

Black Panther Party for Self-Defense

Ministry of Information

Black Paper

POSITION OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE ON THE SEVENTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT ELECTION AND THE CANDIDACY OF JOHN GEORGE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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A VERY CRUCIAL issue is being debated tonight, a very complex and crucial issue which directly involves the life of Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. In order that the discussion follow informed and political lines, not racial and emotional sensations, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense has prepared the following position paper to elucidate and define its position on the Democratic Party, on black participation in the Democratic Party, on the function of electoral politics in the black community, and on the candidacy of Huey P. Newton for the Seventh Congressional District.

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IN THE ARTICLE, "The Case for an Independent Black Political Party," in the current issue of the *International Socialist Review* the following statement concisely illustrates the position of black people in regard to the Democratic Party: "Under duress it throws black people a few concessions, a few posts, a few tokens to placate them though it has no intention of ending racism. The two-party set-up fosters the illusion that black people will get freedom through gradual reform of capitalism and its institutions.

The history of the past hundred years testifies that this is a lie. Black people will never be liberated by supporting political parties that are controlled by their oppressors and that are so constructed and operated that they will always be controlled by their oppressors." Malcolm X's description of the government, which is controlled by the Democratic Party, is the most accurate: a conspiracy to deprive black people of voting rights, economic opportunities, decent housing and decent education.

These statements of fact aside, the black vote is the bulwark of the Democratic Party, allowing it to control city, state, and federal government. In "The Ballot or the Bullet," Malcolm said, "They get all the Negro vote and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. These big Negroes didn't need jobs, they already had jobs. That's camouflage, that's trickery, that's treachery, that's window dressing."

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense says that the black community needs no more window dressing, no more trickery, no more treachery. What the black community needs is real political power — black power for black people — and that will never come through the Democratic Party.

There is a long tradition of bootlickers, uncle toms, and black anglo-saxons who are willing to rise to prominence on the backs of the oppressed masses by selling their votes to the Democratic Machine for the opportunity to lick the power structure's boots and assist in its racist exploitation of the black masses. These black batistas for the most part do not carry the people's needs to the power structure nor voice the people's problems in its assembly, for they are not responsible to the people; regardless of their rhetoric — they are lackeys for the Democratic Machine.

In 1964 the total inability of the Democratic Party to denounce racism and exploitation and to promote the interests of black people was manifested in its response to the Challenge of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the Atlantic City Convention. Excluded from participation in the Mississippi Dixiecrat Party, the black people in Mississippi

pi organized a parallel Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party open to all, endorsed the platform of the Democratic Party, and supported LBJ for President.

At the Convention in Atlantic City they demanded to be seated as the legal representatives of the State of Mississippi as opposed to the Dixiecrat delegation which refused to endorse the Democratic Party platform, refused to support LBJ, and refused to uphold the Constitution of the United States.

The defeat of the MFDP Challenge should have signalled blacks all over the country to begin to organize independent political parties; however, the lesson was carefully concealed and confused by the power structure and an overt break was not made nationally. In 1966, Adam Clayton Powell's ouster — which reduced one of the most competent committee chairmen in the history of Congress and twenty years of political service to ashes in a single stroke — taught many more blacks that the Democratic Party was their overt enemy. Further, the inability of black elected officials to quell ghetto rebellions has weakened their usefulness to the power structure. At this juncture, the task before black politicians of any integrity is to lead black people away from the Democratic Machine.

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense demands that bootlicking come to a screeching halt in 1968.



THE ARGUMENT ADVANCED by many who wish to rise to political prominence quickly is that it is expedient to run in the Democratic Party. Expediency is the yardstick of shysters, hypocrites, and die-hard traitors to the black community. The history of black participation in the Democratic Party is brief, and not an unsurmountable obstacle to black political advancement.

The first Northern Negro to sit in the U.S. Congress was Oscar DePriest, a Republican from the South Side of Chicago who went to Washington in 1928. His replacement, Arthur Mitchell, was elected in 1934 on the Democratic ticket — to the considerable embarrassment of the Democratic Party — and became the first black democrat to ever sit in Congress.

