

STATEMENT

BY
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 OF

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, AND SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE

The original vision of the Black Panther Party was to serve the needs of the oppressed people in our communities and defend them against their oppressors. When the Party was initiated we knew that these goals would raise the consciousness of the people and motivate them to move more firmly for their total liberation. We also recognized that we live in a country which has become one of the most repressive governments in the world even to the point of imperialist exploitation in communities all over the world. We did not expect such a repressive government to stand by idly while the Black Panther Party went forward to the goal of serving the people. We expected repression.

We knew, as a revolutionary vanguard, repression would be the reaction of our oppressors; but we recognized that the task of the revolutionist is difficult and his life is short. We were prepared then, as we are now, to give our all in the interest of oppressed people. We expected the repression to come from outside forces, which have long held our communities in subjection. However, the ideology of dialectical materialism helped us to understand that the contradictions surrounding the Party would create a force that would move us toward our goals. We also expected contradictions within the Party, for the oppressors use infiltrators and provocateurs to help them reach their evil ends. Even when the contradictions come from formerly loyal members of the Party, we see them as part of the process of development, rather than in the negative terms the oppressor's media use to interpret them. Above all, we knew that through it all the Party would survive.

The Party would survive because it had the love and support of the people who saw their true interests expressed in the actions of the Party. The Party would also survive because it would be a political vehicle which continued to voice the interests of the people and serve as their advocates.

The importance of a structured political vehicle has always been apparent to us. When we went to Sacramento, we went for the purpose of educating the people and beginning the building of a permanent political vehicle to serve their true interests. In our most recent communication with both the North and South Vietnamese Revolutionary Governments, they pointed out that they understood what we were doing and saw it as the correct strategy. They said

that a "structured organization is related to politics as a shadow to a man." We recognize that the political machine in America has consistently required Black people to support it, through paying taxes and fighting in wars; but that same machine consistently refuses to serve the interests of the Black community. One of the problems is that the community does not have a structured organization or vehicle which serves its needs and represents the people's interest. You can no more have effective politics without a structured organization, than you can have a man without his shadow. They go together and are necessary to each other. Oppressed Black people -- the lumpenproletariat -- did not have a structured organization to represent their true interests until the Black Panther Party arose from within the community, motivated by the needs and conditions of the people.

Across the country there have been coalitions of Black people and Black caucuses, but these have not served the people as political vehicles. They have merely served as bourgeois structures to get Black candidates into political office. Once elected, the machinery used to thrust these people into office simply passed out of existence or became ineffective, insofar as serving the true interests of the Black oppressed people.

A truly revolutionary vehicle which will survive the repression it encounters daily is made up of a number of characteristics. First of all there is a small, but dedicated cadre of workers who are willing to devote their full time to the goals of the organization. Secondly, there is a distinct organized structure through which the cadre can function. It is this combination of structure and dedicated cadre which can maintain the machinery for meeting the people's needs. In this way a printing press can be maintained to review the events of the day and interpret them in a manner which serves the people. It can circulate information about daily phenomena and educate the people as to their true meaning. It can carry out programs of service which deliver to the people basic needs which are not satisfied elsewhere, because the lumpenproletariat are the victims of oppression and exploitation. A cadre and a structure, however, are not what makes the political vehicle a revolutionary one. It is the revolutionary concepts which define and interpret phenomena, and establish the goals toward which the political vehicle will work. A revolutionary vehicle is in fact a revolutionary concept set into motion by a dedicated cadre through a particular organized structure.

Such a vehicle can survive repression because it can move in the necessary manner at the appropriate time. It can go underground if the conditions require; and it can raise up again. But it will always be motivated by love and dedication to the

interest of the oppressed communities. Therefore the people will insure its survival, for in that survival is the service of their needs. The structured and organized vehicle will guarantee the weathering of the test of internal and external contradictions.

The responsibility of such a political vehicle is clear. It is to function as a machine which serves the true interests of the oppressed people. This means that it must be ever aware of the needs of the communities of the oppressed, and develop and execute the necessary programs to meet those needs. The Black Panther Party has done this through its basic Ten-Point Program. However, we recognize that revolution is a process and we cannot offer the people conclusions--we must be ready to respond creatively to new conditions and new understandings. Therefore we have developed our Free Breakfast Program, our Free Health Clinics, our Clothing and Shoe Programs, and our Busses to Prisons Program, as well as other programs, in response to the obvious needs of Black People. The overwhelmingly favorable response to these programs in every community is evidence that they are serving the true interest of the people.

Serving the true interest of the people also means that the political vehicle must stand between the people and the oppressive forces which prey upon them in such a manner that the administrators will have to give the appropriate response. Such articulation requires us to have a political organ which will express the interests of the people and interpret phenomena for them. The existence of such a political vehicle is justified only so long as it serves the true interests of the people.

Serving the true interests of the people, however, does not mean that the vehicle is simply a reflector of public opinion, because the opinions of the people have often been molded and directed against their true interests by slick politicians and exploitative educators. Their diversionary tactics often lead the people down blind alleys or onto tangents which take them away from their true goals. We can easily see this when we apply the concept of American democracy to the Black community.

Democracy in America (bourgeois democracy) means nothing more than the domination of the majority over the minority. That is why Black people can cast votes all year long, but if the majority is against us, we suffer. Then the politicians and educators try to deceive the community with such euphemisms as "It's rule by the majority, but the rights of the minority are protected." If, in fact, participating in the democratic process in America were in the interest of the Black community, there would be no need for a

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Free Breakfast Program, there would be no need for Free Health Clinics or any of the other programs we have developed to meet the people's needs. The rights of the minority are protected by the standards of a bourgeois government, and anything which is not in their interest is not permitted. This may be democratic for the majority, but for the minority it has the same effect as fascism. When the majority decreed that we should be slaves, we were slaves--where was the democracy in slavery for us? When the majority decreed that we should pay taxes, fight and die in wars, and be given inferior and racist education against our interests, we got all of these things. Where is democracy for us in any of it. Our children still die, our youth suffer from malnutrition, our middle-aged people suffer from sickle-cell anemia, and our elderly face unbearable poverty and hardship because they reach the twilight period of their lives with nothing to sustain them through these difficult times. Where

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is the democracy in any of this for Black people? Democracy means only that the majority will use us when they need us and cast us aside when they do not need us. A true understanding of the working and effect of American democracy for Black people will reveal most clearly that it is just the same as fascism for us. Our true interests and needs are not being served.

The political vehicle of the people must be guided by a consistent ideology which represents the true interests of the people. We see an ideology as nothing more than a systematic and organized set of principles for analyzing and interpreting objective phenomena. An ideology can only be accepted as valid, if it delivers true understanding of the phenomena which affect the lives of the people. The development of a wide variety of truths about the community, its internal development, and the external forces surrounding it, will lead then to a philosophy which will help orient us toward

goals which are in the true interest of the people.

The Black Panther Party was born in a period of stress when Black people were moving away from the philosophy and strategy of non-violent action toward the sterner actions. We dared to believe that we could offer the community a permanent political vehicle which would serve their true interests by meeting their needs and advocating their interests. We have met many foes; we have seen many enemies. We have been slandered, kidnapped, gagged, jailed and murdered. We know now, more than ever before, that the will of the people is greater than the technology and repression of those who are against the interests of the people. Therefore we know that we can and will continue to serve the people and educate the people.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

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