



The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]

By Charles E. Jones

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Oakland, California, 1966-one of the nation's most controversial political organizations, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense is founded. During its meteoric rise, and almost as rapid decline, the Black Panther Party became the subject of countless news articles, books, commentaries, and several motion pictures. This often misunderstood notoriety has made the Panthers America's most well-known Black revolutionaries. But few who have examined the role of the Panthers have done so with the depth and skill of Dr. Charles E. Jones and the other contributors to this provocative collection of essays. Here is a volume that provides the extensive analysis that will lead to a more complete understanding of the dynamics surrounding the Black Panther Party. Now available for the first time in paperback.

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The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered] By Charles E. Jones Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #954378 in Books
- Published on: 2005-09-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x 1.20" w x 6.34" l, 1.55 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 519 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Here is a searing, illuminating and unapologetic look at the Black Panther Party, whose 1966-1982 history is one of the most controversial and dynamic political dramas of our time. Georgia State University African American studies professor Jones uses original writings from insiders, including former officials like former communication secretary Kathleen Neal Cleaver (who now teaches law in N.Y.C.), who writes about the Algerian exile she and her then-husband Eldridge Cleaver experienced during that era; and rank-and-filers like Steve D. McCutchen, whose Panther-era diary makes engrossing reading. The 18 chapters include original essays and memoirs by, and interviews with, former Panthers. Contributors include scholars of Panther history like Stanford's Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, Nakhil Pal Singh of N.Y.U., Clarence Lusane of American University and Trayce Mathews, a Chicago-based political activist whose dissertation explores gender dynamics in the Black Panther Party. Founded in Oakland, Calif., by Bobby Seale and the late Huey P. Newton to promote armed self-defense of the black community from an allegedly brutal police force, the Panthers soon grew into a national force. The Panthers, argues contributor Chris Booker, "embodied the highest aspirations of a generation of radical African American youth." These essays are mainly sympathetic to the Panthers' aims, and there lingers among some of them a bit of uncritical nostalgia. But contributors also critically investigate the party's complex attitude toward violence (police reprisals and inner-party conflict killed over two dozen Panthers from 1967 to 1969), inner-party gender relations, the consequences of the unstable membership mix of political activists and quasi-criminal types, and the group's romantic notions of social revolution.

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From Library Journal

Revisiting the revolutionary reputation of the Black Panther Party (BPP) of the turbulent 1960s, political scientist Jones (African American studies, Georgia State Univ.) contributes a six-part, 18-chapter probe of the reality behind the rhetoric and the substance behind the much-maligned Panther image. The anthology mixes interviews with analysis, reflections, and recollections. Former BPP members such as Kathleen Neal Cleaver, Regina Jennings, and Melvin E. Lewis and others delve into the contextual landscape of the BPP's founding in October 1966, recruitment of rank and file, organizational and gender dynamics, decline, and complex legacy. This work provokes serious thought about how authority in government and media manipulate public perception of black protest. But even more, it unfolds dimensions of the BPP as a base of black nationalism and a bridge to intercommunalism, signaling a move beyond mere memoir to helpful scholarship on the BPP's integrity and interactions. Recommended for collections on African Americans and modern U.S. history and politics. [With the recent death of Eldridge Cleaver, interest may be revived in the Panther phenomenon. Ed.] Thomas Davis, Arizona State Univ., Tempe.

- Thomas Davis, Arizona State Univ., Tempe

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