee. In

[180]Asian American Political Alliance, "AAPA Perspectives," *Asian American Political Alliance* (Berkeley, CA), October 1969, pg 3.

an interview conducted with Wong, she reflects on the egalitarian structure of the organization,

> ...that's what the Asian movement was really about, and that's why it's not sexy, and again that's another reason why it's not written about. Because we don't have those so called big time, big guys. We all, it was a very democratically organized group, for the most part. And, there's always gonna be some people who are more vocal than others, I certainly was.[181]

Wong attributes the void in scholarship on the Asian American movement to the movement's structure. Unlike the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, and most historical revolutions, there is no key leader to identify nor can the significance of the historical narrative of AAPA and the Asian American movement be wrapped around one figure. Wong provided the analogy of the collapse of the Roman Empire and the figure Spartacus; she argues that AAPA and the Asian American movement did not have a Spartacus, making it unappealing to mainstream consumers of history because the period lacks a figure to glamorize. This argument parallels with what Huggins meant when she stated, "we have a tendency to romanticize history instead of looking at it as it actually was."[182] The narratives of grassroots activists and members of the rank and file face historical erasure while the accounts of leaders and key figures are glamorized, mass-produced and distributed. Wong goes on to state that the Asian American movement was not "sexy," insinuating it failed to ascribe to the dominant historical paradigm.

[181] Victoria Wong, interviewed by author.
[182] "Let the Truth Be Told...Voices of Women in the Black Panther Party," itsabouttimebpp, WMV video, 15:52, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Media/Video/Let_the_truth_be_told_BPP_Women_clip1.wmv.

Gender in AAPA—Women and the Reclamation of Asian Masculinity

The social construction of Asian American manhood has been stereotyped throughout American popular culture. The late nineteenth century ushered in images and propaganda to support Yellow Peril, the belief and fear that Asian immigrants threatened the livelihood and existence of Whites and western civilization. These images often presented cunning Asian villains such as the Fu Manchu seen terrorizing Americans (often White damsels). During the early twentieth century, Charlie Chan, an Asian American film character, was initially conceived to balance the negative stereotypes, but proved to be just as harmful to Asian American identity and Asian manhood. Chan, a detective who was mostly played by White actors, spoke with broken English and was incredibly subservient. Charlie Chan reinforces the idea that Asian Americans needed to be docile, subservient, and assimilate into American society in order to survive or have any sort of upward mobility.

By the 1970s hyper masculine images of Asian Americans were being popularized through film, primarily Bruce Lee's Kung Fu movies and the television show, "The Green Hornet." Born in San Francisco's Chinatown during the 1940s, Lee presented an alternative to the traditional Asian American stereotypes. He changed the way in which Asians and Asian Americans were portrayed in American films.[183] Lee's work aligned with the Asian American movement in that he represented strength, manhood, and Chinese nationalism. The depiction of Asian American men as asexual and passive places them in an inferior position to that of Whites and ensures that they are still "othered." Lee's films challenged this as he represented the reclamation of Asian

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[183] Jachinson Chan, "Bruce Lee's Fictional Models of Masculinity," *Men and Masculinities* 2, no. 4 (April 2000): pg 371-372

American manhood, culture, and identity. While discussing the male membership in AAPA, Wong stated, "we had to push our men out there and make them look like they were real."[184] She goes on to mention how they would often try to have the men on the front line whenever they were out at rallies so they were more visible. These comments shed light on how the organization was actively combating these stereotypes as well as how Asian American women were trying to help their men reclaim their manhood and human dignity, without placing their own bodies on the line.

Women in the Asian American Movement

Women were integral to the Asian American movement. They were a key part of membership in many organizations and often used these spaces to develop a sisterhood. Wong's experience with AAPA illustrates a space where women's voices were heard, and men and women often worked in harmony. While Wong didn't have a clearly defined role or position within the organization, she reflected on her organizing efforts during the Third World strike (which resulted in her arrest) as well as other rallies including the "Free Huey" marches. She also worked on the organization's newspaper acting as an editor and writer for the first issue.[185]

While AAPA's history of political organizing and activism is an exemplary one in terms of its gender politics, this is not to say that Asian American women did not experience sexism or were not repressed within the broader Asian American movement. Asian and Asian American culture privileges men based on the system of patriarchy. Evelyn Yoshimura poses an interesting argument as to how sexism and hyper masculinity

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[184] Victoria Wong, interviewed by author.
[185] Ibid.

flourished in Asian American culture during the 1970s. As many Asian American men were drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, Yoshimura's, research captures the narratives of Asian G.I.s, many of whom discussed their time in boot camp and basic training. One G.I. reported on his dehumanizing experience while in boot camp, which arguably led to some of the negative and misogynistic views of Asian American women that Asian American men adopted following these experiences.

> In Marine Corps boot-camp, the military goes through a psychological and physical breakdown trip of men so they can instill their values. And a heavy part of that trip is the mentioning of women in certain sexual contexts…We had these classes we had to go to taught by drill instructors, and every instructor would tell a joke before he began class. It would always be a dirty joke usually having a prostitute as they had seen in Japan or in other parts of Asia while they were stationed overseas. The attitude of the Asian woman being a doll, a useful toy or something to play with usually came out in these jokes, and how they were not quite as human as white women. For instance, a real common example was how the instructor would talk about how Asian women's vaginas weren't like a white woman's, but rather they were slanted, like their eyes.[186]

This G.I.'s report illustrates how Asian American men that served in Vietnam were conditioned by the U.S. military to view their own women as sub-human and as sexual objects. Many of these sentiments manifested within the Asian American movement, as women felt marginalized. Tomi Tanaka's poem, "from a lotus blossom cunt," describes the complicated relationship the Asian American movement had with gender.