The allegiance of the black population prior to Roosevelt's administration had been solidly behind the Republicans, the party of Lincoln and the party of Reconstruction. During the Reconstruction period, when there were twenty-two black congressmen and black people exercised considerably more political power

than they do now, the Democratic Party was the party of reaction, counter-revolution, and violent white supremacy. It was the Democratic Party that was intent on undermining the egalitarian and multiracial Reconstruction government — through terrorism, fraud, chicanery, and all other forms of a burgeoning police state. It was the Democratic Party in 1868-77 that was responsible for destroying the first concrete demonstration of black power immediately following the Civil War, and it is the Democratic Party in 1968 that is intent on destroying the present moves to establish concrete black power. The plan of the South Carolina Democratic Party during Reconstruction to undermine the strongest bastion of black power stated: "Every Democrat must feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one Negro by intimidation, purchase, keeping him away or as each individual may determine how he may best accomplish it."

The rampant terrorism, massacres, murders and violence, political fraud and general hysteria between whites and blacks in the Reconstruction South that threatened to engulf the area in an outright race war pushed the Republicans to their Compromise of 1877 which delivered the black population which had fought and died for the Republican Party to the vagaries of Jim Crow and total white supremacy under the rule of the Democratic Party. The South has been a one party, police state of white supremacy since then. Black participation in the Democratic Party began reluctantly and cautiously in the North following the migrations out of the South during World War I.

THE BOURGEOIS STATE of this capitalist society breeds a culture of exploitation; blacks are no more exempt from exploitative actions than whites — they just have a smaller arena of exploitation and a highly limited mobility.

It is in the nature of a colonialist nation to create elite classes among its oppressed populations to exercise a form of indirect rule over the masses. The black bourgeoisie performs this function for the white power elite that runs this country in regard to the black masses. It is the black bourgeoisie as a class that has prospered, gained prestige and mobility in the white society as a result of the revolutionary pressure of the masses.

Thousands upon thousands of poor, uneducated and excluded black people along with hundreds of powerless but articulate black students with a smattering of professional Negroes have marched, picketed, boycotted, demonstrated, prayed and sung, been jailed, beaten, intimidated, punished, and killed in the southern freedom struggle only to have

the black bourgeoisie who stayed in their comfortable niches during the turbulence come out and reap the benefits — in jobs, housing, education, and prestige.

As a result of the movement in Selma, for example, several ministers grew wealthy, built new churches, bought new cars, and fine wardrobes — but the masses of people who made the movement are still poor and uneducated and excluded. High-placed, hand-picked Negroes were given high-placed, hand-picked jobs as a concession to the pressure of the masses for dramatic social change — but what good does a black Supreme Court Justice do when the entire legal system is racist and dedicated to denying black people justice? The rash of black elected officials in several cities comes directly on the heels of two years of violent ghetto rebellions — but the conditions which provoked the people to revolt remain virtually the same.

Somewhere, the line must be drawn. Sometime, black men who profess to lead their people must stop using their position to reap personal and material benefit and begin to dedicate their resources and talents to the needs of the community. Rosa Parks, when she sat down on a segregated Montgomery bus and refused to give her seat up to a white man, launched a movement which sent Martin Luther King to Stockholm to accept a Nobel Peace Prize. Without Rosa Parks there would be no Martin Luther King. But where is Mrs. Parks and how have the conditions of her life changed?

BLACK POLITICIANS HAVE historically sold themselves to the white power structure on their ability to *control* the restless, exploited masses; on their ability to uptight the lies and subterfuge and political chicanery the white power structure gives black people in exchange for their allegiance.

The black democrat is involved in the move on the part of the Democratic Party to co-opt Black Power for the benefit of the Democratic Party, to transpose the demand for revolutionary black power into a facade of reactionary black power. Revolutionary black power meets the needs of the oppressed and exploited masses caught in the vicious cycle of bad housing, poor health, inadequate education, improper medical facilities, unemployment, welfare, police aggression, court complicity, prison, and racism. Reactionary black power advances the interests of the power structure while adding black faces to its crew of exploiters.

BLACKS WERE BROUGHT to this country to serve the economic interests of the growing colonial economy, and for no other purpose.

