

# All Power to the People!

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When 300,000 people marched in Washington for civil rights in 1963, a lot of people felt as good as they did in November when 750,000 people marched in Washington for peace. But the civil rights movement has not liberated Black people. And the peace movement has yet to end the war in Vietnam, let alone “bring the boys home” from the 53 countries’ in which they are stationed around the world.

Black people will not be free, America’s wars around the world will not be stopped, and white people will not have liberated themselves from their own oppression by the system which is the problem; until the people control the institutions that affect their lives—the communities, the police forces, the schools, the factories and offices, the churches, the city, state and national governments.

The strongest slogan of the Black Panther Party is ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE! And the practical message of liberation it has brought to Black people is that they will not be able to defend themselves, let alone liberate themselves, until they pick up the gun.

A lot of white people have trouble with that. They are willing to tolerate the police murdering Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago, the way they have murdered 28 Panthers since January, 1969; they are willing to tolerate the imprisonment of Panther Defense Minister Huey Newton, national Chairman Bobby Seale and Chief of Staff David Hilliard, and of more than 300 Panthers’ in the last two years. Because the Panthers picked up the gun.

They may not know that the Black Panther Party has sought alliances with white groups for community control of police. They may not know that Illinois Chairman Fred Hampton, who was machine-gunned in his bed by Chicago police, started three Breakfast for Children programs that give a free hot meal to 1,200 ghetto children every morning. They may not know that 19-year-old Ronald Sachel, who was shot five times and is not expected to live, was in charge of the Panthers’ Free Medical Clinic in Chicago. They just know that somehow it doesn’t seem to be a very bad thing to kill or jail Black men who carry guns.

Why do white people tolerate this kind of vicious political repression? A small minority are so viciously racist that they will support any means of keeping Black people down, up to and including extermination. But the vast majority of white people are simply so confused in their subtler forms of racist thinking, so caught up in racist stereotypes of Black people, so insecure in the small privilege the system grants them over Blacks, so afraid of facing the reality of the present and the future, that they cannot understand Huey Newton’s message of liberation in describing the role of the Panther Party as “two-fold: to liberate the Black colony, and to stimulate revolution in the mother-country.”

What Huey was saying is that while Third World peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and here in the United States, can do it alone, win their liberation from white racist oppression and exploitation without the help of white people, it will be easier and better if white people begin to understand that they are oppressed and exploited by the same system, that the interests of Black and white are not opposed, but allied against the police, the government and the bosses.

But it is not necessary to be a white revolutionary to understand that white people must either stand in solidarity with Third World peoples, or fall with the system that oppresses all of us.

It is not necessary to be a white revolutionary to understand that the U.S. is losing in Vietnam because it does not have the support of the Vietnamese people, is losing in Vietnam because it is trying to maintain in power a corrupt puppet government that has been rejected by the people, is losing in Vietnam because no army, however large and well-armed, can stand against the will of a people united and determined to be free.

It is not necessary to be a white revolutionary to understand that the violent repression that is being applied to the Black Panther Party today will be applied to the white anti-war, student and youth movement tomorrow and the labor movement the day after.

It is not necessary to be a white revolutionary to understand that Nixon is trying to use Wallace's tactic of blaming the legitimate grievances of white people—war taxes, high prices, decaying cities, bad schools, uncertainty about the future—on Black and white struggles for a better life, rather than on the corporate-government bosses who spend billions on war and space, instead of serving the people.

It is not necessary to be a white revolutionary to understand all these things, but it helps, because the Black Panther Party and the rest of the Black liberation movement has taught the white movement a lot of lessons we haven't quite digested yet, about the real power relations in this society and the world, and the possibility of people's power.

Huey Newton said that "an unarmed people are slaves or subject to slavery at any given moment."

And Kathleen Cleaver, a Black woman and Panther Minister of Communications, who said that "everybody knows that all of the people don't have freedom, all of the people don't have justice, and all of the people don't have power—and that means that none of us do!"

The police murdered Fred Hampton because he was the most popular and effective Panther leader still alive and free. And if ordered by the power structure to do so, they will murder or imprison anybody else who tells the truth about what is going on in this country and around the world, and who tries to bring the people together to change it.

They will get away with it too, until the masses of the people begin to understand that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" you own or somebody else's. Until we are a united white people allied with a united Black people, determined in our liberation. Until we all understand that any man, Black or white, who stands up with a gun to defend his right to speak truth and organize is a hero, and that we must prevent his being made a martyr.

# fifth Estate

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