> …I'm still with you, brothers
> Always
> But I'm so damned tired
> Of being body first, head last
> Wanting to love you when all
> You want is a solution to the glandular discomfort…

[186] Evelyn Yoshimura, "G.I.'s and Asian Women," 1971, in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki, et al. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center, 1971), pg 27.

Try to use us,
And you'll lose us
Join us[187]

Tanaka is actively trying to work with her Asian American male counterparts, however, their continued objectification of her body weighs on her, and she recognizes that she can no longer continue to place her body on the line. This argument was a common one, and the driving force behind Asian American women's involvement in women's liberation work.[188]

African American and Asian American women played a significant role within the Black Power movement, Asian American movement, and the overall quest for Third World liberation. The shaping of Black and Asian American masculinity further sheds light on the gender politics and role of women within the discussed organizations. Whether women were secretaries, leaders, writers, or organizers, they undeniably held a strong presence and often challenged those that sought to marginalize them. Women in the movement were not silent, because their intersectional bodies forced them to be political and to take a stance against race and gender oppression. Finally, AAPA's egalitarian framework, provided a structure that avoided many of the gender issues the BPP incurred, and it is from this organization that we can discover much to learn.

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[187] Tomi Tanaka, "from a lotus blossom cunt," 1971, in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki, et al. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center, 1971), pg 109.
[188] Daryl Joji Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), pg 128.

Chapter Three

"Seeking Poetic Justice:" Afro-Asian Women's Activism Through Verse

who's gonna make all
that beautiful blk/rhetoric
mean something.
Like
I mean
Who's gonna take
The words
Blk/is/beautiful
And make more of it
— Sonia Sanchez[189]

Sonia Sanchez is revered as one of the great African American poets. Her work goes beyond artistic expression; it tells a story, evokes images of lived experiences, is research, and indicates personal and academic analysis of history and contemporary social issues. Along with Sanchez, works by Maya Angelou, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Nikki Giovanni use poetry as a vessel to illustrate the African American lived experience from a woman's perspective.

With the historical narrative of the Black Power movement being andro-centered and placing an immense value on traditional sources of knowledge, especially biographies, autobiographies, and archival materials, those on the margins of this history,

[189] Sonia Sanchez, "blk/rhetoric (for Kilebrew Keeby, Icewater, Baker, Gary Adams and Omar Shabazz)," in *We A BaddDDD People* (Detroit, MI: Broadside Press, 1970), pg 15.

women, queer identifying, and others, face historical erasure. Elaine Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, and a handful of others were able to ascend to power or notoriety and have written their own autobiographies and works detailing their experiences, but the voices of everyday women, those that comprised the rank and file of the BPP and Third World liberation movement at large have gone unrecognized. This thesis is a conscious effort to add those voices to this history. It is imperative that we begin to move beyond the current acceptable forms of traditional research in order to gain a broader understanding of the perspectives of women in the movement. By placing poetry at the center of this discourse we can reframe our understanding and lend new perspectives and voices to the historical narrative of the Black Power era.

This chapter examines the poetry of Black and Asian American women activists of the era and argues that these works are sources of knowledge and activism. Furthermore, this chapter complicates our traditional understanding of activism by asserting that art is also a form of activism, and that it was through the platform of poetry that Black and Asian women expressed their political groundings, autonomy, and resisted the status quo. Moreover, these works are examples of Afro-Asian collective activism as many of the themes expressed in both Black and Asian American women's poetry mirrored each other and spoke of solidarity and other Third World liberatory tactics.

Esteemed Black feminists and poets, Audre Lorde and bell hooks, seamlessly fuse poetry and scholarship, demonstrating that poetry is just as much a method of research and a component of one's theoretical grounding as it is a form of artistic expression. Grounding this thesis within a Black feminist framework becomes essential, because it is through Black feminism that we can challenge and disrupt traditional

sources of knowledge and begin to provide a space for those straddling the margins of this historical period. Using poetry by African American and Asian American women from the Black Power era, we will gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, narratives, and identity during the period. The aim of this work is to broaden the historical narrative. In examining women's poetry, this work inherently places value on the voices of those women, which have been devalued. Additionally, in using poetry, a far more accessible platform that isn't riddled with the restrictions of the western academy, we can explore the voices of those at the greatest risk of facing historical erasure as they refuse or are unable to ascribe to the dominant system of knowledge production. The majority of the materials analyzed come from the *Third World* and *Broadside Press* poetry collections from 1968-1971, the *Black Panther*, *GIDR*A, a politically liberal magazine published from 1969 to 1974 by Japanese American authors, and various Asian American poetry collections.

Within these works we see women responding to and performing patriarchy, standing up against sexism, and discussing Black nationalism and messianism. Moreover, these works provide a sense of what life was like for women of color involved in the Black Power and Third World liberation movements. These pieces are by everyday women and activists, and speak to the social issues and of the time. These works act as a form of research driven by *embodied* knowledge and lived experience. They are primary sources in that they provide firsthand knowledge on accounts, issues, and events during the era, in the same way newspapers, journals, and other archival documents do. The use of poetry within this history will further the discourse on the Black Power movement in two ways; first it will help deconstruct some of the patriarchy embedded within the

movement and subsequently the historical narrative by providing a space for Black and Asian American women and their voices. Second, it will illuminate new facets of culture and activism in the era.