The entire history of Afro-Americans has been a history of serving the interest of the white power structure. The power structure has never done anything to advance the interests of blacks except when their own interests were also served. The brutal end of Reconstruction proved that when the interests of blacks conflict with the interest of whites — however repugnant to the democratic principles of the nation the interests of these whites may be — the interests of whites will be served.

The Emancipation Proclamation was a tool for defeating the Confederacy and nothing else. All advances towards citizenship rights, all progress towards social and political liberation have come through the organized or unorganized pressure of the black masses and granted in the policy of concession and containment taken towards the black masses. The present SNCC calendar commemorates 1968 as the 349th year of black resistance to oppression. The black community is now as it has always been involved in a struggle for its liberation in order that it may move to satisfy its own interests, not serve the interests of others.

In view of all of this, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense is diametrically opposed to any candidate running in the Democratic Party for the seventh congressional district on the issue of Free Huey or on partial positions of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense — for that would be but one more move to exploit the struggle of the black masses for the advantage of the power structure.

AS A POLITICAL party dedicated to resisting all forms of exploitation and aggression imposed upon the black community, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense views electoral politics as one tool that can be used for the benefit of the black community — if it is not tied to the aims of the power structure.

The formation of the Peace and Freedom Party in direct opposition to the Democratic Party, based primarily on the general inability of the people involved to support the war policy of LBJ and to tolerate the continued oppression of black people, as well as a rejection of the general cynicism, hypocrisy, and decadence of the existing political structures, indicates a healthy break on the part of the white community with the power structure.

At this point it is merely a beginning and its future is not clear: however, on the basis of this break and on the basis of supporting Huey P. Newton, we have formed a coalition for specific political purposes. By supporting Huey Newton and recognizing him as a victim of the political structure to which the

Peace and Freedom Party is opposed, the Peace and Freedom Party has been able to focus attention upon the interrelationship of black liberation and peace in Vietnam in a concrete way.

So far, the focus of the Peace and Freedom Party has been on concepts instead of candidates. The Seventh Congressional District election offers the Alameda County Peace and Freedom Party the opportunity to combine concept with candidate in running Huey P. Newton for Congress.

THE CONCEPT OF black leadership which Huey Newton represents is of the highest integrity and clarity on the issue of human freedom — which is what we are all about. The Peace and Freedom Party as well as the Black Panther Party for Self Defense are both political organizations based on principles — something lacking in the American political arena since its inception.

Huey's life is a testament to his principles, his political imprisonment and his risking his life for his political principles — not only the morning he was shot, but every day since he founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in October 1966 — a story by now well known. His involvement in the struggle of the black masses is the center of his existence. Huey Newton did not seek power for himself, he did not ask the community to pay his salary, honor him, or to reward him in any material way. He only asked that people listen to his teachings, understand, and follow his example. To communicate, to educate the black community in the means of gaining its freedom was his sole purpose. To this aim he dedicated all his time, his money, his learning, and what ever else he had — and was willing to sacrifice his life.

It is this kind of leadership that moves the community itself towards reaping the benefits of power, that accepts the role as a *servant* of the people, a teacher of the people, that makes no compromises with white power and takes no bribes for the people's trust — this kind of leadership that must be projected for black people.

By running Huey in the seventh congressional district, it is this kind of leadership that will gain national projection, not one more black democrat.

The question now open is how the Peace and Freedom Party can put its principles into practice. If the role of the Peace and Freedom Party is to radicalize the electoral political arena, and to bring electoral politics to the service of the peace and freedom movements, then supporting the candidacy of Huey P. Newton — a prime target for destruction by that same political arena — will allow it to perform this function.

If the candidacy of Huey P. Newton becomes a stumbling block to the Peace and Freedom Party, then its attempt to radicalize the political arena will clearly become a failure — and its attempt to practice its principles will fall flat on its face, leaving the Peace and Freedom Party to fall into the same pit of cynicism, hypocrisy, and decadence of the Democratic and Republican Parties. It would be an admission of the inability of whites to change their pattern of oppression and exploitation and an invitation to certain destruction.

If for no other reason, running Huey P. Newton for Congress would be a direct effort on the part of the Peace and Freedom Party to save Huey's life and would be recognized and appreciated by the black community as such.

BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE

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