BAM! The Explosion of the Black Art Movement and Ethnic Artistic Expression

While the Black Power and Asian American movements were very much an on-the-ground fight against various systems of oppression, this activism and spirit also manifest itself in literature, scholarship, and art. Within the civil rights movement we witnessed the SNCC Freedom singers—Fannie Lou Hamer and others—express their activism through song. "We Shall Overcome" became the anthem of the movement.[190] Overall, songs along similar lines expressed the sentiments of the collective, were a rallying tool, and were sung during moments of civil unrest to maintain a level of composure. These songs were an important form of activism. By the 1960s, music was no longer the popular artistic form of activist expression. With the emergence of writers like Amiri Barka, Sonia Sanchez, Adrienne Kennedy, and a host of others, poetry soon moved to the forefront. The poetry from these writers supported and echoed the claims being made by Black Power organizations and the movement at large. With such a vast interest in poetry and artistic expression, the Black Art Movement (BAM) quickly surfaced with militant youth in the forefront.[191]

Black was BEAUTIFUL
Black was RADICAL

[190] Leslie Paige Rose, "The Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights Movement: Music Functioning for Freedom," *National Association for Music Education* 25, no. 59 (Spring/Summer 2007): pg 63, accessed March 25, 2014, doi:10.1177/87551233070250020107.
[191] Elsa Honig Fine, "Mainstream, Blackstream and the Black Art Movement," *Art Journal* 30, no. 4 (Summer 1971): pg 374-375.

Black was MILITANT

Black was IN YO FACE!

Black was poetic, melodic, artistic

Black was

Black IS...[192]

The BAM ran parallel to and supported the Black Power movement. It gave birth to a host of artists, especially poets. Maulana Karenga, founder of US and philosopher of the BAM, argues, "Black art must be for the people, by the people, and from the people...that is to say it must be functional, collective, and committing."[193] Moreover, Black art must be political and make a statement. Karenga is also best known for his quote "art for art's sake is an invalid concept..."[194] These same sentiments are echoed within Mao's work,

> In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause...Revolutionary culture is a powerful weapon for the broad masses of people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution.[195]

Black and Asian art has a responsibility to voice the issues of the collective and contribute to revolutionary change. As people of color, we do not have the privilege of

[192] The author wrote all the poetry that is italicized and bolded. In employing the method of poetry throughout this work the aim is to put the argument and theory of poetry being a form of knowledge and a method into practice as well as to pay homage to the poet-activists discussed throughout this work.

[193] Maulana Karenga, *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles, CA: US, 1967), pg 22.

[194] Molefi Kete Asante, *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait* (Malden, MD: Polity Press, 2009), pg 132.

[195] Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking, CHN: Foreign Language Press, 1966), pg 299-300.

producing art for sheer artistic expression. Our work is reflective of our lived experience, an experience that remains marginalized, substandard, unjust, and unequal.

Black women were key poets during the era. Cheryl Clarke's work investigates the role Black women played in the BAM and their contributions to documenting the movement through poetry. Black women were writing and performing what they witnessed in their communities, asserting their political stance, and challenging the status quo both in and out of blackness. They expressed their activism through the written word and performance. The current historical narratives of all three movements (Black Power, Black Arts, and Asian American movements) continue to rely on western and traditional sources of authenticated knowledge. Poetry has very little representation in the various discourses, and the poetry that is integrated into these narratives tends to speak to the male experience or the small pool of women whose work has been popularized—Sonia Sanchez, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and a few others. The majority of the voices of women from these movements have been lost.[196]

Placing Value in the Third World Aesthetic and Voice

Knowledge is constructed monolithically as a means to control and limit its complexities and to maintain exclusivity. Furthermore, this control continues to oppress women, people of color, queer identifying, and others straddling the margins, as their voices, views, and knowledge are suppressed and subsequently undervalued and devalued.[197] Patricia Hill Collins argues that traditional knowledge and epistemology are maintained

[196] Cheryl Clarke, *After Mecca: Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pg 1.
[197] Ibid.

to protect the interests of powerful White men.[198] [199] Archival research, western epistemologies, and other sources of traditional knowledge are viewed as concrete research and the authenticity of anything defying *tradition* is called into question. Traditional scholarship and research provides little room for oppressed people to insert themselves on their own terms. We must move beyond this western framework in order to begin democratizing knowledge and providing new perspectives to historical narratives.[200]

During the postcolonial period, strides were made to reclaim cultural elements that were lost and systematically erased during colonialism by Black nationalists, cultural nationalists, Pan Africanists, and others. However, the dominant culture continues to attempt to erase what cultural connections people of African descent are attempting to restore. Stuart Hall furthers this argument by stating that the internalization of such denial and suppression of one's culture acts in the favor of the dominant group. Digesting this in tandem with Frantz Fanon's central theme in *The Wretched of the Earth*—mental enslavement—crystallizes our understanding of the willingness of power to suppress the voices, culture, and knowledge of a people.[201] The dominant culture forces us to see and experience ourselves as "other." However, curiosity and resistance are often inevitable, thus, a "push-pull" tension emerges and the group that has been "othered" begins to explore elements of their cultural identity as well as contesting and rejecting their "Othered" status. This was exactly what Asian Americans, Black Art, and the Black Power Movement did. They all challenged the "othering," dehumanizing, and degrading

[198] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), pg 253.
[199] Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988): pg 69.
[200] ibid.
[201] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963).

status quo and asserted cultural identity through the Black and Asian aesthetic, activism, and radicalism.

These forms of knowledge challenge and disrupt traditional western structures; such disruption becomes paramount as a way to insert marginalized voices into scholarship and begin democratizing knowledge. Including poetry into the pantheon of authenticated sources of knowledge enables the marginalized to further reclaim their history, space, and culture. Then and only then will those on the margins be provided a space where they can move from object to subject.[202]

Black, Woman, Poet

Black women navigate the world within an intersectional framework and consequently are pitted against multiple oppressive forms of knowledge, the first being from the western world. Black women's thoughts and ideas have been suppressed within White and male controlled institutions.[203] Their voices, work, and ideas are deemed doubly unimportant because not only are they of African descent, but are also women. Secondly, Black women studying the Black Power era are often compelled to ascribe to the dominant discourse and historical narrative that is andro-centered. Barbara Ransby, Trayce Matthews, and Angela Davis have worked to combat and disrupt this internal oppression, however, much still needs to be done to transform the way in which this history is being preserved and presented.

During the Black Power era women fought tirelessly to ensure that their voices were being heard and poetry became a favored artistic platform to express their activism.

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[202] Michelle Cliff, "Object Into Subject: Some Thoughts on the Work of Black Women Artists," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), pg 275.
[203] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* pg 253.

Amiri Baraka, Gil Scott-Heron, Ntozake Shange, Etheridge Knight, and a host of others achieved fame because of their canny ability to express the Black struggle through poetry.[204] Additionally, this art form helped reiterate the sense of Black pride that the movement articulated so well, as poetry helped illustrate cultural retention. Poets frequently used call and response, dialect, proverbs, and rhythmic variations, all of which are connections back to our ancestral cultural beginnings.

Black Sistahs began slaying goliath
The embodied knowledge flowed from their Black bodies
Bodies that had been mutilated, muted, and humanity disputed
These stanzas dropped knowledge
Shot oppression
And marched through urban jungles in hopes of arriving at a bridge
A bridge to peace
A bridge to truth
A bridge to prosperity
A bridge to
Beyond...[205]

Building off of the momentum of the Black Power Movement, the work of artists and scholars like Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Sonia Sanchez, and a host of others helped usher in a fiery wave of Black feminism, and Black feminist poetry during the 1970s. Lorde and Walker coupled the slogan of being "Black and Proud" with that of Black women's liberation, activism, and the assertion of the beauty of the Black woman, her

[204] See, Amiri Baraka, *Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones* (New York, NY: Williams & Morrow, 1979); Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox: A Collection of Black Poems* (New York, NY: World Publishing Company, 1970); Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1982); Etheridge Knight, *Born of a Woman: New and Selected Poems* (Willmington, MA: Mariner Books, 1980).
[205] Jeanelle Hope, original piece, 2014.

body, and her womanhood. The suppression of Black women's thoughts, ideas, scholarship, as well as on-the-ground activism, drew them to the arts. The arts provided a venue in which Black women could showcase their ideas without being subjected to the intense scrutiny and degradation they were often confronted with in the academy, male-dominated organizations, and under colonial systems of knowledge. Poetry was liberating and a space for Black women to promote a feminist consciousness.

Asian, Woman, Poet

Asian American women suffer a similar fate in terms of their positionality within the dominant society. In the groundbreaking anthology on Asian American women, *Making Waves,* the editors state,

> Asian American women grow stronger with the support of their communities and other activist movements. In the end, though, no one else can speak for them. They, like all of us, must speak for themselves. We can expect no one else to fight our battles; we must fight them ourselves. We must make our own waves.[206]

From this, multiple themes emerge, the first being how other people of color have influenced Asian American women. Second, the importance of Third World solidarities and coalitions, as they help strengthen Asian American women and their quest for liberation. Finally, the editors articulate the importance for Asian American to speak for themselves. Historically, Asian American women's voices have been silenced. *Making Waves* is one of the first works to recover those voices and begin creating a space for Asian American women within history as well as other disciplines. Moreover, *Making*

[206] Asian Women United of California, "Part Seven Introduction," introduction to *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989), pg 348.

Waves reflects the various platforms Asian American women use to speak out, poetry being a very popular one, as many poems are featured in the work. Additionally, for many immigrants and Asian Americans, poetry was a fluid space where their work didn't have to ascribe to rigid western grammar restrictions; for many, English was their second language. Asian American women used poetry to discuss language, family, politics, shared migration stories, memories, and spirituality.[207] By the 1960s and 1970s, these works became more reflective of contemporary politics including the Vietnam War and began displaying undertones of feminist thought.

Fluid flowing words
Spirits, memories, visions
Whimsical escapes

Between1965 and 1975, hundreds of collections and anthologies of poetry were published that aligned with the rhetoric and sentiments of the Black Power movement. Many of those works were self-published or came out of publishing companies that valued the mission of the BAM. The *Third World Press* and *Broadside Press* were the leading publishing houses of the BAM. Founded in the midst of the Black Power era, both presses were led by men (Haki Madhabuti and Dudley Randall) and best known for publishing the work of artists like: Amiri Baraka, Margaret Walker, Sonia Sanchez, and Sterling Plumpp. While the poetry of some of the more famous poets has been widely circulated, other pieces have gone unexamined. Baraka and Plumpp's work certainly complemented the movement, however this monolithic male voice continues to reiterate the false claim of the era being solely masculine. Thus, we must bring the voices of Black and Asian American women to the forefront to position them within the historical

[207] *Between the Lines: Asian American Women's Poetry*, directed by Yunah Hong (2001; New York, NY: Women Make Movies, Inc., 2001), DVD.

narrative. By examining the poetry of Femi Funmi Ifetayo, Jewel C. Latimore, Frenchy Hodges, Janice Mirikitani, and other pieces by women featured in *GIDRA* and the *Black Panther,* we can complicate and expand this historical narrative, as well as provide these women with their rightful place in history.

More than Dashikis and Tikis: Challenging and Remaining Compliant within Black Nationalism

Femi Funmi Ifetayo,'s (1970) poem," Can You Dig It?" was published in the *Third World Press* while she was in high school. The poem discussed elements of Black nationalism, the commodification of the Black power physical aesthetic (daishikis, tikis, afros, etc.), and challenged the role of Black men.

> To be black
> is not only the
> color of your skin
> the thickness of your natural
> the way you come on strong
> your beard
> or the dashikis, gowns, and tikis you wear
> a brother could be—
> natural back
> Afro-down
> With a beard and looking good
> but…
> Check him out
> To be black
> Is togetherness of your mind
> Your awareness
> Of what's going down
> Around you
> And also the love, trust, and
> Respect for your people
> Especially for your women[208]

[208] Femi Funmi Ifetayo, *We the BLACK WOMAN* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1970), pg 11.

Ifetayo provides another lens that allows us to examine and understand Black nationalism. By listing common characteristics of the Black Power movement aesthetic, she is calling to question one's authenticity, loyalty, and dedication to the movement. Simply put, yes you have a natural; yes you have a dashiki, but are you really "down?" She challenges the consciousness of the Black community by asking for it to move beyond its discursive understanding of blackness and to root itself in something radical—nationalism (which she believes will promote collectivism). While the piece is very much aligned with early 1960s Black nationalism, she confronts this political orientation when she places her womanhood in the forefront. In her final stanza she states, "Respect for your people, especially for your women." Her emphasis on women speaks to the call for inclusivity of women and recognition of their presence within the movement. Ifetayo has adopted Black nationalism, but refuses to be complicit in the sexism of Black nationalist rhetoric and practice; thus, she attempts to further it with her gendered lens. Throughout this work, the poems of the examined authors have been inserted in their original form. Ifetayo's work strays from any visible linearity as well as structural rules. In doing so, she is able to place emphasis on certain lines and messages. This poem in many ways is structured like a rap, as there is an embedded rhythm that is evidenced in the way she clusters certain lines. Thus, the knowledge within this work goes beyond the visible word content and extends to the structure.

Ifetayo's Black nationalist and feminist stance expressed her concern with her multiple oppressions; however, many women chose to remain compliant within spaces of extreme sexism and patriarchy as discussed throughout chapter two. These same

sentiments are evidenced in Black women's poetry. Lili Kim argues that women of color have become so consumed with combating racism that they often forget (or negate) their other sources of oppression.[209] Black women-poets of the era truly grappled with this and it is witnessed within Ifetayo's work, as well as in Jewel C. Latimore's "Sisters…" Latimore takes a similar stance as Hudson-Weems in that she is compliant and turns a blind eye to the gender issues of the movement.

> salaam. World/mothers.
> love. the spirit / body
> of yr man.love.hs. blk/
> strong sureness & hs
> need. Love. Hm from yr
> nappy/woman/self.love.
> bear hs children con-
> ceived or his honor &
> delivered to people an
> erth in a /cleanness of (honkies re-moved.)
> love. sisters.love. for
> a blk/world. salaam.[210]

Larry Neal argues that all Black artists are indebted to the Black man, a claim so problematic that it merits a work of its own.[211] This is a clear example of why we have such an andro-centered narrative as well as how patriarchy has privileged this man to make such a fallacious claim. Latimore's poetry is aligned with Neal's vision of being indebted to the Black man as in her poem she ideologically offers the Black man her body, her purpose, and her entire being. Providing this perspective is meaningful in that it can help Black women arrive at a space of consciousness as well as understand the various ways in which Black women situated themselves within Black nationalism.

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[209] Lili Kim, "I Was So Busy Fighting Racism that I Didn't Even Know I Was Being Oppressed as a Woman!: Challenges, Changes, and Empowerment in Teaching About Women of Color," *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2001): pg 99-100.
[210] Jewel Latimore, *Black Essence* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1968), pg 5.
[211] Clarke, After Mecca, pg 195 & 51.

Asian American poet-activist, Tomi Tanka, was featured in *GIDRA.* Her piece "from a lotus blossom cunt,"throws a one-two punch at sexist men,

> ...We are women, we are Asian
> We are freeing ourselves
> Join us
> Try to use us, and you'll lose us
> Join us.[212]

While Ifetayo, Latimore, and Tanka provide two different stances toward Black nationalism and sexism within the era. It is important to integrate both sides into the overall Black Power historical narrative as it restores the complexity of the history and breathes truth into the narrative.

Responding to Stagnation and Messianism

Many of the Black women-poets of the era reflected on the death and imprisonment of leaders, challenging the masses to empower themselves and abandon their reliance upon these figures. Frenchy Hodges' poem "Dreams, Common Sense and Stuff" speaks to this theme.

> "I have a dream
> My vision is long
> Freedom will come
> Through march and song!
> Listen, Brother Martin
> How in the Hell
> Can you expect your enemy
> To treat you well?
> Love your enemy
> Sing and pray
> Non-violence will bring
> Freedom our way.
> For endless years

[212] Tomi Tanaka, "from a lotus blossom cunt," 1971, in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki, et al. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center, 1971), pg 109.

You've been a slave
You'll never see freedom
Till you're in your grave.
My dear Brother Malcolm
I respect your views
Let's stop and sing
The song "Good News."
You're still in prison
That's what America means
We didn't land on Plymouth Rock
It landed on us it seems.[213]

Hodges has rejected King's non-violent tactics and agenda and aligns herself with the early militant Black nationalist stance of Malcolm X. In the process of interrogating both leaders and their political orientation, she finds her own. She places the movement outside the hands of leaders, asserts her agency, and articulates the importance of collective activism. Essentially, she is saying while leaders may come and go, the people must remain strong!

Beyond the works featured in the *Third World* and *Broadside* presses, Party women were also proving to be powerful poets with their work being featured in the organization's newspaper. In the April 6, 1970, issue of the *Black Panther,* the revolutionary poetry section featured five poems written by women members, four of them by Afeni Shakur. Shakur's piece, "The Lesson," is a response to and her solution to messianism,

Malcolm awoke and saw what appeared to be the mountain of liberation-
he was murdered
Martin started up that mountain and found there was a beauty and lasting
peace—he was murdered
Huey went all the way up and came down again to speak to the world of
the solidarity there—he was shot & kidnapped
Eldridge saw my desire to go up and showed me the rugged path—he was
forced into exile

[213] Frenchy Jolene Hodges, *Black Wisdom* (Detroit, MI: Broadside Press, 1971), pg 16.

Bobby took my hand to lead me there and I found the way rough and
exhilarating and of course he was gagged, beaten, and chained
Fred overheard their directions and took to the hills for a closer look—
what he saw made him go back down to share his happiness
When he came back in the valley, all I could hear him say was—I am a
Revolutionary
But, it made no sense and so I just sat and listened
The next day I heard him repeat this melody as he prepared the morning
meal for my child
I heard the words and still I was quiet; Fred didn't seem to mind he just
kept doing things and singing his song
And then one day the melody of his song was taken up by the evil
Winds of human destruction
They heard its message and handed to him, the salary of a people's servant
KA BOOM—
The air that breathed his message to me was alive with urgency.
The mountains became a reality
The tools became friends
The curves became mere objects of jest!
I could sit still no longer
I began to hum his song
As I climbed, as I fell and
Got up and fell again—I
Sang the song of liberation
I AM A REVOLUTIONARY!
I AM A REVOLUTIONARY![214]

Instead of placing her aspirations for activism within these male figures, Shakur, views them as martyrs whose political bodies, minds, and souls have inspired her as she proudly proclaims, **I** AM A REVOLUTIONARY!

Mama Revolutionary: Memories of Mothering on the Battlefield

Beyond discursive discussions on sexism and political ideologies, Black and Asian American women's poetry were reflections and written memories. Motherhood, womanhood, migration, and family are just a few common themes that emerge in the

[214] Afeni Shakur, "The Lesson," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), April 6, 1970, Revolutionary Poetry, pg 12.

poetry by both groups of women. Unlike men, women's discussions on family tend to be more fluid and substantial, especially those concerning motherhood. Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter's poem and ode to motherhood and family, "Black Motherhood" is certainly an anomaly worth mentioning.[215] Both Rucker and Perez highlighted the fact that they were pregnant while working at the George Jackson clinic, reiterating the importance of motherhood, and the bond they had as women in the Party embarking on a similar journey together, thus forming a lasting sisterhood.[216]

Beyond mothering infants and children, both Asian American and Black women were also mothering and nursing their men; those on the streets, in the Party, and those returning from Vietnam, mentally, physically, and emotionally scarred. Artist Femi Funmi Ifetayo states that her poetry "expresses the role of the black woman in Black America, in search of manhood for black men."[217] Iftetayo's quest for Black manhood manifests itself in the form of working with her brothers to combat racism and seeking liberation, but it also surfaces in terms of how she mothers, nurtures, and supports her brothers. Throughout much of the aforementioned poetry as well as the work of Eldridge Cleaver, women were viewed as an integral component of helping reclaim manhood, whether it is through the sexual exploitation of their bodies, their support, or facilitation of grassroots programs. Women were the common denominator in discussions on reclamation of manhood during the Black Power era. Janis Mirikitani—Bay Area native, San Francisco's second poet laureate, and former member of AAPA—was an activist and poet during the Black Power era and wrote, "Jungle Rot and Open Arms," a poem

[215] See Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, "Black Mother," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), November 15, 1969, Revolutionary Poetry, pg 12.
[216] Oral history interview with Silvia Perez, 2013.
[217] Ifetayo, *We the BLACK WOMAN,* notes section.

centered around the care Asian American women provided to their brothers returning from war and the near emptiness women experienced.

For a Vietnam Veteran brother, ex-prisoner
Leavenworth
and jungle too
brought him
back to us
brimming with hate
and disbelief
in love or
sympathy.
His johnnywalker red
eyes
tore at my words
shred my flesh
made naked my
emptiness

my anger
for the enemy heads
of states
boiled to nothing
    nothing
in the wake of his rage
jungle rot
had sucked his bones
his fell
like the monsoon
his brain
in a cast in Leavenworth
In the midst
of genocide
he fell in love
in Vietnam.
    "Her hair was
    long and dark—like yours"
    he said
"her eyes held the
sixth moon
and when she smiled
the sky opened
and I fell through
I would crawl in the tall grasses to her village
and sleep the war

away with her
like a child on my thighs

I did not know
of the raid

and woke
with her arm
still clasping mine
I could not find
The rest of her
So I buried her arm
and marked my grave
We sat in silence
That mocks fools
That lifts us to the final language
his breath sapped by B-52's
his eyes blinded by the blood of children
his hands bound to the bayonets
his soul buried in a shallow grave
I stood amidst
his wreckage
and wept for myself
so where is my
political education? my
rhetoric answers to everything? my
theory in practice? My
intensification of life in art?
words
are
like
the stone
the gravemarker
over an arm
in Vietnam[218]

This piece details the trials Asian American men endured while in Vietnam including falling in love with women in the area. It possesses a certain level of ambiguity as it is unclear if this brother is a familial relative or a lover. Either way, this woman reflects on the problems of her brother and is left with emptiness as he no longer

[218] Janice Mirikitani, *We, the Dangerous: New and Selected Poems* (Berkeley, CA: Celestial Press, 1995).

possesses any capacity to love her, neither physically nor emotionally. He is Jungle rot, yet she still finds some place within her soul to embrace him with open arms. This non-reciprocal relationship leaves her lonely, depressed, and in search of her own identity. She asks, "where is my political education…rhetoric answers to everything…theory in practice…intensification of art in life?" This type of mothering and nursing could have left this woman deprived of any sort of life, however, she recognizes that there is much more that she must do, and instead, symbolically buries her brother in Vietnam, and his death is a catalyst for her yearning for activism.

In the May 4, 1969 issue of the *Black Panther*, Marsha, a member of the Party, makes a similar familial connection within her piece, "POW!"

> His brain splattered to the dotted floor
> my people's hearts and pains
> created the pattern of red upon that dotted base
> I could see my mother on her
> knees
> Whimpering
> my stomach growling
> my knees shaking from cold created the blood stained patterns
> on the floor
> Bunchy, John---the result of this
> pigs' madness
> that sadistic half-dicked mother fucking fool
> and don't forget those who stand in the way
> the unconcerned
> shall also make a bloody pattern
> on the pavement
> for the vanguard has a pact with the people
> to fight the death
> 'cause it's time for the madmen
> to unclench their fists, and stop
> standing on their toes
> waiting to move
> papa's coming home
> Huey's coming home,
> and the oppressor shall vanish.[219]

[219] Marsha, "POW!," *The Black Panther* (Oakland, CA), May 4, 1969, Black Revolutionary Poetry, pg 15.

Marsha's vivid description of the blood spewed about the floor and her mother's reaction forces us to recognize the impact death had on families. Too frequently do we romanticize revolutions and neglect to realize that human beings were/are sacrificing their lives. Marsha's poem breathes humanity and the family structure back into the movement. Ericka Huggins' self-titled poem makes mention of her daughter Mai, who is parentless for the early years of her life, as her father, John Huggins was murdered, and her mother imprisoned. Huggins reiterates how the movement in many ways led to the destruction of Black and Asian American families. Mirikitiani's piece is also about the destruction of a family, as her brother, her lover, is empty and it is as if he too is dead. What is most admirable is that these women respond to death by further empowering themselves, continuing the fight for liberation.

Authenticating Poetry

The aforementioned pieces provide a different lens through which we can analyze this historical moment. The poets' work discussed the relevant issues of the era with the same critical attention that traditional sources employ. Within performance studies scholars have begun to argue for poetry and other forms of qualitative performance to be viewed and respected as authenticated methods, theories, and sources of knowledge. Sandra Faulkner's work, *Poetry as Method: Reporting Research through Verse* is part of this movement to authenticate poetry. In this work she coins the term "poet-researcher" and furthers the quest of authenticating poetry as a source of knowledge by claiming that "poet-researchers" create "research-art." Faulkner reveals several reasons why it is

essential to recognize poetry as a valid way of presenting and conducting research. The first being that poetry pays attention to the particulars, in a much different way than scientific writing which tends to focus on comparative frameworks.[220] Secondly, poetry can be used for social change. As a method, poetry provides insight into specific cultures and is able to represent actual experiences in ways that ethnography and other methods may not.[221] Researcher-poets tend to pay special attention to the use of language. The free-flowing creativity embedded within poetry is a political stance as much as it is artistic, as this style of writing disrupts the western monolithic writing style.[222] Finally, poetry provides a space where researcher-poets can insert voices that have been deemed unauthentic. Works by bell hooks illustrate this as she infuses the voices of southern Black women and their dialect into her research-poetry, however, such work would typically be considered unacceptable within traditional and western scholarship.[223]

For Asian American and African American women, poetry and art became an escape, a form of activism, an area where they possessed a level of control and agency over their thoughts, ideas, and what they viewed as knowledge. Poetry is a space for Asian American and Black women and poet-researchers at large to present their knowledge on their own terms. Poetry as knowledge and a method must continue to move in the direction that allows it to be viewed as an authenticated source of knowledge and continues to resist hegemonic and western influences. It must remain in stark opposition to dominant sources of knowledge, as it has been a successful tactic in providing a space for those along the margins. By examining Black and Asian American

[220] Sandra Faulkner, *Poetry as Method: Reporting Research through Verse* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009), pg 25.
[221] Ibid, 24.
[222] Ibid, 25.
[223] bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989).

women's poetry of the Black Power era, we are better able to understand their role within the movement, reframe this history in a way that is more inclusive, and gain a fuller perspective of the role of women, and provide another context to understand activism—*Art as Activism.*

Conclusion

This thesis accomplishes several tasks and functions as a charge for resistance-movement historians. This work illustrates the distinct character of collective activism in the San Francisco Bay area during the Black Power movement. It shows how the Bay Area and its Black and Yellow youth became highly politicized and radical in response to local and global oppressions. The use of oral histories and archival materials shows the divergent conceptions of collective activism ideologically as well as in practice. Finally, this work highlights the integral role women played within the movement, through an analysis of their narratives and poetry.

When I initially set out to execute this project, my goal was to study my beloved home, Oakland, from a Black feminist/womanist perspective. That goal morphed into a much-needed comparative ethnic study on Afro-Asian collective activism steeped in Black feminist theory. Mama Yuri Kochiyama's pearls of wisdom, "the most powerful weapon for we women of color is truth! Go out and tell truth, everywhere," were my guiding words throughout the writing and research process as my aim was to insert truth and broaden the historical narrative of the Black Power movement, providing a space for women, other people of color, and queer identifying.

Using the theoretical frameworks of transversal politics, transnational feminism, and Black feminism, this work illustrates the shared relationship between African

Americans and Asian Americans. Beyond linking these two groups by way of their physical on-the-ground activism, this work links the two groups historically, politically, ideologically, and philosophically, through an analysis of various streams of Third World political orientation and thought.

Collectively, the oral histories examined in this work help construct a more inclusive Black Power narrative. Rucker, Perez, Wong, and Presley's narratives are the heart of this work. Their voices flow endlessly throughout the pages, as they rightfully should, as their voices have been suppressed far too long. These interviews do not ascribe to the current interpretations of the movement and clearly address my aim of inserting new truths. It was in conducting these interviews that I was the most proud and satisfied as I began to see my work come to fruition and recognized the purpose those recordings and transcripts would serve for historians and students to come.

The potential function of this work extends beyond the academy, because this thesis is a reflection on Third World liberation tactics that remain viable and necessary in our continued struggle for freedom. Calling on the Akan word, Sankofa, we must return to our past, "reach back and get it;" it being knowledge to inform our present; moreover, knowledge that can be used as a blueprint for the future. This work is only the beginning in encouraging younger generations to engage in collective activism and Third World solidarity. This work is far from being complete and encourages further study to continue to inform Third World people's sense of global connectedness in the twenty-first century and moving forward. ASHE.

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EDUCATION

M.A. in Pan African Studies — May 2014
Syracuse, University College of Arts & Sciences, Syracuse, NY
GPA: 3.75/4.00

B.A. in History and Africana Studies, Cum Laude — May 2012
California State University, Long Beach, College of Liberal Arts, Long Beach, CA
Semester Abroad – University of Leicester, England (Fall 2010): coursework in Modern European History
GPA: 3.622/4.00

A.A. in African American Studies & Liberal Studies — May 2009
Contra Costa College, San Pablo, CA
GPA: 3.53/4.00

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS & FUNDING RECEIVED

- Imagining America, PAGE Fellowship — Fall 2013-Spring 2014
- Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization, Travel Grant — Spring 2013
- Central New York Humanities Corridor Visiting Scholar, Research Grant — Spring 2013
- Syracuse University, African American Graduate Student Fellowship Fall 2012-Spring 2013
- Kennedy King Memorial Scholar — Fall 2009-Spring 2011
- Student's Rising Above Scholar — Fall 2009-Spring 2012

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Current Research (M.A. Thesis)

- Examining the extent and legacy of collective activism between African Americans and Asian Americans during the Black Power era in Oakland, CA, and the role of women within these collectives.

Undergraduate Research Assistant — August 2011-May 2012

- Conducted research on African-centered womanism for a faculty member at California State University, Long Beach

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Introduction to U.S. History 1492-present (freshmen seminar), *Supplemental Instructor* — Spring 2012
- Introduction to African American studies, *Teaching Assistant* — Spring 2014 & Fall 2013

PUBLICATION, CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, AND INVITED PAPERS

Publication

- "Envisioning a Third Space: Coalescing Community Through Shared Knowledge and Innovative Thinking" *Imagining America*, September 2013.

Conference Presentations

- "Poetic Justice: Positioning Black Women and Black Male Queer Identifying Perspectives into the Black Power Historical Narrative Through Performance," National Council for Black Studies, Miami, FL, March 5-8. 2014.
- "Black Women in the Academy and the Feminization of Labor"(panel presentation), Imagining America, October 2013.

Invited Papers

- "Seeking Poetic Justice: Positioning Black Women and Queer Identifying into the Black Power Historical Narrative, "
  Syracuse University, CNY Humanities Corridor Brown Bag, February 7, 2014.
- "Journeying to 'Malcolmland:' In Search of Black Identity and Masculinity" Syracuse University, Documenting Dissent Scholars Forum, November 2012

LEADERSHIP

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY — Fall 2013-present
Senator and African American Studies *Department Representative*

California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach, CA — June 2011-June 2012
Pearson Student Advisory Board Member

- Conducted research on mobile learning
- Helped develop a student-friendly mobile learning application

Contra Costa College, San Pablo, CA — September 2006 – August 2009
President (2008-2009), *Senator* (2006-2008)

- Involved in planning and execution of 20+ outreach events to connect the community and the college
- Chaired student body meetings; attended shared governance and district governing board meetings; held membership on bond oversight committee; assembled agendas, budgets, calendars, and minutes
- Represented students at school, district, state, and national levels

MEMBERSHIPS

- Sigma Gamma Rho, Sorority Inc. — Inducted Spring 2014
- Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization (GSO) — Fall 2013-Spring 2014
- Phi Alpha Theta: National History Honor Society — Inducted Fall 2010

CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

- History Students Association, California State University, Long Beach
  Co-Chair — Spring 2011-Spring 2012
- Associated Students Union, Contra Costa College — Fall 2008-Spring 2009
  President
- Associated Students Union, Contra Costa College — Fall 2006-Spring 2008
  Senator

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- Undergraduate Student Organization, "Mane Attractions," Advisor — Fall 2013-Spring 2014
- Graduate Student Organization Travel Grant Committee, Executive Board Member
  Fall 2013-Spring 2014
- Academic Integrity Committee, Graduate Student Representative — Spring 2013

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Rising Sun Energy Center
Community Outreach Manager, Antioch, CA — June 2012-August 2012

- Organized a successful site that provided energy and water conserving measures to various communities.
- Planned successful events that informed the Antioch, CA community about sustainability, energy efficiency, and water conservation

Rising Sun Energy Center June- August 2011
Site Manager, Hayward, CA

- Managed a site of nine underrepresented youth; providing human resource services, and facilitating communication to headquarters

Breakthrough Collaborative June – August 2010
Instructor and Co-Dean, 7th Grade, San Francisco, CA

- Developed academically rigorous and entertaining history, literature, and social justice lessons for underrepresented rising seventh grade students
- Mediated and facilitated communication between students and staff
- Organized events such as a career day for 100+ seventh graders to shadow professionals at job sites and a teambuilding overnight camping trip for 25-30 ninth graders

Contra Costa College Student Life Center February 2008-August 2009
Event Planner, San Pablo, CA

- Planned successful informative and entertaining on-campus events for Contra Costa College students including Rock-the-Vote voter registration, Black Alliance for Just Immigration fireside chats, the first annual Chrismahanakwanzakh inclusive holiday event, graduation celebrations, and the March-in-March budget cut protest

College For Kids February – July 2008
Instructor, San Pablo

- Created and taught successful curriculum to help 2nd-3rd graders enjoy and practice reading
- Helped coordinate a summer program for 400+ 2nd -10th grade students on a college campus